



P R I M O R D I A L

PURITY

ORAL INSTRUCTIONS ON THE *THREE WORDS*
THAT STRIKE THE VITAL POINT

Dilgo Khyentse



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PRIMORDIAL PURITY

Oral Instructions on the Three Words
That Strike the Vital Point

DILGO KHYENTSE

TRANSLATED FROM THE TIBETAN BY

Ani Jinba Palmo

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

the Nalanda Translation Committee



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Publisher's Note

This book contains diacritics and special characters. If you encounter difficulty displaying these characters, please set your e-reader device to publisher defaults (if available) or to an alternate font.

OM SVASTI

By the kindness of the infinite victorious ones and their descendents And
the blessings of the wondrous three roots, May the unrivaled
manifestation of the great treasure of wisdom and compassion
[Khyentse], the exalted guru, Who has emanated according to his
intention, The *fearless holder of the teachings* of the *Uddiyana* lord and
of the sutras and tantras of the unbiased tradition, Completely victorious
in all directions,
Ever remain in the indestructible vajra realm, And may your wish for peace
and happiness be *spontaneously accomplished* without effort.

• • •

*For the sake of auspiciousness, the precious, supreme tulku
of the great Vajradhara, Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse, was kindly
given a name by the supreme lord of the victorious ones, the
refuge-protector, guide through samsara and nirvana [His
Holiness the Dalai Lama], and offered an adornment of
robes at the Maratika rock cave of long life. At that time, this
was written and offered on the excellent eighth day of the
waxing part of the eleventh month of the auspicious Wood
Sow year [29 December 1995] with one-pointed aspiration
by Vagindra Dharmamati, the bewildered monk called
Sha[de-u] Trül[shik].*

JAYANTU

Acknowledgments

DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE came to North America three times during the course of his lifetime. On his third journey, in 1987, he presided over the cremation of the Vidyadhara Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and then offered a series of courses on the buddha dharma in three major Vajradhatu centers: Karne Chöling in Vermont, Karma Dzong Boulder in Colorado, and Karma Dzong Halifax in Nova Scotia. In the vajrayana sections of these seminars, Khyentse Rinpoche presented the essentials of the practice of the higher yantras. At Karne Chöling, he taught on ngöndro practice, taking as his focus the preliminaries for his own terma, the *Rangjung Pema Nyingthik*. In Boulder, his main emphasis was the form aspect of vajrayana practice, supplemented by teaching on the bardos, and he focused on key points of sadhana practice, with reference to the sadhana of Vajrasattva in particular. These talks are published in *Pure Appearance*, (Shambhala Publications 2016).

In Halifax, Khyentse Rinpoche emphasized the formless aspect of vajrayana practice, focusing on the practice of *trekchö*, “cutting through” to primordial purity. He based his teaching on the initial verses of *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which is the posthumous instruction of Prahevajra, or Garap Dorje, to Manjushrimitra—two of the early atiyoga lineage holders—and on Patrul Rinpoche’s commentary. In these three talks, which were given on June 25–27, 1987, and are presented in this work, Khyentse Rinpoche described the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen. We are honored to be able to present these essential mind instructions of Khyentse Rinpoche to the vajrayana sangha of Vajradhatu and beyond.

The oral interpreter for Khyentse Rinpoche’s talks was Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, who cautioned that, due to the length of Khyentse

Rinpoche's discourse and the subtlety of the subject matter, the instructions be retranslated prior to publication. We were fortunate that Ani Jinba Palmo, a long-time student of Khyentse Rinpoche experienced in translating for him, was willing to undertake the project. Working directly from tape and from a transcription of the Tibetan rendered by Lama Ugyen Shenpen, Ani Jinba retranslated the entirety of Khyentse Rinpoche's lectures. She was able to consult with Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, who clarified many of the difficult points in the material, and we are deeply grateful to both of these skilled and learned students of Khyentse Rinpoche. We also wish to thank Matthieu Ricard, Khyentse Rinpoche's translator, who read through a portion of the initial draft and offered a number of valuable suggestions.

The production of *Primordial Purity* has been the responsibility of the Vajravairochana Translation Committee. Sherab Chödzin Kohn and Scott Wellenbach served as editors, working in consultation with Lama Ugyen Shenpen and Lama Chönam Wazi, while the copyediting and composition was handled by Larry Mermelstein, executing the design of Hazel Bercholz.

A translation of the root verses of the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* has been appended to this work. Following the pioneering work of Tulku Thondup, a number of translations of this text have appeared in print and circulated privately. Erik Pema Kunsang's translation, originally published in *Crystal Cave*, is included here with his kind permission, as it was the rendering followed most closely by Ani Jinba, though his wording of certain terms has been amended slightly. Erik has made a few revisions since this was first published, and we are pleased to include these here.

The longevity supplication that appears at the beginning of the book was written by Trülshik Rinpoche on the occasion of Khyentse Rinpoche's tulku receiving a name and robes from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

We deeply appreciate the permission of Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche to publish these talks, and a portion of the proceeds from this publication will be used to help support Shechen Monastery, Khyentse Rinpoche's seat in Boudhnath, Kathmandu, Nepal.

ONE

View

“**I**N ORDER TO LEAD to the state of perfect buddhahood all sentient beings whose number is as vast as the sky, may I listen to the profound, holy dharma.” Thus we should arouse the supreme thought of enlightenment and listen to the dharma in such a way as to remember everything properly. With respect to the stages of the teachings, the supreme secret mantrayana is superior to the vehicle that examines characteristics. According to the Nyingma tradition, the teaching can be divided into nine yanas, the ninth of which is the atiyoga yana. The atiyoga yana can be divided into the outer division of mind (Tib. *semde*), the inner division of space (Tib. *longde*), and the secret division of key, or oral, instructions (Tib. *men-ngag-de*). The teachings I am going to give here belong to the secret division of key instructions. Within this, there are two sections: the path of *trekchö*, or “cutting through,” which is for liberating students who are very diligent; and the path of *thögal*, or “direct crossing,” which is for effortlessly liberating students who are lazy.

First I shall explain the stages of *trekchö*, of which there are two parts: the history of the lineage, an understanding of which helps to develop faith, and an elaborate explanation of the crucial points of view, meditation, and action.

LINEAGE HISTORY

To start with, in the explanation of the history of the lineage, which helps to

develop faith, it is said, “Homage to the unequalled root guru, a treasury of compassion.” As a field of refuge, because the guru is the embodiment of all refuges, he is called unequalled. As an object of offerings, he is also unequalled, because making offering to just one pore of the guru’s skin is of greater worth and much more meritorious than making offerings to a thousand buddhas. As for the blessings of compassion, the guru’s blessings are unequalled, for just practicing guru yoga and supplicating your guru will cause coemergent wisdom to arise in your mind effortlessly.

The love of the buddhas and bodhisattvas for sentient beings is like the love of a mother for her only child. During this age of the five corruptions, sentient beings are unable to see the Buddha’s face or hear his speech. Out of great love for all beings and with the wisdom of the knowledge, love, and power of all the buddhas, for the sake of those to be tamed, the guru has taken human form—a vajra body with the six elements. As far as the quality aspect is concerned, he is not different from the buddhas. As far as the kindness and compassion aspect is concerned, he excels all the buddhas. The text says, “I prostrate to the kind root guru,” who is the lord of compassion.

In the practice that I am explaining here, because the guru is the embodiment of all refuges, in paying homage to the guru, one pays homage to all the refuges there are. How can one recognize this guru? The teachers from dharmakaya Samantabhadra up to one’s present root guru are all gurus. There are three lineages, according to the Old Translation School: the mind lineage of the victorious ones, the symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas, and the hearing lineage of superior individuals.

Mind Lineage of the Victorious Ones

Let us first consider the mind lineage of the victorious ones. All the dharmakaya buddhas have perfected the twenty-four qualities of freeing and ripening. They abide in equanimity throughout the three times, never interrupted, in the sphere of their own self-cognizing wisdom, the ocean of kaya and jnana of undefiled inner luminosity. All unconditioned dharma turns upon that unconditioned wisdom; therefore, it is called the wheel of dharma. These unconditioned teachings are not ordinary words that have come about through the efforts of ordinary individuals.

The mind lineage of the victorious ones passes from dharmakaya Samantabhadra down to the five sambhogakaya buddhas. One may ask what this

mind lineage is. To describe dharmakaya Samantabhadra and the five families of victorious ones from the perspective of those to be trained: In the tradition of the New Translation School, the dharmakaya buddha Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha who is perfectly enlightened from the very beginning, is called Vajradhara or Vajradhara the sixth. As the lord of all the families, he is the lord of the five families, and so he is known as the sixth, Vajradhara, which refers to the dharmakaya. The nature of the dharmakaya can be understood in terms of the five wisdoms, which are connected with the five buddha families. The five victorious ones associated with those families are Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi, and Vairochana. Though there is this fivefold classification, there are essentially no differences of high and low or greater and lesser compassion between Samantabhadra and the five victorious ones. They are all buddhas. They can be compared to many forms reflecting in a crystal ball, which are all within the crystal ball.

Even though it is not understood through words, the unconditioned knowledge of the five victorious ones below is known by the wisdom mind of dharmakaya Samantabhadra, by his self-cognizing wisdom. The unconditioned wisdom mind of dharmakaya Samantabhadra above is known by the five victorious ones. There are no differences between them in terms of these two knowledges or the qualities.

For example, if a hundred mirrors were hanging in a house with one person in it, there would be one hundred reflections of that person, and since they would all be reflections of that one person, they would all be the same. The mind lineage of the victorious ones is like that.

Symbolic Lineage of the Vidyadharas

The symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas passes from the five victorious ones down to the protectors of the three families, in particular to the Lord of Secret Vajrapani, and then to the five noble ones. According to dzogchen (“great perfection”), the lineage runs from the five victorious ones to Vajrasattva and then to Prahevajra (Tib. Garap Dorje). That is called the symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas.

About the meaning of *vidyadhara*: *Vidya*, or “awareness,” means wisdom free from eternalism and nihilism. Those who always, beyond meditation and postmeditation, *hold* (Skt. *dhara*) awareness in their hands within the space of compassion are called *vidyadharas* (“awareness holders”). In regard to their

primordial nature, all the holders of the lineage, from the five victorious ones, the Lord of Secret Vajrapani, Vajrasattva, and so on down to Prahevajra, are buddhas. As to their manifestation, they attained realization through nothing more than being shown a symbol.

What is this realization through being shown a symbol like? For example, when Guru Rinpoche, Padmakara, met Shri Simha, Shri Simha made the pointing mudra toward Guru Rinpoche's heart center and said KO HA A SHA SA MA HA DROL, which means "All that arises is liberated as it arises." Just through being shown that symbol and hearing those symbolic sounds, the minds of Shri Simha and Guru Rinpoche became inseparable. No actual words were necessary. Since in this lineage the transmission of realization takes place in this way, it is called the symbolic lineage of vidyadharas.

Hearing Lineage of Superior Individuals

The hearing lineage of superior individuals passes through Prahevajra, acharya Manjushrimitra, learned Jnanasutra, pandita Vimalamitra, and Uddiyana Padmakara and then to the lord [King Trisong Detsen], the subjects [the other disciples], and the companion [Yeshe Tsogyal]. Why is it called the hearing lineage of superior individuals? The abhishekas, transmissions, and teachings are given by means of words and writings; because this lineage passes through the words of one person and the hearing of another, it is called the hearing lineage of superior individuals.

The Three Words That Strike the Vital Point

These three lineages are condensed in the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which I shall be explaining here. From the perspective of the view of the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, what is the mind lineage of the victorious ones? It is omniscient Longchen Rabjam ("Infinite Great Expanse"). Though Longchen Rabjam was a guru who was born in Tibet, his wisdom was equal to that of the Buddha. He attained the state of the exhaustion of samsara and nirvana.

The mahapandita Vimalamitra promised to take birth in Tibet once every hundred years in order to spread the dzogchen teachings. He manifested uninterruptedly in this fashion down to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo [Khyentse I]

and Jamyang Chökyi Lodrö [Khyentse II, Dzongsar Khyentse I] of the present age.

Among all these manifestations, one was a great master knowledgeable in all the different sciences existing in his time. This was Longchenpa, who possessed all the good qualities, such as exertion, intellectual understanding, the accomplishment of experiences and realization, and noble activities. He was unequaled in establishing the foundation of the dzogchen doctrine. He appeared to be the embodiment of all the qualities of the six ornaments and two supreme ones of Jambudvīpa. Apart from his principal outer guru, the vidyadhara Kumaradza, he had about twenty other dzogchen teachers. However, in addition to that, since Longchen Rabjam's mind became inseparable from Samantabhadra, he is the mind lineage of the victorious ones.

Longchenpa had many incarnations who were born in Tibet. The supreme of them all was the omniscient Jigme Lingpa, who stayed in the charnel ground known as Tragmar Ke-u Tsang at the sacred place of Samye Chimphu for three years, one-pointedly practicing mantra recitation. While meditating on the dzogchen view, he had three visions of Longchen Rabjam. Subsequently, he received the blessings of his body, speech, and mind and was appointed a holder of the dzogchen teaching. Through that appointment, through the visions, and through merely hearing the words, “May the mind blessings of the lineage be transmitted; may they be transmitted!” and “May the lineage of spoken words be perfected; may it be perfected!” the minds of master and student became inseparable. This was how the mind terma of omniscient Jigme Lingpa—the dharma space treasure, the dzogchen *Heart Essence of the Great Expanse* or *Longchen Nyingthik* (Tib. klong chen snying thig), came to be spread throughout Jambudvīpa. Since Jigme Lingpa was liberated through merely being shown a symbol by omniscient Longchen Rabjam, he is the symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas.

In regard to the hearing lineage of superior individuals, omniscient Jigme Lingpa had four disciples called the four Jigmes (“fearless ones”) from Kham, as well as an inconceivable retinue of emanations of the lord, the subjects, and the companion. His extraordinary heart son was Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu, who was an emanation of noble Avalokiteshvara. To him, omniscient Jigme Lingpa gave the entire cycle of the ripening and freeing teachings of the *Heart Essence of the Great Expanse*. Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu in turn gave this teaching to both Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Patrul Chökyi Wangpo. In that way, the abhishekas, transmissions, and teachings of dzogchen passed from the mouth of one person to the ear of another. Hence, this is called the hearing lineage of superior individuals.

Patrul Rinpoche, Chökyi Wangpo, held all three of these lineages. In the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which has few words but is profound in meaning, Paltrül Chökyi Wangpo conveys an understanding of all the fundamentals of the cutting-through, primordial-purity aspect of dzogchen (Tib. dzogchen kadak trekchö).

That is the historical background that authenticates this teaching by establishing that it includes the three lineages. Academic and intellectual understanding alone cannot incorporate the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen. This is because the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen can only be understood through the superior meditation of the buddhas. The superior meditation of the buddhas belongs to the sphere of their self-cognizing wisdom and not to the dry words of learned individuals. Thus, since it is said that the meaning of the tantras is seen through omniscience, those who explain such tantras as the Guhyagarbha, Hevajra, or Chakrasamvara should themselves have attained the level of a noble one. Having understood the view, meditation, and action of the tantras through the unconditioned knowledge of their self-cognizing wisdom, they are able to teach it to others. Even individuals who have perfected all the ten branches of knowledge cannot understand the tantras through the words alone. Since there is no difference between the subject matter of the tantras and the naked mind of the Buddha and since the tantras are bound by the six limits and the four ways, when investigating them, one must use one's own self-cognizing wisdom. Otherwise there is no benefit.

Let us take an example from the Kagyu lineage. The mahasiddha Tilopa said, "I, Tilo, do not have a human guru." Tilopa went to the dakini land of Uddiyana and actually received the secret dakini treasure from Vajrayogini, which he taught as a hearing lineage.

Among the eighty-four Indian mahasiddhas, Tilopa's realization is considered to be equal to space. Someone who has perfected the view, meditation, and action in that way is able to explain the tantras. Others cannot do so. Ordinary people like us cannot understand them. Gurus who hold the three lineages, have perfected the impartial view of dzogchen, have exhausted samsara and nirvana in the expanse of the dharmadhatu, and have mixed their mind with the mind lineage comprise an authentic lineage.

There is no teacher in this world superior to the Buddha. The outer form of the Buddha was the supreme nirmanakaya who performed the twelve acts in India. Though he was an emanation of buddha, not the actual dharmakaya buddha, his mind essence was the actual dharmakaya. The genuine understanding of his view, beyond meditation and postmeditation, is dzogchen. His teachings are absolutely unerring.

For example, the Buddha is referred to as omniscient. When one comes to understand the view, one sees that because there is nothing to be known beyond the Buddha's knowledge, he was said to be omniscient. The teaching of the ultimate view known by the Buddha is dzogchen. Therefore, whoever teaches it should be recognized as having realized the unerring view of the Buddha, free from delusion. This should not be someone without lineage or legitimate source. According to the investigations of the learned ones:

All dharma is the Buddha's oral teachings and the commentaries upon them.

The commentaries come from proper contemplation of the view.

Due to that, the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni

Will remain in this world for a long time.

As the teachings of the Victorious One and the authentic commentaries of his disciples were established through critical investigation of quotations, logic, and key instructions, they are unmistakable. Those who have directly seen the truth of the dharmata will not depend on inference, but will directly realize the Buddha's view. However, we cannot realize the Buddha's view directly, but through inference. The Buddha's view can be directly realized through all the teachings of the secret-mantra vajrayana, but among them, the heart advice for directly realizing the view of the Buddha is dzogchen.

Within dzogchen are found the outer division of mind, the inner division of space, and the secret division of key instructions. Among those, the division of key instructions is the one that is like the pure heart's blood. To teach according to that view is to follow the intention of the omniscient guru and his sons [Longchenpa, Jigme Lingpa, and Gyalwe Nyugu]. In order to elucidate that, with this invocation, I have presented a brief history of this genuine lineage.

MEANING OF THE TEXT

Following the history of the lineage and the invocation, we turn to the actual meaning of the text. As it is said: "In explaining the actual meaning of a text, unless things are given names, everyone will be confused. Therefore a skilled master will indicate phenomena by name."

It is said that all phenomena, from the samsaric phenomena of skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas up to the nirvanic phenomena of kaya and jnana, should be

indicated by names and sounds. In doing this, there are two kinds of names: arbitrary and meaningful. Calling certain objects “pillar” or “vase,” for instance, is something that cannot be explained. It is arbitrary; there is no reason. On the other hand, some names indicate the intended meaning. As instances of this second category, the names of omniscient Longchen Rabjam, the vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa, and Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu indicate the meaning of the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen. Here the meaning to be expressed and the words that express it—which are the teaching and the teachers of dzogchen, respectively—never depart from the nature of dzogchen. If teaching and teacher are connected, then when the teacher is authentic, the doctrine must also be regarded as authentic. If the teacher is not authentic, the teaching is also not authentic. When both teacher and teaching are authentic, what is to be expressed is based on the names of the teachers, and what expresses that, the names, includes the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen.

If one understands the meaning indicated, that is called understanding through the merging of sound and meaning, which first develops through hearing the teachings. What is this understanding through the merging of sound and meaning? For example, hearing the sound of the words “Longchen Rabjam” can directly point out the meaning of the dzogchen view. When that is pointed out, it is called understanding through the merging of sound and meaning. If one does not have that power of recognition, when the mind is not focused but one just hears the sound of a word through the ears, the meaning of the word does not settle in the mind. In order to point out the understanding through this merging of sound and meaning, the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen are taught. Here the indication is made with the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*.

One might ask what these words are in the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*. The sound and the word are the same. For example, the word “mother” can be understood as indicating someone who is very kind. If one says “mother,” the meaning of what that word expresses is pointed out. What is known as “the three words” is like that.

What are the three words? “View,” “meditation,” and “action.” What does it mean to “strike the vital point” with these three words? If one wants to kill a man and strikes his heart with a weapon, the man will not live another hour. He will die immediately. What vital point do these three words strike? Just as oil is present in a mustard seed, all of us, all sentient beings, have buddha nature. Though it is present, we do not recognize it, because our minds are obscured by delusions. When, as a result of the view, meditation, and action, we come to recognize these delusions, we can get rid of them in a moment. In one day

sentient beings can be transformed into buddhas—that is the ultimate view, meditation, and action of dzogchen. Such a power of transformation is called “striking the vital point.”

Let us say, for example, that one is ill. If there is a skillful doctor who accurately knows the point in our body where that disease resides—the spine, the flesh, the bones, or whatever—and draws it out of there, one will be immediately cured. In the same way, this view, meditation, and action can cut the life force of delusion in a moment. Thus they are said to strike the vital point.

Where did this view, meditation, and action originally come from? In order to spread the teachings of dzogchen in Jambudvīpa, Vajrasattva himself manifested as a vidyadhara, Prahevajra, taking birth in the dakini land of Uddiyana as the son of a princess. Later, when the body of Prahevajra disappeared into a mass of stainless light, his disciple Manjushrimitra cried out in despair: “Alas, alas! Now that the guru is dissolving into light, who will dispel the darkness of the world?” When he uttered these words of longing, Prahevajra was moved by compassion to give him the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*. As soon as the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* fell into the hands of Manjushrimitra, though he had already understood the view, meditation, and action of dzogchen, the mind of guru and disciple became one. The mind lineage merged into one. To illustrate this, let us think of the analogy of a golden locket depicting a principal deity and the retinue: the gold pervades all of them.

The key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* were taught by the dzogchen vidyadharas. Within the realm of human experience, these vidyadharas turned the wheel of dharma. When they manifested passing into nirvana, into the extraordinary luminous wisdom space of the buddhas, which is beyond human experience, at that moment they gave extraordinary instruction to an equally fortunate and worthy student, and the minds of guru and disciple became inseparable. So, in this way, when the vidyadhara Prahevajra manifested passing into nirvana and transmitted the wisdom of the mind lineage to his student, the student’s realization became equal to that of the master.

That transmission is known as the final testament, and starting from dharmakaya Samantabhadra and continuing up to this point, that great potential (Tib. tsal) exists in the key instructions of dzogchen. The meaning of that is elaborately explained in the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*.

View

The first of the three words is “view.” If one has not recognized the view, there can be no meditation or action. Those who have the view are like those who have the essence of wealth—lots of gold and diamonds. It is no problem for them to enjoy wealth in this world. But beggars who have no possessions can only imagine being rich. They cannot enjoy wealth. So unless we have realized the unerring view, we will not attain the state of omniscience. If you have no eyes, even if you have ears, tongue, nose, and the other senses, you are disabled. The view is like the eyes. If it is not realized without error, just imagining it will not enable one to progress on the path of liberation and omniscience.

The Buddha said:

It is easy to progress through discipline,
But that is not the view.
Through discipline, one can attain a fortunate existence.
Through the view, one can attain the supreme state.

That supreme state is the state of omniscient wisdom. To attain that is to understand the view. To make that view attainable, the Teacher, the perfect Buddha Bhagavat, introduced the different levels of the view, starting with the shravaka yana and progressing on up to the atiyoga yana. Even though the Buddha introduced all these levels, individuals should exercise discrimination concerning these views—whether they are vast or not, whether they are profound or not, whether they correspond to the ultimate state of buddhahood or not. If, discriminating in this way, one asks what the ultimate view is, the answer is the view of dzogchen. This ultimate view of dzogchen is the wisdom of the buddhas’ meditation. As the Sakya Pandita said:

This view of atiyoga is not the result of a vehicle.
It is not a view to be ascertained through one’s intelligence.

It is the result, the direct realization, of the buddhas’ wisdom, known by the noble ones through their own self-cognizing wisdom. Therefore, it is known as “the sphere of one’s own self-cognizing wisdom.”

After the Bhagavat, the perfect Buddha Shakyamuni, had meditated and attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he said:

I have discovered a nectarlike dharma
That is profound, nonconceptual, and unconditioned.
Since no one I show it to will be able to understand it

SINCE NO ONE SHOWS IT TO WILL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND IT,
I will remain silent in the forest.

Realizing that it could not be expressed in words or speech, the Buddha showed the way of meditation, the view of which is what is established by dzogchen. It is said:

This view of dzogchen is beyond words.
It cannot be indicated through speech
And transcends the sphere of mind and mental activity.

It cannot be expressed in words at all. This is not just true of dzogchen; it is said that even “the prajnaparamita is beyond speech, thought, and expression.” It is impossible to indicate it through words.

Out of his skillful means and compassion, the Buddha taught the emptiness aspect of the view through the metaphor of the sky, the luminosity aspect through the metaphor of the sun and moon, and the aspect of pervading all of samsara and nirvana through the metaphor of sun rays and moon rays, thus illustrating each aspect with different analogies.

To summarize these metaphors, the view is an object of proper hearing and reflection. Through hearing, the view is understood; through reflection, it is experienced. And if one meditates, the view will unfold free of error. If one does not do that—if one just blindly thinks, “This is the view”—that is not enough. As the Buddha said:

Just as gold must be burned, cut into, and rubbed,
My teachings should be properly investigated.
They should not be accepted merely out of respect.

The more one examines the Buddha’s teachings through quotations and logic, the more profound and vast they become. One cannot help but develop a special trust and confidence in them. The views of other yanas, the non-Buddhist views and particularly the view of Christianity, no matter how elaborately they may be explained, do not become more profound and vast. Since the other views do not become more profound in this way, and since it is said that a view should be judged by its profundity, the teaching of dzogchen is the ultimate Buddhist view.

You might ask, “Do any of the eight lower vehicles teach a view other than that of dzogchen?” The answer is that none of them does. For example, let us start with the view of the first vehicle, the shravaka yana, about the truth of suffering, that it is based on impermanence. That impermanence is an aspect of

emptiness. That feature of emptiness is taught in dzogchen—clear, in detail, and complete. The charge that the shravaka yana does not teach even a fraction of the principle of emptiness is not at all true. If it were true, the shravaka yana would not be able to eradicate the obscuration of the kleshas, which it can do.

If one has not realized the view of emptiness, then, as it is said:

For whomever emptiness is possible
Everything is possible.

Those people who are able to understand emptiness fully should receive extended teachings on emptiness. Those who can only understand a third of it should be taught only a third of it. Those who can understand only a small fraction of it should be taught only a small fraction. In this way they will gradually come to understand the ultimate view.

People come from the east, the south, the west, and the north. Some come by foot, others on horseback, some riding elephants, some by car, and others by plane. They all arrive at the same place but at different speeds. The speed depends on the view. If the nature of the view is correctly introduced, meditation and action will only assist the view. Once the view has been introduced, meditation and action will come along without much difficulty.

Certain sounds are able to indicate the meaning of the view of all the root and lineage gurus. Take for example the word *sang-gye*, which is the Tibetan translation of *buddha*. *Sang* means “awake”—awakened from the sleep of deluded ignorance. *Gye* means “blossom”—the lotuslike blossoming of the wisdom of the two knowledges of everything that can be known. These two words indicate, respectively, the qualities of abandoning and realization of the Buddha himself. Not only that, but bodhisattvas dwelling at the level of the tenth bhumi have these inconceivable qualities of omniscient wisdom. In sum, there are absolutely no buddha qualities that are not included within abandoning and realization.

Now in the same way, when explaining the view of dzogchen it is said:

The view is Longchen Rabjam.

With regard to that, concerning what is being indicated, what is *long* (“expanse”)? It is explained to be the view that leads to the exhaustion of the four visions, known as *longchen rabjam* (“infinite great expanse”). It is the ultimate realization of the true meaning of dzogchen. Concerning the name, the indication, the one who introduced the genuine realization of Samantabhadra, the wisdom of the 6,400,000 dzogchen tantras, is omniscient Longchen Rabjam. The name and the teaching have become one. When the person and the dharma are mixed as one, the person is dzogchen and the dharma is dzogchen.

Why is that teaching introduced? The vast meaning of the teachings is of the sphere of the minds of the noble ones and cannot be expressed by ordinary

people. However, with the support of the guru's key instructions, it is possible to indicate it vaguely. As is said, "The best practice is to rely on the guru's transmission." Also, "The guru's key instructions are easy to practice and can be understood with little trouble." Thus one can attain buddhahood without difficulty. The easy way to realize the Buddha's view is to rely on the key instructions.

The key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* begin, "The view is Longchen Rabjam." This view has to be understood. The guru referred to, who is indicating that, is omniscient Longchen Rabjam. As was said above, omniscient Longchen Rabjam fully understood the view of the teachings of the three divisions of dzogchen. For the sake of his students he composed the treatises of the *Seven Treasures* (Tib. dzö dun), the *Three Cycles of Relaxation* (Tib. ngalso korsum; also translated as *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*), and the *Three Cycles of Self-Liberation* (Tib. rangdröl korsum). These are teachings explained through words. This omniscient one transmitted his wisdom mind to Terchen Ratna Lingpa, Orgyen Terdak Lingpa, Lhatsun Namkha Jigme, Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgön Lodrö Thaye, and Jamyang Chökyi Lodrö. Because he transmitted his mind blessings to all these great beings, they constitute the mind lineage of the victorious ones.

When he was taught the ultimate meaning of the mind lineage of the victorious ones, for example, the omniscient vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa had three visions of Longchen Rabjam. First, he received the blessings of his body; second, the blessings of his speech; and third, the blessings of his mind. Omniscient Longchen Rabjam transmitted these blessings of body, speech, and mind while in the form of an Indian pandita—very beautiful and peaceful, like a tathagata.

In Jigme Lingpa's first vision, Longchen Rabjam looked a little old. In his second vision, Longchen Rabjam handed him a book containing the hidden meaning of the *Seven Treasures*. As Longchen Rabjam was telling him what the book contained, he transmitted his mind stream to him. This shows what is meant by the "outer guru." As for the inner guru, after the third vision, Jigme Lingpa realized the self-manifesting impartial view of dzogchen—"Longchen Rabjam" was not just an outer pandita.

When the nature of inner awareness has been realized as Longchen Rabjam, if the awareness is strong, delusion will be exhausted and liberated into its ground. If you need to teach the realization of Longchen Rabjam in one sitting, on the spot, you can do so. If you can do that, that is called the absolute realization.

The view of dzogchen has to be explained through the aspect of what is to be indicated. Omniscient Jigme Lingpa said that when one's mind is in the right

frame, the guru is not outside. For someone whose mind is in the right frame and has merged with the dharma, the master is not outside. However, the gurus who grant abhishekas, transmissions, and key instructions to people like us, whose faces we see and whose voices we hear, these masters that liberate us, are all outer masters, who serve as a means to communicate with the inner guru. These gurus confer abhishekas, transmissions, and key instructions, pointing out the liberating path of omniscience, so we should listen to what they say. If we hear, reflect on, and meditate on the teachings, there will be a time when we actually realize our intrinsic nature, the sugatagarbha.

When we have realized that, the guru who has taught us the dharma will not be outside us anymore, but inside. Where inside? The guru is the nature of our mind. Once we have realized the nature of our mind, it is no longer necessary to search for the guru outside. If the view of the mind is maintained beyond meditation and postmeditation, the guru is present beyond meeting and parting.

It is said that when the outer guru points out the key instructions, the gradual introduction to the vital points of view, meditation, and action of dzogchen takes place. From among those, to indicate the view that is to be realized, we should speak about what *longchen* (“great expanse”) means. *Long* means something vast, like vast space. It is impossible to measure space in miles. Space is vast and its nature is empty. Because it is vast and empty, space is used to point to the view. Inside of it is the world with all its contents—mountains, islands, and so on. No matter how vast an array of the world and its contents is conceived of, it will never be impossible to fit it within space. What does it prove that the world and its contents—all the mountains, islands, and so on, no matter how numerous and vast they are—could never fill up space? It proves that space is not a substantial thing. Even the Buddha would not have been able to assert that.

So what does the world with all its contents have as its basis? Its basis is space, and it cannot have any basis other than space. Even though the world and its contents of lakes, islands, towns, people—whatever has form—are pervaded by space, if one were to ask if the nature of space and the nature of the world and its contents are the same, the answer would be that they are not the same at all. Without giving up its distinguishing characteristic, space is the basis of the world and its contents. Without seeming to, the world and its contents have as their basis the same, empty space. Thinking like this, we should understand the word *longchen* to denote something vast. What is this *long*? According to dzogchen, it shows the emptiness aspect of the view—primordial purity.

What does *rabjam* (“infinite” or “universe”) mean? It means a very large amount. How large? For example, if one were to try to count all the trees in all the forests of Jambudvīpa, even spending one’s whole life at it, one would not be

able to finish the count. Similarly, all samsaric and nirvanic phenomena have as their basis the nature of primordially pure great emptiness, and all samsaric phenomena of skandhas, dhatus, ayatanas, karma, and kleshas and all nirvanic phenomena of kaya and jnana existing together are said to be *rabjam*.

What do samsaric and nirvanic phenomena have as their basis? All samsaric phenomena of karma and kleshas are based on the nature of primordially pure great emptiness. All nirvanic phenomena of inconceivable kaya and jnana are also based on primordially pure great emptiness. If one were to ask if the samsaric phenomena of karmic and emotional obscurations are the same as the primordially pure great emptiness, the answer would be that they are not. The reason why they are not the same is that the samsaric phenomena of karma and kleshas give rise to confusion and suffering. Through the kleshas, we produce the karma of passion, aggression, and ignorance and experience the sufferings of the six realms. In primordially pure great emptiness, even the name of suffering does not exist. Someone who has realized primordially pure great emptiness sees samsaric phenomena as projections without inherent existence, like a rainbow in the sky or like the water in a mirage.

In what sense are the nirvanic phenomena of kaya and jnana based on primordially pure great emptiness? Their natures are mixed as one. Kaya and jnana are spontaneously present in the nature of primordially pure great emptiness. Although kaya and jnana are spontaneously present, with regard to primordially pure great emptiness, to explain the qualities of the Buddha, for example, it is said that there are the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks. What are the thirty-two major marks? They are the circle of hair between the Buddha's eyebrows, the protuberance on the crown of his head (Skt. ushnisha), and so forth. Each of these qualities is inconceivable. Although they exist in primordially pure great emptiness, Buddha's ushnisha is not something raised up, and the circle of hair between his eyebrows is not something round and white. They do not exist as form or substance. The cause of the ushnisha on Buddha's head and the circle of hair between his eyebrows is the inconceivable treasure of merit that is naturally and spontaneously present in primordially pure great emptiness.

This is analogous to gold or diamonds. If one has a diamond, whether it is as big as a mountain or as small as a sesame seed, the preciousness of diamond is present within it. In the same way, the treasure of all the unconditioned qualities is naturally and spontaneously present.

When the sun shines in the sky, its rays pervade Jambudvīpa. The sun does not need to think that it should try to pervade the earth with its rays. When the sun shines in the sky, its rays spontaneously pervade the earth. In the same way,

if we realize the essential nature of primordially pure great emptiness, the inconceivable unconditioned phenomena of the buddhas are all naturally complete and perfect in that state. How is that so? They are in the nature of our minds right now, but we do not realize that. Not realizing the primordially pure great emptiness of the natural state of mind is called ignorance. Such ignorance is the root of the 84,000 kleshas.

According to dzogchen, there are two kinds of ignorance: coemergent ignorance and conceptual ignorance. What is coemergent ignorance? In the natural state of dzogchen, the confusion of the three worlds of samsara, which is like a stain, is called coemergent ignorance. When one has fully recognized that this coemergent ignorance is the expressive power (Tib. tsal) of primordially pure great emptiness, it is inevitable that this coemergent ignorance will be thoroughly purified.

Ignorance is like camphor, which is white and has a strong smell. Camphor is a good medicine for fever. If camphor is exposed to the air, it evaporates. Having evaporated into the air, it does not remain anywhere. Confusion is just like that.

What is the unconfused intrinsic nature (Skt. dharmata)? It is naturally present in one's own innate nature, not brought from elsewhere or touched up like something gilded by a skillful goldsmith. Effortlessly, the inconceivable qualities are naturally perfect.

The only difference between buddhas and sentient beings is whether these qualities are realized or not. In terms of how things are, there is no difference between buddhas and sentient beings. However, in terms of how things appear, sentient beings are confused and buddhas are not. So confusion is the only difference.

If two pieces of gold are to be used to make an ornament and one is stained and the other is not, the stained piece cannot be fully valued and used in the ornament until it has been purified. Once the stain has been removed and it looks like gold again, it is ready for use in the ornament. All the while, however, both pieces are made of the same gold.

The nature of samsaric and nirvanic phenomena is similar. Primordial purity is the emptiness aspect, and rabjam ("infinite") is the appearance aspect of samsara and nirvana. What is the basis of samsaric and nirvanic phenomena? It is spontaneous presence, according to dzogchen. If one asks whether spontaneous presence in dzogchen and primordial purity are different, they are not. The nature of spontaneous presence is primordial purity.

Do these appearances of spontaneously present kaya and jnana affect the primordial purity? They do not. Because primordially pure emptiness is the

inconceivable wisdom of the vast dharmadhatu, all the inconceivable qualities of unconditioned spontaneous presence are there in the nature of that primordially pure great emptiness—they are spontaneously present there.

When pointing this out to students, the appearance aspect must be distinguished from the emptiness aspect. From the point of view of the actual primordially pure great emptiness, spontaneous presence does not have to be looked for elsewhere. It is not something different. Spontaneous presence exists in the nature of primordial purity. Once the view of spontaneous presence and its qualities are manifest, there is no need to search for primordially pure great emptiness elsewhere.

The Madhyamaka Tradition and Longchen Rabjam

The pinnacle of all the views of the causal vehicle that examines characteristics is the prasangika madhyamaka. There is a slight difference in the prasangika madhyamaka taught by Nagarjuna and that taught by Chandrakirti. What is this difference? Glorious Chandrakirti stressed mainly the emptiness aspect, teaching the view of dharmadhatu in which everything is realized to be of the nature of emptiness. Emptiness is established through the sevenfold analysis of a chariot. Though Chandrakirti accurately understood Nagarjuna's view, which is extensively and clearly expounded in the *Root Stanzas on Madhyamaka* (Tib. uma tsawa sherap; Skt. Mula-madhyamaka-karika) and the other five texts in the Collection of Reasonings (Tib. riktsok), his own view emphasized the emptiness aspect, whereas Nagarjuna's stressed the union of appearance and emptiness. Even though Nagarjuna taught the union of appearance and emptiness, that does not deny the emptiness referred to in Chandrakirti's teachings. Chandrakirti's emphasis on emptiness and Nagarjuna's emphasis on appearance, taken together, are the inseparability of appearance and emptiness.

Thus, the view of glorious Chandrakirti and the view of glorious protector Nagarjuna in his *Root Stanzas on Madhyamaka* and the other five texts in his Collection of Reasonings cover the second turning of the Buddha's three turnings of the wheel of dharma—the one known as “no characteristics”—which teaches the nature of emptiness, the path of signlessness, and the result of wishlessness. This is the ultimate meaning of the *Prajnaparamita in One Hundred Thousand Verses* (Tib. sherap kyi pharöl tu chinpa tongtrak gyapa; Skt. Shatasahasrika-prajnaparamita), which is found in the great Kanjur (Tib. bka' 'gyur), the collection of texts containing the teachings of the Victorious One.

Noble Nagarjuna was like a second buddha come to this world. He composed commentaries explaining all the Buddha's views. The six ornaments and the two supreme ones of the sacred land of India accept that there is no difference between Nagarjuna's commentaries and the Buddha's teachings. This is because Nagarjuna's commentaries cover all three turnings of the wheel as well as the secret-mantra vajrayana. The commentaries constituting his Collection of Talks (Tib. tamtsok) deal with the first turning of the wheel—the teachings on the four truths. His *Root Stanzas on Madhyamaka* and the other five texts in the Collection of Reasonings deal with the second turning—the teaching of no characteristics. His Collection of Praises (Tib. tö-tsok) deals with the last turning—the teachings on the absolute truth. After that, in order to elucidate fully the doctrine of the secret-mantra vajrayana, he wrote *The Clear Vision of the Five Buddhas* (Tib. rig-nge gongsal), a commentary on *The Secret Gathering* (Tib. sangwa dupa; Skt. Guhyasamaja). All of Buddha's teachings are covered in Nagarjuna's commentaries.

Similarly, in the writings of omniscient Longchen Rabjam, such as the *Seven Treasures*, all the teachings can be found without error. The *Seven Treasures* explain everything from the 84,000 components of the dharma and the 360 non-Buddhist wrong views up to the nonduality of primordial purity and spontaneous presence of dzogchen.

Though the doctrines of the 360 non-Buddhist schools lie outside of the buddhadharma, if we do not know their views we will not be able to recognize the faults of the non-Buddhist views and the qualities of the Buddhist views. By examining the faults of non-Buddhist views—that the eternalist view has such-and-such defects and that the nihilist view has such-and-such defects—we will come to think that the philosophical system of madhyamaka is correct and does not fall into any extreme. We will come to understand the ultimate true meaning of madhyamaka. When we understand the true meaning of madhyamaka, we cannot help but understand the view of dzogchen.

Among the great gurus of the Nyingma secret-mantra teaching in Tibet, there was Rongzom Pandita, who was recognized by Lord Atisha to be an incarnation of the omniscient Indian mahasiddha Krishnacharya. He mainly practiced and taught primordially pure great emptiness, and his teachings are largely on that aspect. When we say “Rong Long,” we are referring to omniscient Rongzom Pandita and Longchen Rabjam. These two are like the sun and moon in the sky of the teachings of the Nyingma, the Old Translation School.

Longchen Rabjam mainly taught the union of appearance and emptiness. The view of Longchen Rabjam's *Seven Treasures* and the teachings of noble Nagarjuna on both the three turnings of the wheel and the sutras and tantras are

inseparable. Because of this inseparability, we find this praise in the supplication to Longchenpa:

Your mind has the compassion, learning, and realization
Of the six ornaments and two supreme ones of Jambudvīpa.

The person known as Longchen Rabjam was born in Tibet and studied the sutras, tantras, and sciences. He received direct transmission from noble Sarasvati and exalted Tara, and was able to revitalize the teachings of dzogchen. He was an incarnation of Vimalamitra. Here, the ultimate view of dzogchen is introduced through the name Longchen Rabjam. By *longchen*, we should understand “primordial purity,” and by *rabjam*, “spontaneous presence.” Thus when the text says that “The view is Longchen Rabjam,” the dzogchen view is being introduced, which should be understood as the union of primordial purity and spontaneous presence. Once the natural state of the union of primordial purity and spontaneous presence has been understood, when this union of primordial purity and spontaneous presence is practiced, one cannot help but also practice the inseparability of the Buddha’s dharmakaya and rupakaya.

Meditation

The ultimate view pointed out by the words of the guru is Longchen Rabjam. That view is not something outside. If that view were outside, it would not be able to cut the life force of delusion within. Practicing the essence of one’s intrinsic nature within, the sugatagarbha, is what is called meditation. What is meditation like? Emptiness, that nature free of any concept of phenomena—one’s self-cognizing wisdom—is called knowledge. Once we have realized the intrinsic nature of emptiness through this knowledge, we do not have to look for compassion elsewhere. Great compassion is present in the nature of emptiness.

We may generate compassion toward a being who is suffering, but that kind of compassion is only aroused when we see suffering. When we do not see suffering, that compassion is not aroused, and so it is not actually ultimate compassion. Ultimate compassion is self-existent and all-pervasive.

Once we realize emptiness and are aware that sentient beings have not realized it, we will naturally feel compassion for all beings all the time, while meditating or not, in a continuous flow. Great compassion will manifest, and when it does so, it is not merely out of sadness.

Recognizing that sentient beings are confused, we will know how to remove

this bewilderment in whatever way is effective. Compassion such as this and knowledge only differ with respect to their names; their nature is essentially the same.

This knowledge and love are like the life force of the view of emptiness. If one needs to emanate for the sake of sentient beings or explain the intrinsic nature of sugatagarbha—whatever is necessary—it comes from this knowledge and love. Since it does not come from the state of great emptiness alone, the text says:

The meditation is Khyentse Öser (“light rays of knowledge and love”).

When the view of the natural state of nondual emptiness and compassion has been introduced and the meditator starts to become accustomed to it, then one has the first actual realization of emptiness. This is similar to the causal vehicle that examines characteristics. When you realize the truth of the path of seeing, you are beginning to realize the intrinsic nature of sugatagarbha. From then on, that realization will grow.

Action

With that realization, absolute bodhichitta develops in one’s being. When that has developed, one knows that the minds of sentient beings and buddhas are one. When meditators who have realized this are pervaded with loving compassion and want to lead all sentient beings who have not realized it to the state of buddhahood, then anything whatsoever that they do—even just opening or closing their eyes or stretching and bending their arms—benefits sentient beings. It is not as though sometimes they benefit sentient beings and sometimes not. The benefit for sentient beings is naturally and spontaneously accomplished. It is never too early or too late to benefit beings. It is not like that at all. Because in that state all bodhisattva action is complete, the text says:

The action is Gyalwe Nyugu (“the sprout of the victorious ones”).

In the beginning, this view, meditation, and action should be introduced; in the middle, they should be practiced; and in the end, the fruit of that practice is that you have control over body, speech, and mind. Though view, meditation, and action are different names, in essence they are one. They cannot be separated in anyone’s being.

If you realize emptiness, there is absolutely no doubt that you can attain buddhahood in one lifetime. What teaching has a view that is so utterly beyond doubt? It is the teaching of dzogchen.

How is the whole of existence reduced to dust just by realizing a fraction of the dzogchen view? When you realize emptiness, you care less about the eight worldly concerns. There is not much hope and fear. If you realize just a fraction of the view of emptiness, your mind will not be moved by worldly distractions, which are like waves on the ocean. You must gradually grow accustomed to that nature which absolutely cannot be moved.

For example, it is said that bodhisattvas who have attained the first bhumi, if they so wish, can attain buddhahood in seven days. Or they can choose to attain buddhahood when samsara is emptied. When you begin to realize the ultimate view of emptiness, you can choose like that. Then, when the view of emptiness is fully realized, though you actually see the truth of suffering of samsaric deluded appearances, they are just empty projections. By way of an analogy, consider a rainbow: whether it appears in the sky or does not appear, you will have no thoughts of liking or disliking. Whatever appearances of samsara or nirvana arise—bad or good—you will feel at ease.

Remaining comfortably in that state is called being carefree and at ease in the view of dzogchen. You will feel amused within. In that state, you will realize that the appearance of relatively true delusions and the appearance of undeluded ultimate reality are amusing.

The Scholar's Way and the Hermit's Way

The three phases just discussed are the “three words” in the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*. As for the method of realizing the view, in the tradition of the causal vehicle of characteristics, as was explained above, scholars received the view of the Buddha's teaching and analyzed it logically. They understood it through quotations and logic. Once that had been understood, the view of the ultimate nature had to be realized, and so the Buddha gave this instruction:

Having accepted my teachings, after hearing them and reflecting on them,
You should apply meditation.

In the beginning, you should listen to what you have not heard. In the middle,

you should reflect on the meaning of what you have heard so that it can be understood. In the end, you should practice the meaning of what you have reflected on through meditation.

However, unlike in the vehicle of characteristics, you cannot gain certainty in the dzogchen view through the complexities of quotations and logic. There are two ways to gain certainty in the dzogchen view: the scholar's way of analytical meditation and the hermit's way of leaving things as they are.

In the scholar's way, one gains certainty in the meaning of the dzogchen teaching through quotations, logic, and key instructions, some of which are explained extensively and some of which are explained profoundly in Longchenpa's *Seven Treasures*. That is the scholar's way of analytical meditation.

For the hermit's way of leaving things as they are, there are key instructions on dzogchen, such as those in *Vimalamitra's Heart Essence* (Tib. bima nyingthik) and *Dakini's Heart Essence* (Tib. khandro nyingthik). So that these meditation instructions may be practiced, words of living experience are given. As it is said, "Even if one may have no knowledge of the five sciences, if these instructions are applied with blind faith, one will gain accomplishment." Since dzogchen is the most profound and vast teaching, one should have confidence that it can instantly remove all the confused appearances of conflicting emotions. If the authentic guru is recognized as the Buddha, the dharmakaya itself, one will realize the view of dzogchen. That is called the hermit's way of leaving things as they are.

In this age of the five corruptions, people have short lives and much disease. Their exertion is weak. They are very distracted and attached to the things of this life. Therefore, this heart of the ultimate key instructions, *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which is like nectar that can revive the gods, is taught. The meaning is experienced through meditation practice, so it is unnecessary to analyze all the different extreme views.

View

When practicing meditation, we should become accustomed to the meaning of the view. Where is this view? At the moment our deluded mind probably is not in possession of the view. The unerring ultimate view is not something far away and spectacular that we need to look for outside, like embarking in a boat across the ocean after one has already exhausted all the land on Jambudvipa. That

would be the approach of the causal vehicle of characteristics. When recognized within our present state of delusion, the view is naturally in the state of primordially pure great emptiness.

For example, in the sand of the Ganges River, sand and gold are mixed. Someone who knows the value of gold will get it by removing the sand and obtaining the precious substance. But when ordinary people look at it, they will just see the sand and the gold as the same. How do we separate the gold from the sand? We should leave the mind in its natural, uncontrived flow. If we look at the nature of that uncontrived state, we find it is disturbed by many thought waves. We are carried away by these waves of confusion: we follow after previous habits, stimulate thoughts of the future, and lose present awareness. What are these waves of confusion? They are the expressive power of the view. They are not separate from the view.

How does one stop these waves of confusion? This can be compared to the adjustment of an engine by someone who knows the key points of how an engine works. If the engine needs power or if we need it to run very quickly, a skilled person who knows how to tune the engine can give it the power of a thousand people. Similarly, in regard to the waves of confusion, if we know the key point of view, there is no need to stretch the extremes of lots of intellectual studies and texts. There is no need to accumulate merit and purify obscurations in order to realize the view. It will be realized within that state.

We must recognize that these waves of confusion obscure the view. Even in the case of strong waves of confusion, such as hatred arising so strongly that we would give up our life to accomplish its goal or desire arising so strongly that we would give all our wealth without holding any back in order to acquire the sought after object, confusion can only control us because we do not investigate it. If we know how to investigate these waves of confusion, we see that they are nothing but a rainbow in the sky or a mirage on the plains. Through analytical meditation over a considerable period of time, we would come to understand that this confusion, which is nothing but a rainbow or a mirage, in the beginning has no origin, in the middle has no location, and in the end has no cessation. It is devoid of the eight extremes of concept.

On the other hand, in order to realize the view through meditation based on the experience of the key instructions, not much is needed. Why is that? While engulfed in these waves of confusion, if one strongly shouts PHAT while focusing on the uncontrived nature of mind, those thoughts will be scattered. If a heap of sand as large as Mount Meru were to be hit by a whirlwind, it would not take long to scatter the sand. Shouting PHAT is like that.

What is this sound of PHAT? It is the self-resounding wisdom of inseparable

prajna and upaya. It is like a sharp instrument that cuts all the trees. What does it cut? The past confusion is followed by the next confusion, and the following confusion is added to the previous one in an uninterrupted chain. It is like beads strung on a mala: if the string is cut, then all the beads will be scattered. Similarly, if one shouts PHAT at confused thoughts, all those confused thoughts will be cut and scattered. Then, looking at the naked state, one will recognize that though one's mind has no shape, color, or substance whatsoever, all the six sense perceptions naturally manifest continuously from its nature. Resting in that naked state is the sense of "The view is Longchen Rabjam."

Why should we utter this forceful, short, and sharp sound of PHAT to cut the waves of confusion? We are deceived by the lies of relative truth, and those lies can be cut by PHAT, since it is self-resounding wisdom. When we have recognized its nature, we will think, "Oh! This is what the uncontrived dharmata is like!" Phenomena arising from this nature—thoughts—are like the play of a child. The view of uncontrived dharmata is like the thinking of an old man: We think, "What is called 'confusion' is just this." It is resolved. This resolution is called the view. That is the first point of the three words striking the vital point.

To introduce the natural state of the view through the experience of meditation, one should not follow after thoughts of the past nor stimulate thoughts of the future, but rest directly in the present mind without altering it. Without worrying about whether one's thoughts are thoughts of faith, devotion, and compassion or passion, aggression, and ignorance, one should leave the mind in its natural flow (Tib. rangbap su shak).

Muddy water, if it is stirred up further, cannot become clear. If the water is left as it is, however, the dirt will settle and the water will be clear. In parallel fashion, it is said: "Uncontrived mind is fully awake; contrived mind is not fully awake." One should rest directly in the nature of mind without fabricating anything. As the Kagyupas say, "This meditator who rests simply (directly) without altering it (uncontrived)." When the mind rests directly and uncontrived, even though the essence of the natural state of mind cannot be recognized in the sense of your being able to say, "This is it!"—though it is free of such a reference point—as long as you do not get distracted as ordinary people do, you will be able to recognize the nature of the natural flow. If one rests uncontrived in that state of recognition, it will naturally become stronger, and the strength of deluded thoughts will inevitably diminish. Then, with faith and devotion to the root and lineage gurus, the natural state of mind will be realized. This is called recognizing one's nature.

What is this recognition of one's nature? The view that is within us has been introduced to us. It is not as though through the blessings of the guru the view

has been brought into us from somewhere else. It is not that we have received something we did not have before. Recognizing this gem that exists in us is like finding a hidden treasure that belongs to us under the floor of our own home. It will make us confident that our poverty has been overcome. Resting in that state of recognizing our nature summarizes the dzogchen view. So we should rest uncontrived in that state.

TWO

Meditation

THE VEHICLE OF CHARACTERISTICS is concerned with the cause of realization. Taking the cause of attaining the state of buddhahood as the path and expecting a result at some later time is called the vehicle of characteristics. In the secret-mantra vajrayana, which takes the result, or fruition, as the path, the result—all the phenomena of the kaya and jnana of the buddhas—is perfect from the very beginning within the intrinsic nature of the sugatagarbha. The secret-mantra vajrayana takes things as they are as the path. When we introduce all the teachings of the secret mantra, there is nothing that is not included within these two: the upaya of unchanging great bliss and prajna endowed with all the supreme aspects.

Between those, the vehicle that focuses on the upaya of the wisdom of great bliss, emphasizing taking the appearances of relative truth as the path while introducing the secret-mantra vajrayana path of abhisheka, samaya, accomplishment, activity, and liturgical practice, is the foundation of mahayoga.

Taking emptiness endowed with all the supreme aspects as the path is anuyoga. Emptiness endowed with all the supreme aspects primordially abides beyond speech, concepts, and expression. If emptiness is not realized through the upaya of bliss, it cannot be realized otherwise in the context of anuyoga. Therefore, through the syllable HAM melting at the mahasukha chakra at the crown of the head as the body, bliss as the speech, and nonthought as the mind, body, speech, and mind are brought to the path as vajra nature. This is the transmission of anuyoga, which is like the life-tree of the secret-mantra path.

Practicing mahayoga and anuyoga together—literally taking as the path the

meditation of the noble buddhas, which is beyond the sphere of mental effort—is the fruition of atiyoga. The Tibetan translation of *atiyoga* means “ultimate yoga.” Among all the yogas, the supreme one, the highest, is atiyoga. In atiyoga, the empty nature of mind as such is the dharmakaya, its inherent luminosity is the sambhogakaya, and its unceasing compassion is the nirmanakaya. Trekchö practice emphasizes primordially pure emptiness, while thögal practice emphasizes spontaneous presence. If we unify these two, the four kayas and five wisdoms will manifest.

Initially, however, it is very important to introduce the view of primordial purity, free from the very beginning. That is why we are emphasizing primordial purity. There are many ways to realize this primordial purity, such as the view that interrupts the naturally arising city [of samsara], the meditation on the self-liberation of samsara and nirvana, the action of the primordial freedom of peace and existence, and the result of the self-liberating three kayas.

When he was teaching primarily the view of primordial purity, Prahevajra assumed a body of light and gave the acharya Manjushrimitra a testament summarizing all the vital points of the key instructions concerning the primordial purity of dzogchen: recognizing one’s nature is the view, deciding on one thing is the meditation, and having confidence in liberation is the action. These constitute the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which is a marvelous way of attaining the sublime state of the three kayas easily.

In the key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, the view, which is introduced first by saying “The view is Longchen Rabjam,” is regarded as the object. The cognizing subject comes up in the second point explaining meditation: “The meditation is Khyentse Öser.” This is regarded as the subject.

What is *khyen*? Khyen is the unceasing knowledge aspect of wisdom. It is one’s own awareness, the intrinsic nature of primordially pure emptiness as it is. Realizing that is called possessing the essential nature of emptiness and compassion. Because the nature of emptiness is inseparable from compassion, when the nature of emptiness—the unceasing knowledge aspect—is realized, a great loving compassion naturally manifests without having to be sought. The key point here is that emptiness and compassion are indivisible in our basic nature. Even in the causal vehicle of characteristics, the mahayana, the understanding that the upaya of great compassion and the prajna of emptiness are indivisible is taught as the ultimate view. Throughout the nine yantras there is not one stage in which upaya and prajna are not distinguished. Realization of the nonconceptual nature of the view is known as the sphere of one’s self-cognizing wisdom. And this aspect of one’s self-cognizing wisdom is called the unceasing

knowledge aspect. In the special vocabulary of dzogchen, it is called the self-existing lamp of prajna. That is the unceasing knowledge aspect of wisdom.

This unceasing knowledge aspect of wisdom is of two sorts: knowledge of things as they are (Tib. chi tawa khyenpa) and knowledge of things as they appear (Tib. chi nyepa khyenpa). In knowledge of things as they are, emptiness is realized as it is. In knowledge of things as they appear, the causes, conditions, and results—whether simultaneous or not, whether deluded or not—of all phenomena of samsara, nirvana, and the path—from form up to omniscience—which arise from the self-expressive power of emptiness, are perfectly distinguished. When we say, “I pay homage to the omniscient one, the perfect buddha bhagavat,” the reference is to the wisdom of the two knowledges. This is because the qualities of the Buddha are nothing more than the two knowledges.

When we have that knowledge, we do not have to search elsewhere for great loving compassion. It is naturally there already. When the expressive power of knowledge has unfolded, it is like the sun shining on this world. One does not have to try to find sunbeams somewhere else; they naturally illuminate Jambudvipa. Though knowledge and love appear to be different, their nature, like that of fire and heat, is spontaneously present from the very beginning.

How is this indicated? When the omniscient vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa began practicing at Palri Tsechok Ling, the Palri Tsogyal tulku named him Pema Wangchen Khyentse Öser. During his three years of practice in the charnel ground of Samye Chimphu, omniscient Jigme Lingpa had three visions of the omniscient dharmaraja Longchen Rabjam, who gave him direct transmission. Through the vision of his form, Longchen Rabjam conferred the blessings of his body. By giving Jigme Lingpa a book that contained the *Seven Treasures* in a hidden way and asking Jigme Lingpa to elucidate it, Longchen Rabjam conferred upon him the blessings of his speech and gave him permission to compose commentaries. By mixing their minds inseparably, Longchen Rabjam conferred the blessings of his mind. That is how vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa was perfected by the symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas.

Based on this perfection conferred by the symbolic lineage, Jigme Lingpa composed the root text and commentary called *The Treasury of Qualities* (Tib. yönten dzö). This explains topics concerning the view, meditation, and action of the Old Translation School that were not thoroughly explained in the *Seven Treasures* or the *Three Cycles of Relaxation*. It takes the approach that all phenomena of the ground and path are one.

There are three texts that were widely famed in the snowy land of Tibet as the three chariots of the teaching of dzogchen: *Dakini's Heart Essence*, which Guru Rinpoche Padmakara gave to the dakini Yeshe Tsogyal in the dakini feast hall at

Shotö Tidro; *Vimalamitra's Heart Essence*, which contains the 190 key instructions on dzogchen given by pandita Vimalamitra chiefly to Neten Dangma Lhüngyal, Nyangben Tingdzin Sangpo, and the dharmaraja Trisong Detsen; and the *Profound Inner Essence* (Tib. zabmo yangtik), which distills the essence of the two “inner essence” texts¹ as well as the seventeen tantras and four profound volumes and was composed by the omniscient Longchen Rabjam through the special transmissions of pandita Vimalamitra and the acharya Padmakara and his consort. These are the three Nyingthiks.

When the great translator Vairochana went to India at the age of fifteen, he received direct transmission from the wisdom forms of the vidyadhara Shri Simha and the acharya Manjushrimitra. He received completely all the abhishekas, transmissions, and key instructions of the seventeen tantras. His mind was equal even to that of the great acharya Guru Rinpoche. It was due to the compassion of the great, praiseworthy translator Vairochana that the outer semde, the inner longde, and the secret men-ngag-de came to the snowy land of Tibet. All these teachings are summarized in a unified fashion in the commentary called the *Wisdom Guru* (Tib. yeshe lama). That is why it is part of the symbolic lineage of the vidyadharas.

What is the essential nature indicated by the great vidyadhara? Earlier we explained “The view is Longchen Rabjam”—recognizing one’s own nature. We also mentioned that in meditation one should decide on one thing. Now, if one does not have trust and a special confidence in deciding on one thing, one will not be able to do it. Deciding on one thing in dzogchen meditation is called Khyentse Öser. From the outer guru we receive the abhishekas, transmissions, and key instructions. Based on having been introduced to our wisdom mind, the ultimate view comes forth from within. The highest view of primordial purity, the self-manifesting impartial view of dzogchen, is realized. We will have the realization that samsara and nirvana are like the back and front of our hand. All deluded samsaric phenomena only exist because we do not investigate and analyze them. When we do investigate them, the lie of their vivid presence collapses. We do not need to look elsewhere for the nirvanic phenomena of kaya and jnana. They are complete in our own nature. As it is said: “The self-existing luminous youthful vase body is inseparable from the first buddha Khyentse Öser, i.e., resting in the heart essence.” That is the meditation of deciding on one point. Resting in that state of meditation is called the yoga of resting like a flowing river.

When the view of dzogchen has been completely realized, there is no longer any difference between meditation and postmeditation. All phenomena appear as the play of wisdom. Beginners like us interested in the supreme yana cannot

understand this yoga of resting like a flowing river. When it has been recognized, as Milarepa said:

When meditating on mahamudra,
Maintain it without fluctuation.

If sometimes we practice with diligence and at other times just take it easy, we will not be able to develop confidence in our meditation on the view. What must we do to develop this confidence? We must understand that day and night, throughout the entire dimension of our lives, there is no difference between the meditation experience and the postmeditation experience.

Initially we identify the fresh and naked state of uncontrived awareness through conditioned mindfulness. However, if we leave the awareness as it is, at some point innate mindfulness, a natural state of awareness, will arise without our having to manipulate it through a conditioned mindfulness. Through that innate mindfulness, the yoga of resting like a flowing river is maintained constantly, day and night, during deep sleep, in dreams—all the time. In order to recognize that, one should leave the mind uncontrived in the natural state. This unaltered stage of mind is free from the very beginning. This is the view of primordial purity. While one is maintaining that unaltered nature, lots of thought projections will arise. These thoughts might be positive, such as faith, devotion, and renunciation; or negative, such as passion, aggression, and ignorance. However, both these types of thoughts are projected from the same basis, the intrinsic nature of sugatagarbha. It is not that there is a bad place from which negative thoughts arise and a good place from which positive thoughts arise.

Where does the root of our confusion come from? The Buddha Bhagavat said that there are two ways of relating with thought projections in meditation: that of the dog and that of the lion. If a dog is hit by a stone, it does not check to see who threw the stone, but runs after the stone. In this way, it will be hit by many stones and never find out where they are coming from. When a lion is hit by a stone, it pays no heed to the stone, but looks and finds out who threw it. Because of that, the lion is only hit once.

So when thought projections appear and we follow along with them, many thoughts will appear like ripples on the surface of the water, and we will be carried away by them. That confusion is called the confusion of looking outside. Proceeding in that way, we cannot trace the source of our thoughts. Therefore, we should look within, like an actress looking in a mirror. Though there is a display of thoughts, if we trace them to their origin, we will find that they manifest from wisdom. When we have identified that wisdom, we will not be

carried away by thoughts. It is like when a tree is cut off at the root: its branches, leaves, and flowers dry up automatically.

Where is that wisdom? Though there may be many thoughts of attachment or aversion, their nature is empty. When we experience intense pleasure and feel so happy it is unbearable and so excited we cannot sleep, if we look at the nature of that happiness, we will see that it is empty. The wisdom of that emptiness is the nature of primordial purity. That is what we should look at. When we get very angry and think we want to kill our enemy even at the cost of our life, when our face turns red from unbearable anger and we think about getting hold of a weapon, if instead of indulging in this anger, we look at its nature, we will see that it is empty. Once we recognize this empty nature, it is inevitable that the anger will naturally dissolve, like ice melting into water.

Are the thought projections and the awareness the same? They are not the same, because projections move and awareness does not. Are they completely different? No, because whatever is projected from the awareness arises from the state of awareness. This can be compared to asking whether water and ice are the same. Are they the same? Ice is hard. People and horses can walk on it. Water is liquid and moist. If we try to walk on it, our legs get wet. It is not firm. Are ice and water different, then? One cannot say they are entirely different, because when ice melts it becomes water. Similarly, it is unacceptable to say that projections and awareness are the same. Projections move; self-cognizing awareness does not. But one cannot say they are different either, because the projections, or expressive power, of the awareness manifest from the awareness itself.

Relying on the vital point that they are not different and not letting the projections wander, if the mind then apprehends the natural face of awareness, the essence of the intrinsic nature will become manifest.

According to the causal vehicle of characteristics, when emotions arise, one should apply an antidote. When passion arises, one should meditate on ugliness. When ignorance arises, one should meditate on dependent origination. When anger arises, one should meditate on patience. What is to be abandoned and the antidote are like two armies meeting in battle. This is what is called regarding emotions as enemies. Regarding the emotions as negative and applying an antidote, one constantly struggles to conquer them.

In the bodhisattva yana, emotions are brought to the path and transformed into emptiness. If emotions occur, we definitely have attachment or aversion to the five sense objects, regarding them as good or bad. If we look to see if that attachment or aversion is in the outer object, the inner senses, or the consciousness in between, we will definitely come to understand that the

emotion by nature is without origin, location, or cessation. When that has become clear, the wisdom of emptiness is resolved. By resting in that state, the emotion will be liberated.

In the secret-mantra vajrayana, emotions are transmuted on the path. How so? In the foundation of mahayoga, it is like a skilled doctor transforming poison into medicine, which is called the supreme art of extracting the essences. In mahayoga, emotions are brought to the path by way of liberation through union. In the anuyoga of scriptures, emotions are transformed into bliss, luminosity, and the wisdom of nonthought. All the emotions are transformed into emptiness. Both the form and the nature of the emotions are transmuted into the state of dharmata. In dzogchen, when emotions arise, they should not be rejected and no antidote should be applied.

As you maintain effortless, natural mindfulness, relaxation will come automatically. By way of analogy, the surface of the ocean may be turbulent with many waves, but seven fathoms down it is completely still, like milk that has turned to curd. In the same way, no matter how turbulent the waves of thought projections become, once one determines that the nature of the thoughts is empty, it is inevitable that the power of thoughts will be naturally pacified. If one rests in that stage of tranquillity, there is no longer any need for an antidote for each emotion. Becoming accustomed to that state in which there is no longer any need for support is “the meditation is Khyentse Öser.”

In the dzogchen texts, one finds such phrases as “practice the yoga of space” and “the great meditation of no meditation.” What do these phrases mean? According to the other yantras, the object of meditation and the mind that meditates are two different things. According to dzogchen, what is to be meditated on and the meditator are of one taste. This is the meaning of “When the mind dwells in its own state, that is called seeing one’s mind.” When one sees that, sees what is present in oneself, how does one practice the yoga of space? When space is used as the object of meditation, since the characteristic of space is to be empty from the very beginning, there are no reference points such as visualizing A or HUM. There is nothing to be grasped.

The same is true in recognizing the intrinsic nature. When the primordially unchanging mother luminosity is present as the ground, if one has just a bit of understanding of path luminosity, as the experience of that path luminosity becomes more and more intense and stable, the ground luminosity can be identified.

At present, the ground luminosity is not entirely manifest in our mind. It is inconceivable wisdom, and if that complete realization of the Buddha were manifest in our mind, confusion would have been purified as groundless, like the

liberation of Samantabhadra with six special qualities.

In the causal vehicle of characteristics, however, in the path of unification, the appearance of heat is an indication of the realization of emptiness. It can be likened to rubbing two sticks together to produce a fire. From the heat produced by rubbing the sticks, a fire will be kindled. Similarly, emptiness must first be recognized through the samadhi in which heat arises. By way of contrast, in the meditation of resting in the inconceivable intrinsic nature, as was mentioned above, even when thoughts of passion and aggression arise, one should not follow these thoughts or try to stop them. One should leave them in the natural flow without any alteration. Even though thoughts arise, they are like the movement of waves on the ocean. They come from the ocean and dissolve into the ocean. Since the expressive power of thought arises from the state of dharmata, if it is left unaltered in the natural flow, when it dissolves, it dissolves into the state of dharmata. As it is said, "In the space between the incidental occurrences of thought, the wisdom of nonthought arises, and they are freed."

When the previous thought has passed and the next thought has not yet occurred, in between these two is the essence of the present naked awareness, the awareness of the first instant, which is called the naked dharmata. When mentally analyzing the nature of the thought, we find that previously there was no origin of the thought and no thought originating. We find that at present there is no location and nothing to locate. In the future there will be no destination and nothing to go to it.

If we examine whether this is so or not, analyzing in the manner of madhyamaka the nature of thoughts arising from the intrinsic nature of the mind, we can look at this morning's past thought, this evening's future thought, and the present thought. We find that a past thought and a present thought cannot be together. In order for them to meet, the past thought would have to be present or the present thought would have to be past. Since the past is already over and is not an actual thing, and the present thought can be recognized, there is absolutely no way for the two to meet.

In regard to the meeting of present and future thoughts, it is just as impossible for a future thought to have arisen as for there to be a horn on a rabbit, a flower in the sky, or a child of a barren woman. And, as the present thought has arisen in the mind, the characteristics of the present and future contradict each other. These two cannot meet. It might perhaps seem that they meet, but this is like making ourselves see two moons by looking at the moon in the sky and pressing on our eye with our finger. Though there is only one moon up there, when we press on our eye it seems as if there are two. If we do not investigate and analyze phenomena, we think they exist, just as we might think two moons exist.

Through attachment to this naive belief, the power of the past thought seems to connect it to the present thought, and the power of the present thought seems to connect it to the future thought. However, if we precisely analyze past, present, and future thoughts, we see that sixty split-second thoughts arise and cease in the time it takes to snap our fingers. It is said that sixty segments of a mushroom can be pierced with a needle in the time of a finger snap. Thoughts arise in our mind that quickly.

How can we realize this trick? If the mind is left to its natural flow without any alteration, the present thought will not stay very long. When the present thought occurs, if we think it should not occur and try to stop it, that will block the expressive power of awareness. When the expressive power of awareness is blocked, the natural flow of energy is obstructed, and this causes obstacles such as depression and so forth. So when the present thought first arises and we recognize it, we should rest in the natural flow of that recognition without any alteration. It is like ripples in water: as soon as they arise, they disappear without a trace, which is the characteristic of thoughts. There is absolutely nothing solid, true, or imperishable about a thought. If we watch as the present thought falls apart, at the point where the future thought has not yet arisen and the present thought has dissolved and become past, we will see the nature of mind.

What is the nature of mind like? It has no color, shape, or substance, no matter how much we may look for them. It is not semi-circular or circular or spherical. It is not male or female. It has no form, such as that of a horse, elephant, or mountain. It is radiant emptiness. If one mentally investigates that radiant emptiness without the grasping of thinking, "It is empty," it will be like someone who has achieved stability in resting in the intrinsic nature beyond meeting or parting. It is not as though one does not see forms with one's eyes or hear sounds with one's ears. One does, but the forms seen by the eyes and the sounds heard by the ears do not disturb one's inner samadhi. It is the same when a beginner looks at that state of emptiness with undistracted mind. One's eyes will see forms, one's ears will hear sounds, and one will feel all kinds of sensations. And though there will be attachment to beautiful things and aversion to ugly things, pleasure in pleasant sounds and displeasure in unpleasant sounds, excitement when happy thoughts occur and worry when unpleasant thoughts occur, when these reactions occur there will be no grasping. When there is no grasping, everything that arises has the radiant aspect of knowing everything and being aware of everything.

If we were practicing a worldly form of shamatha, we would close our eyes, hold our breath, and rein in our mind. However, in meditation on the intrinsic nature, the six sense consciousnesses do not have to be blocked. Just leaving

those consciousnesses as they are without following them is all right. Though one might try to distinguish the unceasing and vivid six sense consciousnesses from their empty nature, it cannot be done. Because their nature is emptiness, there will be a vivid awareness of the dharmata. Those consciousnesses are vivid because they have the knowledge aspect of knowing all and being aware of all. The nature of dharmata endowed with this knowledge aspect is called “mother luminosity present as the ground.” Here one sees a glimpse of its essence, which is primordial purity, and of its nature, which is spontaneous presence.

The Buddha Bhagavat said that even bodhisattvas approaching the end of the tenth bhumi could only see the buddha nature as through the eye of a needle. If bodhisattvas approaching the end of the tenth bhumi can only see that much of the buddha nature, how can we beginners see it at all?

The methods of the secret-mantra vajrayana are very profound, and the blessings of the guru are very great. If we have particular confidence in and devotion to our guru, when the guru’s blessings enter our minds, we cannot help but have some semblance of the experience of the intrinsic nature arise in our beings. By way of analogy, if one has seen a picture of the moon and knows what it looks like, when one sees the moon in the sky, there is no need to be told what it is again. One recognizes it. The fraction of the intrinsic nature we can experience now is like the picture of the moon. Even though it is only a glimpse, if we are asked if we have seen the intrinsic nature, we can say that we have. It is like a person who has only drunk one mouthful of the ocean: one can still say one has drunk from the ocean.

Such a glimpse is not arrived at by intellectual study, but through experience. When this glimpse is left without any alteration, it will become prolonged and more stable, and the power of thoughts will inevitably diminish. It is like hot and cold. When the body is warmed by fire, feelings of cold subside automatically. When the body feels cold, feelings of heat subside automatically.

Otherwise, if seeing the intrinsic nature did not diminish the power of thoughts automatically, we would need an antidote for each thought. We would have to think like this: “There is a thought. I shouldn’t let myself be carried away by it. It has no origin and no cessation. It is empty.” Thinking like that is trying to *make* thoughts empty; it is straying into superimposing the concept of emptiness. There is no need to do so: thoughts are empty from the very beginning. Once we have recognized the source of this primordial emptiness, when we have even a fraction of the experience of that recognition, that is the mixing of mother and child luminosity. The nature of the primordially unchanging mother luminosity, which abides as the ground, is spontaneously present in oneself. It is like a great ocean. Though spontaneously present, it is

obscured by the expressive power of thoughts.

When we meditate now, we think of meditation as akin to looking far away into deep space some time in the distant future, and we imagine that ordinary people like us are at present so tossed about by thoughts that there is no meditation whatsoever, as is said in the traditions of other vehicles. But it is not like that. If we maintain the natural flow of the intrinsic nature without being controlled by its expressive power—the projecting and dissolving of thoughts—we cannot help but have a glimpse of the mother luminosity present as the ground. Once we experience and recognize that nature, we cannot help but develop confidence in that awareness, sugatagarbha. Once that confidence unfolds in our being, it becomes increasingly clear and stable.

When a child meets its mother—this is even true of animals—the child is able to recognize its mother even among thousands of others, because mother and child have come together as the result of a karmic connection from previous lives. In the same way, if we experience a glimpse of the child luminosity, it is inevitable that the mother luminosity present as the ground will manifest and that the two will mix equally in one taste. By way of analogy, this can be compared to all the rivers flowing throughout different places in Jambudvīpa: in the end they come together in the great ocean. When the experience of recognition is mixed with the mother luminosity present as the ground, that is called the meeting of mother and child luminosity. And this meeting of mother and child is called “the mind’s essence.” It is also known as the introduction to the dissolving of mind. That introduction to the dissolving of mind, the nature that is encountered when the past thought has dissolved and before the next thought has had time to occur, is the wisdom of nonthought.

Once we have had a glimpse of the wisdom of nonthought, confidence arises. And as the sages of the past said, “When confidence is born from within, the one that has given rise to it and the object are gone.” That is very profound. What does it mean? When we are certain that this is the dharmata, the buddha nature, when we are confident that we have had a glimpse of recognition and hold on to that glimpse without letting go, the experience will arise again and again. As that experience becomes prolonged and more stable, the previous confidence will disappear without any basis. It is like lighting a fire by rubbing two pieces of wood together: once the fire has started, those two pieces of wood will be consumed. In just that way, the previous confidence vanishes naturally. When that previous confidence has disappeared, a greater confidence will unfold in your being, which is a sign that your confidence has become deeper.

Meditating is like having to travel to many distant countries. If we have not seen lots of easy roads, difficult roads, oceans, mountains, rocks, and so forth,

that is a sign we have not traveled very far. If we rest in the nature of the mind without altering it, sometimes we have good experiences. We think we have recognized mind's nature and would like to remain in that state for a long time. We think that even if we were deprived of food and clothing, we would be able to meditate. But sometimes we have bad experiences. Lots of emotions disturb us, like waves on the ocean. We think that though we have meditated for many years, our practice still does not have as much as a sesame seed's essence to it, and we are just incapable of practicing properly.

When tranquillity, bliss, and clarity occur, we should not regard them as anything special. When we are drowsy or distracted, we should not feel beaten or weary. We should remain without feeling high or low. If we rest in the nature of dharmata, without feeling high or low, we will gradually grow accustomed to it. As a result of that, thought projections will no longer be able to shake that experience of mind.

It is like an old man watching a child at play: whether the child plays good games or bad games, the old man just sees it as play, without any reference point. He does not consider it good play or bad play. Similarly, whether happy thoughts or unhappy thoughts arise in the mind, we should recognize them to be of the nature of the natural flow of dharmata and leave them in that natural flow. Through confidence in the natural flow, we will not be moved. No matter how many externally caused thoughts arise, we will not be moved. When that happens, it is called being carefree and at ease. It is called carefree because we are without the narrow-mindedness of thinking "I can't meditate" or "I am so drowsy and distracted."

We should continually look at that nature, as it is said:

Whether eating or sleeping, going or staying,
Whatever one does, there is nothing more than this
Even in the teachings of the buddhas of the three times.

By maintaining that state of recognition, we will arrive at certainty. Then the expressive power of thought will be unable to stop it.

To begin with, while practicing the preliminaries, we should arouse renunciation, weariness with samsara, faith, and devotion again and again. At first, devotion and renunciation have to be contrived. We should continue meditating until sincere devotion and renunciation have arisen in our being. But at the point of meditating on the main practice of dzogchen, it is of no use to think that we should have thoughts of faith, devotion, compassion, and so forth—signs of the mahayana path—and try to produce them. Why not? Cultivating

such things arouses the expressive power of awareness and obscures the ground nature. When thoughts and emotions occur, we should not stop them, thinking that thoughts should not occur and that we should be without attachment and aversion while meditating. Positive and negative thoughts manifest as virtue and evil, but their nature is the same—the expressive power of dharmata. If that expressive power of intrinsic awareness is left in its natural flow, it will have no more strength, and the basis out of which the expressive power manifests will be very strong.

If we create a lot of movement in the expressive power, the ground is lost. Though the ground remains unaltered, it is obscured by confusion at present. Therefore, when yogins rest directly and without any alteration within the self-recognition of the nature of thoughts, they will know the ground. It will become increasingly easier to identify that experience of the innate and uncontrived ground. We may think that we are presently unable to remain in the yoga of resting like a flowing river, but this is not something that takes a long time to achieve. It takes many months or years to manifest signs of accomplishment when meditating on the pranas and nadis or on a yidam. But if a highly realized guru introduces us to the naked experience of dzogchen, we can connect with it right where we are, right in the moment.

However, we do not believe in this introduction. Just as the eye does not see its eyelash because it is so near, we do not believe how easy it is to recognize the intrinsic nature. When, through the guru's key instructions, we do believe it, that is deciding on one thing. Once this is stabilized, we will understand the intrinsic nature of awareness and have no more doubt.

In general, the so-called mind, due to the six sense consciousnesses, spontaneously has past, present, and future thoughts. But their nature is empty and their quality is radiant. Though their nature is empty, attachment to emptiness makes it small emptiness. Though their quality is radiant, attachment to radiance makes it small radiance. Once the nature of the awareness is recognized as it is, the confidence will arise that the earlier recognition of emptiness is like something that can be peeled away. The vastness of the radiant quality depends on whether there is grasping or not. That is why it is said, "When there is grasping, there is no view."

If nongrasping is something produced by the mind, it is artificial nongrasping. But when the very nature of the dharmata manifests out of itself, we are no longer excited by experiences. For example, if a dzogchen yogin resting in the intrinsic nature has a vision of the thousand buddhas telling him or her that they will attain buddhahood in such and such a pure land, that yogin will not be especially happy. It is not that there is a lack of devotion toward those buddhas,

but that since all the buddhas are a display of one's own awareness and not outside of it, once one has recognized awareness, the wisdom that is present as the ground of the three kayas, there is nothing wondrous about having an outer vision of the thousand buddhas giving a prophecy.

If one is without grasping, as it is said, "Even if surrounded by a hundred murderers, one will have no fear." But we have not been able to understand this through actual experience. How can we understand this through experience? Through the preliminary mind training, we look for the origin, location, and destination of the mind. Once the mind has been introduced as without origin, without location, and without cessation, we cannot help but attain the state of the exhaustion of the dharmata.

Now the guru gives us experiential instruction on meditation, and some students do the practice merely thinking that thoughts are without origin and without cessation. No one in this way actually develops confidence from within. Thinking that thoughts neither originate, cease, nor stay is just an understanding of what is written in the books about no origin, no cessation, and no location. Those students have not yet realized no origin, no cessation, and no location through experience. The realization of no origin, no cessation, and no location through experience was pointed to by Aryadeva when he said, "Even though some doubt might arise in one's mind, wondering if all phenomena really are empty, one cannot help but completely let go of the confusion of dualistic existence."

Once one has found emptiness, it is like the summertime, when the earth becomes warm and all the orchards and forests start to grow naturally without effort. When the nature of awareness has been identified, there is no longer any difference between meditation and the postmeditation experience, and so it is said:

Not having meditated and not having been separated from it,
One is inseparable from the nature of no meditation.

Does the ultimate dzogchen meditation have a view of fabricating, such as trying to overcome drowsiness and distraction during shamatha and vipashyana practice? It does not. The absence of such fabrication is the meaning of "not having meditated." "Not having been separated from it" means that nonmeditation is not like falling asleep. Maintaining the yoga of a flowing river with effortless mindfulness settled in its natural state, we will not have as much as a sesame seed of distraction. Once one no longer becomes distracted, it is as the Bhagavat, the perfect Buddha, said:

When one has become unbiased in regard to meditation and postmeditation, one is like an elephant:
When the elephant goes, it rests in the natural state.
When it stays, it rests in the natural state.

As there is not the slightest wavering from that natural state, there is nothing to meditate on and no meditation. “Not having been separated from it” means remaining in that nature of nothing to meditate on and no meditation. What one is not separate from is the view of the intrinsic nature. That is called the great meditation that is no meditation. When one rests in the ultimate unfabricated nature, the dharmata, there is nothing special to meditate on and no meditation. Subject and object are mixed as one taste, which is meditation on what is called the luminous depths of great primordial purity. When one is beyond meeting with or parting from that state, there is no more certainty about something to be meditated on and someone meditating. This is from the perspective of the ultimate nature of the way things are. But in regard to the way things appear, if beginners do not cut the root of basic confusion, just talking about not having meditated and not having been separated from it is of no help.

In order to cut the root of basic confusion, one should rest in the natural state without altering it. Once one is resting in the genuine natural state, one should neither follow one’s thoughts nor search for an antidote for them. If the intrinsic nature is left in its natural state, as it is said, “When water is not stirred, it will become clear.” Just as dirty water, if not stirred, will become clear, if the nature of mind is left unaltered, as it is, deluded thoughts will automatically clear up. The natural flow of the intrinsic nature will come automatically.

That is why this meditation is also called oceanlike natural contemplation. Though many phenomena such as mountains, rocks, fruit trees, forests, galaxies, and stars reflect in the ocean, their appearance does not make the ocean any more crowded; and the absence of their reflection does not make it any more spacious. Whether they appear or not does not benefit or harm the ocean. In the same way, when one rests in the state of vaguely recognizing the natural flow of the intrinsic nature, even if appearances of the six senses arise within that state of recognition, since they are not followed up by thoughts of attachment and aversion, there is no harm. As the six sense consciousnesses arise without cessation, there is no benefit. Since in that sense it is like an ocean, this meditation is also called oceanlike natural contemplation.

Unlike practice with the body such as prostrations and practice with speech such as reciting mantras, in which every day there is some result that can be

counted in numbers, just resting in the natural flow of the intrinsic nature produces no apparent result. Though nothing may be perceived, the mind has to continue its effort for a long time. When diligence of body, speech, and mind are compared, diligence of mind is the most difficult. To have diligence of mind, one has to control one's mind. In order to do that, since natural mindfulness like a flowing river does not occur at present, we must artificially put the mind in its natural state through conditioned mindfulness. If we sustain that for a long time, we will automatically come to know the nature of the mind. Remaining in that recognition, the mind will spontaneously become more clear.

When consciousness is left unaltered in its natural state, for beginners the radiant view of spacelike primordial purity spoken of in the dzogchen texts will not manifest right away. Though it is not manifest, awareness is there. It is in the sphere of deluded thoughts, like gold in the sand. If one does not follow deluded thoughts but remains properly in the natural flow without thoughts arising and tends one's mindfulness like a herdsman, awareness is right there.

If there are many clouds in the sky and a strong wind clears them away, the sky will be radiant blue. In the same way, by leaving the mind in the uncontrived natural flow and not following thoughts, we rest at ease in the nature of dharmata. Because we are relaxed, we will gradually be able to distinguish mind from awareness. When we can distinguish those two, we will be able to recognize the nature of awareness and rest in that state of recognition without altering anything.

Sometimes we will recognize the nature of awareness and sometimes not. When we recognize the nature of awareness, we think to ourselves, "I had such a good meditation!" and we are happy. When we have not been able to identify the nature of awareness, we think that we do not know how to meditate and feel terrible. That is not the way to proceed. Even though we may not recognize the nature of awareness, the innate unaltered mind is there. Deciding on that nature and leaving it as it is, we should rest without altering anything.

Even though we may actually recognize the nature of awareness, we should not hold on to that mindfulness tightly, thinking, "I have indeed recognized it." If we do hold on to it tightly, it will be like when a thread is twisted too taut: one cannot sew with it, because it knots up. In the same way, if one is too tense, one's mindfulness will be obscured. If mindfulness is not grasped too tightly but left in the natural flow, sometimes it will be clear and sometimes not. But we should not get caught up in whether it is clear or not. If genuine mindfulness is left without being altered, gradually we will come to know, through our own experience, "This is awareness, and this is ignorance; this is mind, and this is wisdom."

In the view of dzogchen, there are what are called “decision” (Tib. lada) and “differentiation” (Tib. shen-je). “Decision” means resting in the natural state without any doubts about whether “my mind is right” or “my mind is not right.” Directly deciding without any artificial concepts about earlier or later, one should decide on the unaltered intrinsic nature, thinking, “This is it.” With confidence like that, it will naturally be right. That is called “decision.”

“Differentiation” is when, in that state, awareness manifests and mind does not. It is good to differentiate mind and awareness through experience. But matters will only be obscured by reading many commentaries and then trying to fabricate experience on that basis, wondering when such a high, skylike view of primordial purity is going to manifest and what it will be like. As it is said, “The altered mind is not buddahood.” One should not try to cultivate anything at all. Reading books can give us a good comprehension of view, meditation, and action, but when resting in meditation, we should not add concepts based on our book learning. If one puts patches on new clothes, they look old and not very nice. In the same way, if we alter the mind a lot by trying to add concepts, it is like patching new cloth. The natural state of mind will be obscured.

In brief, we should leave the nature of mind unaltered. As it is said, “A great meditator leaves everything as it is, unaltered.” If we leave things unaltered, the intrinsic nature of mind will naturally manifest. When it manifests and is recognized through experience, we do not need to make a deliberate effort. It will not take long for it to manifest of its own accord.

When that unaltered nature becomes stronger, even though thoughts may arise, they will be merely like drawings on water. Thoughts will arise, but the mind will not be moved. When there is no movement, it is called “mountainlike natural contemplation.” Imagine a huge mountain in the center of a great plain, very firm and stable; wind and water cannot move it. In the same way, when we are introduced to the view of the intrinsic nature, if we remain in the confidence, then confused thoughts of the three times will definitely not be able to cause any agitation. Maintaining that view is called meditation.

Though view and meditation can be distinguished as distinct aspects, their nature is not different. There is absolutely no meditation other than the view. Meditation in this case does not mean meditating with a deliberate reference point. This is nonconceptual meditation. Nonconceptual meditation is without mind-made effort.

The nature of the natural flow of meditation should be recognized. When we rest in meditation within that and meditation has found its natural place, like a horse tied by a halter, it cannot go very far but will stay where it is. Thus, if one recognizes the intrinsic nature from which the expressive power arises, the

expressive power will neither benefit nor harm. It will be self-arising and self-liberating. When the child luminosity experienced on the path recognizes the mother luminosity present as the ground and the two meet, there will be no mistake or confusion whatsoever about whether they have recognized each other or not. There will also be no mistake or confusion about identifying the natural flow of the intrinsic nature and maintaining it. The four places to get lost and the four places to err mentioned in the teachings are all due to attachment to the expressive power of thought—expectations about emptiness, expectations about bliss, feeling happy when they arise and disappointed when they do not. Resting at ease in the unaltered state, which is the intrinsic nature, is meditation.

While maintaining the yoga of resting like a flowing river, in the beginning when resting in that effortless state for a long time, we will become drowsy and distracted and will not have any stability in our samadhi. In order to avoid that, it is helpful to train in many short sessions. If the mind is trained gradually in short sessions, it will become good and clear. When the mind has gained stability in the nature of dharmata, it becomes unchanging. At present, the characteristic of the mind's manifestation is that it always changes. When one lets the mind remain unaltered in its natural flow, if the thought waves begin to toss about and one becomes very agitated, as we said above when discussing recognizing one's nature, one should focus the awareness one-pointedly and forcefully shout the sound PHAT. The turbulent thought waves will be dispersed. If they are not dispersed by our shouting it just once, we should shout it again, and that will disperse them.

This can be compared to threshing grain. When the grain is beaten, the husk comes off and the actual grain is revealed. As we look at that nature which has been revealed by the dispersal of the thought waves—the naked intrinsic nature—and maintain that clarity without altering it, the natural flow will manifest from within. Since beginners will be unable to sustain meditation without effort, when looking at that arising they should again and again arouse renunciation of samsara, trust in karma and its result and, in particular, sincere devotion to the guru who introduced their mind to them as the intrinsic nature. If one can supplicate the guru, the power of his or her blessing will be like that of a forest fire fanned by a windstorm.

It is difficult to meditate on the effortless nature in places where there is a lot of distraction. Practicing in solitary places and giving up the eight worldly concerns, we should meditate one-pointedly. In that way, we will come to understand our own nature.

The three important stages in the practice of dzogchen are recognizing, perfecting one's skill, and gaining stability. In recognizing, as we said above,

one distinguishes mind from awareness and recognizes the nature of awareness. In addition, one should perfect one's skill in that recognition. If one just recognizes the awareness without perfecting the skill, the awareness cannot work as an antidote for one's deluded thoughts. A young prince cannot rule his kingdom until he has grown up, so just recognizing him will not be of much help. When the skill is perfected, the mind will no longer be drowsy and distracted, and it can be controlled. If one practices with the right effort, the result of that effort will come about. When that occurs, one will be able to maintain the practice correctly.

Practicing the dharma is a little difficult in the beginning. But beginning with hardship, one ends with happiness. Why is the beginning difficult? Hearing, reflecting, and meditating to develop experience and realization require effort. Without effort, nothing can be accomplished. Therefore, at the beginning we have to be very diligent and undergo hardship. Later, things will be easier. One's practice will become more stable, one's confidence will progress, and mindfulness and awareness will come naturally. If one does not cultivate anything now, one will not even develop renunciation toward samsara or trust in karma and its result.

When arousing devotion toward one's guru, one should trust that the guru is the dharmakaya. Seeing the guru as the dharmakaya means regarding the guru as the inconceivable dharmadhatu wisdom. The form of the guru is the relative aspect. Since the dharmakaya pervades the whole of samsara and nirvana, whenever one remembers the guru, the guru is present in one's mind, beyond meeting or parting.

If one recognizes this presence, that will help. If one lacks the devotion that has the conviction that one's guru is the Buddha, that will not help. Only through devotion can one remove all obstacles and strengthen one's practice. When effortless devotion develops in one's being, just through remembering the guru's name or seeing the guru in one's dreams, ordinary thoughts will naturally stop. Merely thinking about one's guru with inner confidence will advance one's practice.

A fruit may have a lot of skin, but if we peel away the layers one by one, we will gradually get to the inner essence. One cannot get to the inner essence by peeling off only the first layer. In the same way, one does not come to the inner essence of the mind right away. But by working through the range of changing circumstances, such as gain and loss, good and bad situations, the mind will become stable. In a yogin's meditation, many experiences, such as bliss, clarity, and nonthought, will arise. If one becomes attached to any of these experiences, one only gets more caught up in samsara. But if one is not attached to

experience, one will be able to attain stability.

If dirty water is boiled a long time, one will not get sick from drinking it. It will taste good and sweet, and one will be able to gain sustenance from drinking it. Thus sometimes in a yogin's meditation, through favorable circumstances, faith, devotion, and compassion may arise; sometimes, through favorable circumstances, lust, hatred, and stupidity may arise; sometimes one may be drowsy, and sometimes excited. Under all these circumstances one should make a great effort to arouse devotion toward one's guru. When continuous mindfulness of the natural flow of the intrinsic nature is maintained and completely integrated in the mind, the natural flow of the intrinsic nature will truly manifest.

We may speak of the yogin's meditation being destroyed. This means that the shell of experience has been stripped off and the yogin can see the essence of the intrinsic nature directly. If one cannot strip away the shell of experience, one cannot recognize the essential nature as it is. To strip away the shell, it is important to be without hope or fear.

If one fabricates mental reference points such as "My meditation is empty; this must be emptiness," or "This is clarity, it must be clarity," the nature of dharmata will be obscured. One should not try to fabricate anything, whether the natural flow appears or not. If one just decides on one thing and leaves it like that, it will come.

It is difficult to have natural, effortless mindfulness, and one should be very diligent for a long time, maintaining the unaltered intrinsic nature by resting in the state that is like a flowing river. As Milarepa said:

When I go, that is brought to the path.

The six senses are self-liberated as I go.

When I stay, I stay at rest without altering anything.

When I drink, I drink the water of mindfulness and awareness.

I am drinking constantly.

Without that kind of an approach, we might give up meditation on the effortless nature of the mind, thinking it might be better to work on the development stage; and when we cannot complete the development stage, we might think it would be better to work on the completion stage. It is not that those teachings are not profound, but if we try to master the techniques of many different instructions, we will not gain stability in even one of them. However, if we decide on one thing, both the development and completion stages will be accomplished. Through deciding on one thing, every practice will be

accomplished.

In the beginning, through tightening the mind a little bit by constantly maintaining unaltered mindfulness, we will learn the nature of mindfulness. The omniscient Longchen Rabjam mentioned six types of mindfulness in the *Treasury of Key Instructions* (Tib. men-ngag dzö). When at the beginning ordinary people keep watch on whether they are distracted or not, that is conditioned mindfulness. When, through constantly practicing conditioned mindfulness, awareness manifests again and again and we become accustomed to conditioned mindfulness, the intrinsic state of mindfulness will come naturally.

What is the intrinsic state of mindfulness? No matter what occurs—whether attachment and aversion, experiences of bliss, clarity, and nonthought, or nothing at all, and we are just relaxed—we watch the nature of mind. The nature of our awareness has a liberating aspect, and when that liberating aspect has been recognized, we can no longer be deceived by the expressive power of thought.

If we do not recognize this liberating aspect, we will be tricked by the expressive power of thought. If we try to make discriminations without having recognized this liberating aspect, we are just fabricating things. With a fabricating mind, there is absolutely no way to attain buddhahood. If we recognize the liberating aspect, decide on that one thing, and rest in that nature, all expressive power will dissolve into the ground luminosity of the intrinsic nature.

Display (Tib. rölpa) is the outer object, which causes attachment and hatred; expressive power is the energy that is present as soon as it arises. These two are gross and subtle, respectively. As it is said:

If one does not distinguish the expressive power and what manifests
from it,
How can one know the nature of awakened mind?

The distinction between the expressive power and what manifests from it is very subtle and very difficult to realize. Knowing its nature, ascertaining that the source of the expressive power is the intrinsic nature, and maintaining that state without altering it—that is the vital point of “The meditation is Khyentse Öser.” There is no need to look for any meditation other than this.

As was said above, deciding on the view and maintaining the meditation, we will recognize, perfect the skill, and gain stability. After gaining stability, everything is liberated by that universal antidote, the unaltered state of the

intrinsic nature. Maintaining that again and again, there will be no difference between meditation and postmeditation, good and bad, subtle and gross. It is very important to rest in that state without altering anything.

1. These are the *Dakini Inner Essence* (Tib. khandro yangtik), which is Longchenpa's elaboration of the *Dakini Heart Essence*; and the *Guru Inner Essence* (Tib. lama yangtik), which is Longchenpa's elaboration of *Vimalamitra's Heart Essence*.

THREE

Action

THE KEY INSTRUCTIONS on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*, which is from the dzogchen tradition, were given by the vidyadhara Prahevajra to the acharya Manjushrimitra as a testament that condenses the entire meaning of primordial purity, trekchö, into the crucial points of view, meditation, and action. We have gone through the view, which is recognizing one's nature, and through the meditation, which is deciding on one point. Now I shall explain the action, which is gaining confidence in liberation.

What is it that indicates gaining confidence in liberation? "The action is Gyalwe Nyugu" indicates that. To summarize the essence of dzogchen: when the ultimate thought of enlightenment (Skt. bodhichitta) is brought to the path, the source of delusion collapses. The ultimate thought of enlightenment, the wisdom of the meditation of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, when taught through words and syllables, is dzogchen. When someone has realized the view of dzogchen and has perfected the meditation on that basis, then the precious thought of enlightenment develops in their mind, and at that point whatever actions of body, speech, and mind are performed, there is not even one that will not be for the benefit of sentient beings.

This can be compared to adding medicine to water. If one adds medicine to water, all of the water turns into medicine. If one were to add poison to the water, all of it would turn to poison. Whoever drinks the medicinal water or washes with it will derive only benefit from it. It cannot cause trouble at all. In the same way, once we have experienced the ultimate thought of enlightenment, we will spontaneously benefit beings without having to try to do so. Thus, since

the omniscient vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa perfected the self-manifesting, impartial view of dzogchen, the teaching of the *Longchen Nyingthik* that came forth from the expressive power of his awareness brings incomparable benefit to beings. This is because of the power of his aspiration to maintain the nonconceptual ultimate thought of enlightenment in solitary places.

Though this great omniscient teacher had an inconceivable number of disciples, as numerous as the stars in the sky or the trees on the earth, his extraordinary heart sons were the four fearless (Tib. jigme) ones from Kham, one of which was Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu, who was an emanation of Avalokiteshvara. He received the abhishekas, transmissions, key instructions, and explanations of the dzogchen *Heart Essence of the Great Expanse* from the omniscient Jigme Lingpa.

When he was about to go back to his homeland, the great omniscient one said: “It seems that in your uncivilized country, where people only eat meat and drink blood and do nothing but rob and steal, you will have some disciples. You should benefit them through the *Heart Essence of Luminosity* (Tib. ösel nyingthik) teachings.”

Saying that, he entrusted them to him. Due to that, of all the omniscient one’s disciples, Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu became the best known. His benefit of the teachings and beings was inconceivable and, in particular, he transmitted his realization to his own two extraordinary disciples, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Patrul Chökyi Wangpo, both of whom spread the study and practice of the teachings. To this day, among all the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism there is none that is not linked to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

This is all due to the power of the ultimate thought of enlightenment. According to the key instructions of dzogchen, to develop the potential of the ultimate thought of enlightenment in one’s being, one needs to gain confidence in liberation. Without confidence in the view and meditation, even if one has the intention to help others, one will be fettered by distraction, stuck in the sphere of the eight worldly concerns, and enslaved by passion and aggression. If one has perfected the view and meditation of dzogchen, even if outwardly one does not benefit beings in an elaborate way, by giving teachings to a great number of people and so forth, through the self-existing compassion that resides in the depths of one’s heart, one cannot help but naturally guide all beings on the path of liberation through seeing, hearing, remembering, and feeling. Therefore, one should gain confidence in the view and meditation.

What is this confidence in the view and meditation like? One should be able to naturally liberate all deluded samsaric perceptions. The liberating vital point comes down to view and meditation. When we gain ultimate confidence in the

view and meditation, all karmic and emotional confusion is liberated. This is analogous to clouds in the sky. No matter how dense the clouds are, when a strong wind arises, the sky will become absolutely clear. Clouds are impermanent; the sky is always there. When clouds gather, the sky does not disappear, and when there are no clouds, the sky does not actually become any more brilliant. We should know that vital point of liberation.

In all dzogchen instructions, there are three points: decision (Tib. lada), differentiation (Tib. shen-je), and self-liberation (Tib. rangdröl). “Decision” means deciding on the view, and “differentiation” means gaining confidence in the meditation that distinguishes mind and awareness. Relying on the power of confidence in the view and meditation is like knowing how to turn on an engine: one can automatically accomplish any task, no matter how difficult. It is very important to know this secret way to liberate.

In regard to liberation, in the ordinary vehicles, that which is to be rejected and its antidote are opposed. What is to be rejected is regarded as the enemy. The antidote, which is something other than that, something opposed to that, is what liberates. In dzogchen, however, among the vital points of the key instructions is that of the self-liberation of what is to be rejected. What is self-liberation? That which is to be rejected is incidental; it is not at all present in the original basis. What is to be rejected is karma and kleshas. If karma and kleshas were present in the original basis, its nature would not be primordially pure. At present, being deluded, we hold on to what does not exist, which is like an illusion or mirage—just a magic trick. When those who have realized the intrinsic nature see it, unlike deluded beings of the three worlds, they are not confused by it at all.

The reason for calling delusion incidental is that delusion appears, though there is no basis for it. When the natural state of the basis, which is devoid of delusion, is realized, delusion is without a basis or root. Though when there are clouds in the sky, it is not clear, and when there are no clouds, it is very bright, the sky itself is unchanging. Similarly, in regard to the ground, path, and fruition: respectively, the obscurations of karma and kleshas are seen to be present; they are seen as a mixture, sometimes present and sometimes not; but the ultimate nature is not bound by obscurations. The source of not being bound comes down to the view of emptiness. If one can get a grip on the view of emptiness, it is inevitable that the basis of delusion will be liberated.

Up to atiyoga, that which is to be rejected is regarded as the enemy, and the antidote to it is regarded as a friend. When two things are in battle and fighting, this can only produce more fighting. In that way, when what is to be rejected and the antidote to it are opposed to one another, the root of the obscurations

constituting what is to be rejected cannot be overcome. On the other hand, if one realizes the nature of dharmata, the natural state that is devoid of anything to be rejected, one sees that the nature of what is to be rejected is also emptiness.

If there were no karma and kleshas to give up, the Buddha could not have taught the 84,000 dharmas. As everyone would have been awakened and would have realized the dharmakaya, there would have been no reason to turn the wheel of dharma. There would also have been no way to do so. The gradual teaching the Buddha provided by turning the wheel of dharma is there thanks to what is to be rejected. Because of that, there is something to work with. What is to be rejected should not be regarded as an enemy but as a friend. Once we have captured the life force of what is to be rejected from within, it is inevitable that the basis of delusion will be purified. That is because the nature of the karma and kleshas to be given up is emptiness. Therefore we should know the vital point of emptiness.

What is the vital point of emptiness? As was discussed above, through recognizing our nature and deciding on one thing, we will come to know the vital point of what is to be rejected. Regarding karmic and emotional obscurations in one's being, if we search for an antidote elsewhere, taking the approach that obscurations are to be dealt with in a manner that resembles smashing a vase with a hammer, of course it will be difficult. But when the obscuration to be rejected arises, if along with it we arouse confidence in self-manifesting awareness, it is impossible for the basis of what is to be rejected not to be liberated.

Lacking confidence in such liberation, even if we were to remain in a mountain retreat for many months or years and practice diligently in body and speech, we would be completely unable to uproot the poisonous tree of emotions within. If we are unable to uproot that tree, it will not be possible to get out of the three worlds of samsara. If we know and grow accustomed to the vital point of liberation and gain confidence in the intrinsic nature, whether we are going or staying—no matter what we are doing—our emotions will be liberated as they occur. Though outwardly you may not be famous, inwardly it will come spontaneously. Even though passion and aggression arise, if we recognize that their nature is emptiness and rest in that emptiness, there will be no passion and aggression toward the object at all.

When we teach beginners the basic nature of things, as described above, it may often seem to them nothing but a nihilistic view. So how should we deal with this vital point of liberation now? Having maintained the experience of the unaltered natural state of mind for a long time and having distinguished mind from awareness, as discussed above, we will have the experience of “This must

be dzogchen, the view of the intrinsic nature,” which is like meeting someone we know.

Due to the impurity of incidental obscurations of the mind—what is to be rejected—when things we like happen, we become attached to them: for example, a thought of intense joy arising from obtaining high rank, experiencing worldly entertainment, or meeting our parents, relatives, husband or wife, or others who are close to us whom we have not seen for a long time. As soon as that thought of joy arises, we become attached to it. If we reject that, thinking we should not have attachment and that all conditioned existence is impermanent, we will wind up with a fight between that which is to be rejected and the antidote to it. That will not help. But if we look at the nature of that intense joy without altering it, we will arrive at the wisdom of emptiness endowed with all the supreme aspects. The reason we will arrive there is that even though we become attached to this intense joy and feel ecstatic, its nature is nothing other than emptiness.

To use another example, if we see an enemy, someone we do not like, we will become angry when we look at that enemy. We may become so angry that we feel like eating his or her heart raw, and, since the specific characteristic of anger is to kill or fight, if we pursue that anger, we would accumulate that karma. Nevertheless, if we look at the nature of anger as soon as it arises, we will see that it is emptiness.

From among the bliss, luminosity, and nonthought that arise in the mind, because we develop intense passion for an object we want, the nonconceptual wisdom of bliss-emptiness is present right there. If we recognize this nonconceptual wisdom of bliss-emptiness, our mind cannot help but relax, and it will not be fettered by passion and intense joy. We will not be tense at all. If we recognize the nature of aggression as the mirrorlike wisdom of luminosity and emptiness, since aggression is empty, we will not be controlled by it and will not think that we must subdue or kill our opponent even at the cost of our life. All that will relax and fall apart.

Though the sky may be filled with clouds, as many clouds as there are can vanish in a few minutes, leaving a clear sky. Thus though we may think that feelings of passion and aggression are to be rejected, there is no need to do so. If we recognize the very nature of passion and aggression, that itself is the antidote. If we recognize the nature of that antidote, the awareness of bliss-emptiness and luminosity-emptiness, and that awareness is left naked, we see that there has never been any passion or aggression in the nature of the awareness. There is no basis to give rise to passion or aggression. That is called the state of dharmata, where mind is groundless and without any expressive power. This is what the

omniscient vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa was talking about when, in relation to an incident in the later part of his life, which appears in his biography, he said, “This samsaric mind is beyond meeting or parting from the three doors of liberation.”

Since it is like space, the vital point of liberating that nature is the antidote to attachment and anger. Since it is right there with the klesha, what is to be rejected, there is no need for some antidote. When what is to be rejected is liberated by itself, by what is to be rejected, that is called self-liberation. Confidence in liberation means that through confidence in the view and meditation, when what is to be rejected occurs, we will observe its nature and know that it is inseparable, beyond meeting or parting, from the intrinsic nature of emptiness. Through that emptiness, what is to be rejected is spontaneously liberated. When it is liberated, no karma is produced.

Someone who achieves the realization of emptiness does not produce karma. Because of their confidence in the view of dharmata, great gurus such as Tilopa in no way incurred the fault of taking life when killing fish. Tilopa clearly demonstrated that to his disciple Naropa when he subsequently snapped his fingers and brought the fish back to life. Since the object to be killed and the killing mind have both been purified in the one great intrinsic nature of primordial purity, there is absolutely no vestige of an ordinary thought of aggression. Once there is no longer any ordinary thought of aggression, the karma of something rejected is not accumulated. If that karma is not accumulated, the confused, conditioned karmic three realms of samsara become groundless and without any expressive power.

Therefore, if thoughts of attachment or aggression come up while we are practicing, just as soon as they arise, we should remember the view of deciding on one thing, which we were introduced to earlier on. If we remember our experience of the view, passion and aggression cannot help but be spontaneously liberated. When we develop anger toward an enemy and are determined not to give up until we kill our foe—even if we have reached the point where we are holding a weapon in our hand—if we recognize the luminosity-emptiness wisdom of awareness in that state of anger, that intense anger toward our enemy will be interrupted and relaxed. Once it is relaxed, we will not carry out that act of hatred.

This can be compared to the traceless flight of a bird. When a bird flies through the sky, one cannot point to any trace of where it has been. In the same way, when a thought of passion or aggression occurs, if we have the confidence of self-liberation, it will disappear without leaving a trace and will be utterly incapable of producing any karma.

For example, if one sows a seed in a field and does not water it, even if it is left there for many years, no sprout will grow. In the same way, if we do not produce a karmic reaction, nothing will happen, since the three realms of samsara are an illusion produced by karma, phenomena generated by karma. If we recognize that nature, we will see that we have been totally deluded in countless lives up to this point. If we realize the view of shunyata, confusion is instantly destroyed without difficulty. Confusion is self-liberated.

Otherwise, if we think that the quality of confusion is like being covered by a cloth and that it is to be removed through purification, we will have to be accumulating merit and purifying obscurations for a long time. But if we have confidence in the view, confusion will inevitably be self-liberated.

The lower yantras, those below dzogchen, do not realize that when thoughts of passion and aggression occur, the antidote comes from the expressive power of those thoughts. They maintain that the Buddha did not teach that. That is why, in those lower yantras, not knowing that the antidote for what is to be rejected is already there, one looks for it somewhere else. In dzogchen, when thoughts of passion and aggression occur in one's mind, if one looks at their nature and knows the vital point of the great self-liberation in the dharmata, the basis of all delusion is inevitably liberated.

In the special terminology of dzogchen, thoughts, karma, and emotions are said to be incidental. Merely recognizing anger as the wisdom of luminosity-emptiness and passion as the wisdom of bliss-emptiness is not enough. That recognition has to be continually sustained. If we do not sustain it, we cannot get at the root of our confusion. It will be like an illness that recurs again and again. When we recognize it and maintain that state of recognition, the view of the intrinsic nature becomes stronger. Like washing a cloth and getting it spotlessly clean, it will be primordially free and pure.

First we should recognize what is to be rejected. Upon recognizing it, we should know that the wisdom of luminosity-emptiness and the wisdom of bliss-emptiness are in between occurrences of what is to be rejected. Through the power of resting in the state of both luminosity-emptiness and bliss-emptiness, what is to be rejected will be naturally pacified and liberated. Once it has been naturally pacified and liberated, when one rests in that state that has been experienced previously, what is to be rejected will not be able to increase. In that way, all thought will be spontaneously liberated.

Once liberated, we will see that confusion, other than being labeled "confusion," is nothing whatsoever. As it is said:

This great ignorance concept

Is what makes us fall into the ocean of samsara.

Thus, ignorance's magic trick is thought. In the beginning we should look at the mind and understand that mind is without origin, cessation, or location. Why should we do that? Because we will automatically be liberated.

Mahamudra begins with pointing out the mind, which brings an understanding of awareness. Though that is understood, in the mahamudra tradition one must meditate diligently on the three points of stillness, movement, and awareness for a long time. If one is able to do that, one will inevitably recognize the nature of self-liberating awareness. In dzogchen, we rely on the view of differentiating mind and awareness. If one can maintain recognition of that for a long time, one will inevitably arrive at the basis.

As far as the terminology is concerned, in mahamudra this is called bringing mind to the path, and in dzogchen it is called bringing wisdom to the path. However, if the source of the wisdom in regard to bringing wisdom to the path is not pointed out, there can be no liberation. If there can be no liberation, it is not the correct view of dzogchen.

In summary, in regard to liberation, what is to be rejected and the antidote to it do not have to be opposed. What is to be rejected is liberated by itself. Passion is liberated by itself. Aggression is liberated by itself. Ignorance is liberated by itself. In the beginning that self-liberation will be somewhat fabricated. But if one really gains confidence in the view of the intrinsic nature, the mind does not need to fabricate anything. It is liberated from the very beginning.

At present, we are confused about phenomena. Though they are liberated, we cannot recognize this, and so we hold on to them. It like someone with jaundice who sees a white conch as yellow. It is very important to recognize this.

To achieve this liberation, in the beginning when a deluded thought comes up, we should recognize it. When that recognition is sealed with the view that has been pointed out, the thought will be liberated as groundless and rootless. When it is liberated, there should be no trace left behind. If there is a trace, karma will again be produced. If there is no trace left, that is the sign that the thought has been liberated.

In some teachings it is said that all one needs to do is recognize thoughts. But merely recognizing them is not enough. That recognition has to be liberated. Of course, for a beginner it is enough just to recognize thoughts. Lacking that recognition, if one only looks outward, when positive and negative thoughts arise, one will not recognize them. But to go further, if that recognition is sealed with the view of the intrinsic nature, the thoughts will vanish. But even though they have vanished, if one is not able to be free of any trace left behind by those

thoughts, karma will be produced. If there is no trace left, the thought is liberated.

As for how this liberation happens, pandita Vimalamitra spoke of three ways. In the beginning, the liberation of thoughts by recognizing them is like meeting an old friend. In the middle, the self-liberation of thoughts by themselves is like the freeing of a knot in a snake. In the end, the liberation of thoughts as they occur, with neither harm nor benefit, is like a thief entering an empty house.

When we recognize a thought, that recognition alone will not liberate it. It is not that we should not recognize it; it must be recognized. But then when recognizing it, without grasping at the thought, the basis from which it arises—the unaltered natural state of mind pointed out by our teacher—should also be recognized. When we look at that recognition, the strength of the thought is broken, and the recognition of the intrinsic nature becomes stronger. Then no reaction can be produced. Once we cease producing a reaction, since thoughts in themselves are self-arising and self-liberating, we will find the source of that liberation. Being taken in by a thought is like being afraid of a man wearing a lion's mask. But if we know that the nature of thoughts is emptiness, like realizing that it is only a man wearing a mask, the strength of the thought will be broken and we will naturally relax.

We are not wandering in the three worlds of samsara just through one thought alone. There is a continuous stream of thoughts. Take for example thoughts of harming an enemy. First we think that our enemy has harmed us in such and such a way or rebuked us with such and such words. Then we think that we should retaliate in a corresponding way. Then we think about doing this. Then we actually start the harmful action. Just the first thought of harming our enemy cannot accumulate karma. But when many thoughts follow one after another and are not liberated, just liberating one thought will not help. All the following thoughts must also be liberated.

If the first thought is liberated, it is inevitable that the subsequent ones will be liberated as well. So first we should recognize the thought, and upon recognizing it, it should be liberated without a trace.

Recall meeting an old friend, someone we know well, whom we have stayed with for a long time, a person that we would recognize among thousands of other people the moment we saw their face. Not only would we recognize such a person, but we would walk with them and spend time with them. In the same way, first the thought is recognized, and then the nature of recognition should be liberated in the view of the dharmata that was pointed out by our guru. When it has been liberated, it is free of basis and root, without leaving a trace. And just as we are not satisfied by merely seeing the face of old friends, but as soon as we

recognize them we also speak with them, ask them how things are, relax with them, and thus feel good about having met them, so, in the same way, along with recognition there must be simultaneous liberation.

In the middle, the self-liberation of thoughts is like the knot in a snake freeing itself. First the thought is recognized. As that recognition takes place, the view introduced to us by our teacher becomes stronger while the thought becomes weaker. Afterward, if thoughts leave a trace, though a little bit of effort is needed, beginners must recognize that. Becoming accustomed to this liberation by recognition can be compared to the freeing of a snake knot. If a knot is tied using the body of a snake, it does not have to be untied by someone. The snake's body itself is the antidote and can untie itself.

When recognition of the thought is sealed with the view of the intrinsic nature, there is no need for what is to be rejected and the antidote to struggle with each other. What is to be rejected is itself the antidote and will liberate itself. Like the knot in the snake untying by itself, it is not necessary to look for some other antidote. The antidote is liberated by the antidote itself. What is to be rejected is liberated by itself.

When we become accustomed to that, first we recognize the thought. Then, without trying to perfect the skill of recognition, it should be sealed with the view of the intrinsic nature. We do not need to make any more effort, thinking, "It has been sealed and liberated without a trace." When we seal the thought as soon as it is recognized with the view of the intrinsic nature, the force of the thought is broken, and it naturally relaxes. The present thought has no more power, and the next thought cannot yet be thought. When the next thought is not thought, there will be no trace left behind. And if there is no trace left behind, it is impossible for karma to be accumulated.

When we gain confidence in the view of the intrinsic nature without distraction or confusion, the arising of a deluded thought is like a thief entering an empty house. The house has nothing to lose, and the thief has nothing to gain. Whether the thief comes into the house or not, there is neither benefit nor harm. In the same way, thoughts will arise like reflections; but the moment they occur, the view of the intrinsic nature is right there. Since the view of the intrinsic nature is stronger than the thought, the thought will automatically be groundless and rootless. When that happens, there is also no trace left behind. If we can maintain the continuity of that state in which no trace is left, that is what is known as liberation. It is like a drawing made on the surface of water: there is no need to find something to erase it. Before the end of the drawing has been completed, the beginning has already disappeared.

If it is not like that, we are not yet able to liberate. We should look at our

minds and see if thoughts of passion and aggression occur. When they occur, we should see whether they are sealed with the view we have experienced. If they are sealed, we should see whether they are liberated without leaving a trace, without producing a reaction.

We should investigate our minds in detail. What is called “thought” can be either gross or subtle. When a gross thought arises from within and we look at its face, we recognize whether we feel happy or angry. That is a gross thought. In addition to gross thoughts, many thoughts will unfold like drawings on the surface of water; they are neither beneficial nor harmful. As they unfold, we may think that our mind is not distracted, that there is no trace left behind, and that we have recognized the thoughts; but the subtle thoughts occur in a hidden fashion, and karma is accumulated. It is like an ant’s nest underneath us—lots of thoughts come up from underneath, and we cannot help but become confused. If we cannot liberate the undercurrent, many thoughts will amass together and produce a reaction. But if we know how to avoid producing a reaction, even if thoughts occur, there is neither benefit nor harm. That is how we can avoid accumulating karma through thoughts.

The characteristic of thoughts is that the way they manifest is uncertain. They do appear. Thoughts of attachment and aversion will definitely appear. If we use those thoughts as an antidote, as soon as they appear they will be liberated. If we seal thoughts with the view of the intrinsic nature, they will inevitably be liberated.

However, if we do not thoroughly understand the view of the intrinsic nature but get lost in the sidetrack of thinking that we do, there will be a lot of unnoticed thought activity and, though we may think that our mind is not distracted and that there are no traces of thoughts left behind, actually we are automatically accumulating a lot of karma. It is not the body and speech that accumulate karma, but the mind. Unless there really is no trace left behind, the mind will not stop producing reactions.

Once we are no longer producing reactions, thoughts are like designs drawn on water, which disappear as they are drawn. If it is like that, though the thought occurs, there is neither benefit nor harm.

The occurrence of thoughts happens the same way for yogins and worldly people. Even a yogin who has actually realized the ultimate nature will not be completely free of thoughts. Someone who had no thoughts at all would be inanimate, like a rock or a piece of wood. Even though yogins have thoughts, they remain unaffected. But worldly people get caught in their thoughts. That is how they get confused. That is what is meant when it is said that the yogin’s mind surpasses the worldly mind. Even though a yogin has thoughts, they are

like many images reflecting on the ocean. The reflections of trees, forests, rocks, mountains, stars, and planets do not change the nature of the ocean. The ocean does not have to expand or shrink in order to reflect these images. In the same way, though a lot of thoughts, both positive and negative, manifest in the yogin's mind, they do not leave a trace and are recognized and liberated. There is no confusion.

When an ordinary person has thoughts, it is like erecting houses and planting trees in a small space—every house and tree makes the space more crowded, and less of it is available for use. When ordinary people have many thoughts, they are carried away by them. Enslaved by their thoughts, they have lots of troubles and are very busy in this life. In future lives, they will also experience lots of happiness and suffering. Therefore, it is said that if one cannot liberate thoughts, one should cut the trace of the habitual patterns of past thoughts, not stimulate thoughts of the future, and not let the present awareness wander free. Once thoughts are liberated, all this is not necessary. If thoughts do not affect us, liberation or nonliberation is utterly not at issue. What is called “liberation” is when a thought leaves no trace and so no positive or negative karma is accumulated.

If we do not know this vital point of liberation and cannot apply the method of liberation, even if the mind is without thoughts and remains pitch black for a long time, that is not the dzogchen view. If the mind remains in a dull state of nonthought for a long time, we might remain for an entire intermediate eon in the realm of the formless gods. Even so, this is only like passing out from being drunk—it will not sever the root of existence. Later, when the power of this shamatha is exhausted, we will again be deluded in the three realms of samsara. This is because we are not able to liberate our thoughts.

If thoughts are not liberated, we cannot cut the root of delusion. It is like being unable to cut the root of a poisonous tree. When a yogin has attained liberation, whether the mind is still or not it is liberated. This is conviction in self-liberation. This liberation needs no further antidotes. That which is to be rejected is already self-liberated. If one knows the crucial point of self-liberation, that is how thoughts are liberated.

The key instructions of dzogchen mention four ways of liberation: primordial liberation, naked liberation, self-liberation, and liberation upon occurrence. In all four of these ways of liberation, we must recognize that thoughts arise from the state of dharmata. If that recognition is then sealed with the view of the intrinsic nature, all the key points of the way of liberation are complete right there. But if we merely maintain the still mind of shamatha, we are like the gods of the higher realms, who are unable to eradicate the conflicting emotions.

Within both shamatha and vipashyana meditation there are many distractions. When mind remains still without moving, it is called shamatha, or tranquillity. When the nature of one's awareness is recognized in that state, it is tranquillity, but not the tranquillity in which thoughts do not occur. Though thoughts occur, if the nature of awareness is not obscured, it is still tranquillity. When thoughts occur and awareness is not lost, tranquillity is automatically present. If the nature of awareness is as if held in the palm of the hand, thought occurrence will neither benefit nor harm, and there will be absolutely no grasping at the experience of tranquillity. That is called the view without grasping. It is referred to in the saying, "If there is grasping, that is not the view." That grasping should be destroyed from within.

With regard to the nature of mind: bliss, luminosity, and nonthought exist in our deluded mind now. When the nature of awareness has been understood, they exist there too. Though the terms we use are the same in both cases, there is a difference in meaning. The bliss, luminosity, and nonthought in the realization of awareness are superior. Though bliss, luminosity, and nonthought may be experienced by the mind, without the vital point of liberation, that is not the dzogchen view. When awareness recognizes bliss, luminosity, and nonthought, the vital point of liberation is there. In this bliss, luminosity, and nonthought, bliss is liberated as it is, and luminosity is also liberated as it is.

Liberation while resting in the state of nonthought is the essence of the natural state of awareness. Once you hold the essence of the natural state of awareness in the palm of your hand, in that recognition of naked awareness it is impossible for thoughts not to be liberated. It is like when two countries are at war. When the cause of the war, the person who started it, has been captured by the other country, the war will end. In the same way, when the crucial point of the self-liberating nature of awareness, self-liberating within the intrinsic nature of mind, is captured, mind can no longer be moved by confusion. It is liberated. That liberation is not something new. Rather, it is of the nature of the great primordial liberation, free from the very beginning. For someone who has the technique of liberation, whatever thoughts arise are the display of wisdom. In this regard, it is said that all phenomena are the display of wisdom.

Once a yogin has understood the nature of that great wisdom, even though he may not be visualizing his body as the deity, no matter what he does or say, his body is the deity. This is due to his confidence in the view of the dharmata, which is the binding force of the unchanging view during the development stage. Even though he may not recite lots of mantras, mind dwelling in the intrinsic nature is the ultimate of all mantras, inexpressible wisdom. When that wisdom is recognized, the power of recitation is complete.

Someone who has attained direct realization of the intrinsic nature has tremendous power. When the Indian mahasiddhas performed miracles, such as burning down a whole forest just by showing the threatening mudra, this was not due to the power of the mudra but to that of the inner view of the intrinsic nature. When one has realized all phenomena as emptiness through the inner view, one has mastered the ability to transform substance into nothingness and nothingness into substance, as needed. Without confidence in the inner view, it will be difficult to make substantial phenomena nonexistent or vice versa. For example, if we wish to destroy a house, we generally have to do a lot of work using weapons or tools. But if we have confidence in the view of dharmata, then meditation on deities, recitation of mantras, the power of destroying mantras, and the force of miracles will come spontaneously. No other tools will be necessary.

This is like a field that is having a good crop: one need not make any special effort for the sheaves; they will come along naturally with the grain. In the same way, if we have well understood the view of the intrinsic nature, sugatagarbha, the ocean of unconditioned phenomena will be spontaneously accomplished, faith and devotion will arise, and we will see our teacher as the Buddha. Due to the power of that, we will be able to attain all the supreme and ordinary siddhis. Guru Rinpoche and the vidyadhara Shri Simha, for instance, gained mastery over the expressive power of awareness and perfected the inner view of dharmata. For them the whole of samsara and nirvana became a display of the intrinsic nature. That display can be whatever one wants it to be. Sentient beings can be transformed into buddhas; impurity can be transformed into purity.

When the buddha qualities are explained in the causal vehicle of characteristics, it is said that if bodhisattvas who have attained the ten powers want to remain, they can do so for as many eons as they like without aging. If they do not want to remain, they can pass away immediately. When one has command of the inner samadhi, that is called having command of the ten powers. This has nothing to do with a transmission of outer powers. As one maintains that nature over and over again, the view of the dharmata is free, and all confusion is purified as groundless. That is condensing a hundred crucial points into one.

Once one has gained confidence in the view of dharmata in that way, buddha qualities will be spontaneously present without effort. When the sun shines, it is not necessary to do something extra to make the rays shine as well.

For a yogin who has confidence in the view of the dharmata or a bodhisattva who has attained the first bhumi through the path of the causal vehicle of characteristics—someone who has directly realized the view of emptiness—if on

his right side there is a person venerating him and making pleasing offerings of brocade clothing and so forth, and on his left side there is an enemy who is attacking him and cutting his flesh to pieces, he will not feel attachment to one nor aversion to the other, but will treat them both equally. He can do this because he has attained confidence in the view of dharmata.

In the Jataka tales it is told that when the kind Bhagavat was the sage Kshantivadin he did not feel any suffering when all his limbs were cut off. Eventually, even his head was to be cut off. In general, someone who was going to have their head cut off would become angry, but not Kshantivadin. Instead, he made the aspiration, “Though now you have cut off all my limbs, in the future, when I attain perfect buddhahood, may I cut off all your obscurations of karma and klesha.” No anger arose in him in the beginning. None arose in the middle. None arose in the end. In the language of dzogchen, we would say that he was able to liberate and, because of his aspiration, the one harming him became his disciple. As it is said:

With whoever harms us we should make a positive connection.
I take refuge in that source of happiness.

Whoever relates with a person who has actually realized the view of dharmata will become their disciple. Whether they venerate that yogin with faith and devotion or make a negative connection by beating or killing the yogin, in the future they will all become the yogin’s disciples without the slightest distinction. This is because the yogin has no concept whatsoever of benefit or harm. Having realized the view of emptiness, which is like space, yogins have no aversion to those who harm them and no attachment to those who benefit them.

In a number of sutras or tantras, it is explained that the view of equanimity is extremely profound. According to the causal vehicle of characteristics, though the ultimate view of equanimity arises for a bodhisattva on the eighth bhumi through personal experience, even one at that level cannot manifest, develop, and perfect it.

Now in the secret-mantra vajrayana path, the view of the mahayoga yana is discussed in terms of the inseparability of purity-equanimity and truth. Purity is equanimity, and equanimity is the absolute truth. When explaining the dharma of dzogchen, it is called the dharma beyond positive and negative and cause and effect. When it is seen that positive and negative are equal in being emptiness, the view of equanimity has been understood. That is the true view. When we have perfected it, then what is called liberation does not involve a liberator and something that is to be newly liberated. That is confidence in the intrinsic nature.

Having attained such confidence in the view of inner equanimity, which is known as gaining confidence in liberation, whatever we do with body and speech is sealed with that view. If sandal-wood or musk has been put in a box, even when they have been removed, the box will be permeated with their strong odor. In the same way, when body, speech, and mind are sealed with the view of equanimity, whatever we do with body, speech, and mind is the display of wisdom, which is free of delusion. Therefore, that ultimate, primordially pure natural state, the great primordial purity liberated from the very beginning, is known as gaining confidence in liberation.

SUMMARY: INSEPARABILITY OF VIEW, MEDITATION, AND ACTION

We have been looking at the vital points of view, meditation, and action. At the time of teaching, view, meditation, and action are presented as three things, but in essence they are one. When the view is perfected, meditation and action will also naturally be perfected. When meditation is perfected, the view and action will manifest spontaneously. In the ordinary sutras and tantras, the view—the object to be known—is understood by the knowing mind. In that approach, one needs to make a lot of effort in understanding quotations, logic, and key instructions. The dzogchen view, which is present in us from the very beginning, can be introduced to us by a master who possesses the blessings of the mind lineage. When a rich parent gives a child his inheritance, the child will recognize the wealth as his own. In the same way, the view that has been introduced to us is something we have ourselves, not something from outside. Meditation is resting in the nature of that view; there is no meditation other than that view.

According to the language of the ordinary yantras, it sounds as if the view is understood through inference, and meditation is actual experience. But it does not have to be like that. The view must be actually realized, and meditation is not inference. It is resting in the intrinsic nature. Meditation does not involve the analysis of what is meditated upon and the one meditating on it, nor of drowsiness and excitement, distraction and confusion. It is free from an object of meditation and meditating. That is the great meditation of no meditation. Once we have gained confidence in the view and meditation, though they are indeed something we explicitly practice during practice sessions, in postmeditation we should also apply the view and meditation that we have practiced during the sessions. Practice in postmeditation should not be something different.

To say more about the inseparability of view, meditation, and action: In the

beginning, the view is introduced, the view of the nondual nature of primordial purity and spontaneous accomplishment. When maintaining that through meditation, if the view is regarded as the object and meditation as the subject, then omniscient wisdom and loving compassion will naturally come from the expressive power of primordial purity and spontaneous accomplishment. That expressive power is not something separate from the view. If one has confidence in the view of primordial purity, then knowledge will come naturally. And once one has confidence in the view of knowledge, no additional meditation on loving compassion is needed. It will come spontaneously.

Knowledge and compassion are not two different things, because the expressive power of knowledge is reflected as compassion, and the source of compassion is knowledge. The knowledge we are talking about is not just conventional knowledge, but actual knowledge of the nature of dharmata.

When the buddhas comprehend the nature of dharmata, the 84,000 dharmas are expressed from that intrinsic nature. When the nature of dharmata is realized and the dharmas are expressed, the wisdom of the buddhas, madhyamaka, the view, is reflected from that expressive power. When one understands the view of dharmata, it is not necessary to hear and reflect again. As it comes from within, one does not need to train in it again. It will naturally manifest in the expanse of knowledge, like a river rising during the monsoon rains. It does not manifest just for the sake of skill and fame. It inevitably benefits the teaching and beings. That is what is called spontaneous compassion.

The Buddha knows that all sentient beings are deluded, and though he does not have any fixed concept of taking on this suffering of beings—conceptual sadness would be an example of this—his compassion naturally manifests wherever the violent karma and defilements of sentient beings are erupting. This happens without any specific focusing on his part. It happens naturally, just as all rivers flow into the ocean and not somewhere else. When these qualities of knowledge, compassion, and power develop, bodhisattva activity will be spontaneously complete.

What is bodhisattva activity? Accomplishing the benefit of beings in an unsurpassed way without the slightest concept of benefit for oneself. When one has actually realized the view of the intrinsic nature, there is absolutely no holding on to the distinction of self and other. Any sense of possessiveness related to oneself falls away. Through great compassion toward others, oneself and others become equal. There is absolutely no difference.

As an analogy, think of the mountains, rocks, trees, forests, and so on—all the things that take form on the earth: the earth does not foster good things and reject bad things. It treats them all equally. In the same way, bodhisattva activity

pervades everywhere, and it is impossible for this pervasive quality to be in vain. It is like during the monsoon rains, when plants even grow from cracks in rocks, and inevitably trees and forests will fill the rocks and mountains and naturally break through them. The natural effect of bodhisattva activity can be compared to this.

When view, meditation, and action are taught, they have to be explained separately. When the view is taught—that the intrinsic nature is like space—one might think that dzogchen does not have the view, meditation, and action referred to in the other vehicles. If we teach just the view of emptiness to adherents of the gradual path, they will be inclined to think that the view is that of a blank emptiness. For that reason, view, meditation, and action are described from many different perspectives. Ati dzogchen does not denigrate or deny the gradual vehicles. Ultimately, the understanding of all the gradual vehicles boils down to the ati dzogchen view. The view, meditation, and action of other vehicles are guides to dzogchen.

By way of analogy, if you want to travel to an eastern country, all the roads to the east will lead there. Similarly, the view, meditation, and action of all the nine yantras are ways to reach the dzogchen view. They do not contradict dzogchen. If one actually realizes the dzogchen view, one will not give up the other eight vehicles, because the qualities of all nine vehicles are naturally present in the view of dzogchen. Whatever the quality of the vehicle—for example, in the shravaka yana, trying to achieve liberation for oneself; or in the bodhisattva yana, realizing that the two obscurations are veiling the dharmata and achieving liberation for the sake of others—all lead to the realization of dzogchen.

Though view, meditation, and action take many forms, all are of one taste. Realizing that view of one taste is like putting a single bridge across a hundred rivers. When one has perfected dzogchen, all the qualities of the view, meditation, and action of all nine yantras are fulfilled and complete. Someone who has actually realized dzogchen can explain all the stages of the nine yantras. One will naturally have the ability to know all the crucial points of the entire progression of the nine vehicles.

In Tibet there were eight important schools known as the eight chariots of the practice lineage. All had abhishekas, commentaries, and key instructions. All these different views lead to the ultimate pointing out, the view of dzogchen, atiyoga. The pointing out of the ultimate, the fourth abhisheka, is considered the ultimate of all empowerments. There are ten categories of subject matter in tantra: the view of suchness, determinate conduct, mandala array, graded levels of abhisheka, samaya that is not to be transgressed, display of enlightened activity, fulfillment of aspiration, offerings that bring fulfillment of the goal,

unwavering contemplation, and mantra recitation. But if one gains confidence in the view of dharmata, all these will be manifest within that. They will all be present and do not have to be looked for elsewhere. Therefore, even though the words of the instructions that we have been discussing are few, they contain all the essential points.

What these few words teach is dzogchen's view of primordial purity. Even if one were to hear and contemplate all the 84,000 dharmas, one would find that ultimately there is nothing that needs to be introduced beyond the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*. Even if one were to compare these three words to the teachings of a hundred learned teachers and a thousand siddhas, one would find that there is nothing they can teach beyond this. When we have understood the meaning of this teaching, which condenses all the crucial points into one and cannot be excelled by anything else, we will find that, as it says in the secret-mantra vajrayana, "This is the advice for attaining buddhahood in one lifetime."

Omniscient Longchen Rabjam understood the entire meaning of the three divisions and nine spaces of dzogchen and became inseparable from Samantabhadra. If we were actually to meet Longchen Rabjam and receive teachings from him, he could not teach us anything beyond the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point*. The vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa, Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu, and all the vidyadharas and gurus of the three lineages could not possibly teach us anything beyond this instruction.

There are many detailed teachings to guide us in this view, such as those related to the preparatory practice and the main practice. They are all steps leading to this profound view. When one practices in accord with these instructions, which are the essence of the 84,000 dharmas, even if one only has a glimpse of the view through one's own experience, one's emotions and attachment to this life will naturally be liberated.

In this degenerate age, when people's life span is short, their intelligence is dull, and their exertion is minimal, encountering such extraordinary teaching, which enables one to attain liberation in one lifetime, is like finding lion's milk. All the previous lineage teachers down to me have not only expounded the words but have also had the actual experience of this dzogchen view. If one were to hold a medicinal root in the palm of one's hand, one would be able to see clearly its size, shape, structure, and color. In the same way, the lineage masters gained confidence through their own experience and taught from that realization.

Patrul Rinpoche's key instructions on the *Three Words That Strike the Vital Point* is brief in words but profound in meaning. This explanation I have given corresponds with what I have received and what I have understood. If you practice accordingly, you cannot help but be liberated. It will not be enough,

however, just to practice for one or two days. In such a short time, we cannot break through our confusion. Even though you cannot spend your whole life continuously practicing in solitary retreat, please do as much practice as you can every day. As it is said, “A collection of drops can become an ocean.” Since the teaching becomes more and more profound through continuous practice, confusion will naturally be purified, and all good qualities will spontaneously unfold. Those are the key instructions of the gurus of the three lineages.

These instructions should not be openly discussed or given to the public without careful consideration. Considering this difficult time and our short life span, I have spoken these profound words for the sake of those with the right karma and fortune. I have given these teachings with the motivation that beings in this degenerate age who are interested in such a practice might be able to dispel the confusion of samsara. If it is practiced properly, it will definitely be of benefit. As it is beneficial, if we begin to develop some experience in our being, we will understand the importance of this teaching and know why I spoke of it as including all the crucial points. There is a saying that as a sign of knowledge, we are tamed and, as a sign of having practiced, we have no conflicting emotions. The bonds of conflicting emotions will be cut and, through the guru’s kindness, we will recognize all the important instructions.

The dharma is something we have to become accustomed to repeatedly. Merely hearing the sound of the dharma can close the gates to the three lower realms, but just that will not bring liberation. We should hear the dharma again and again. As Repa Shiwa Ö said:

Even one word of teaching can lead to buddhahood in one lifetime.
Training again and again is the basis of virtuous action.
Studying many books is the cause of arrogance.
Just receiving one word of pith instruction from a realized guru is the
basis of enlightenment.

Through one word of instruction, liberation can be attained. Attaining liberation through one word, we will understand the meaning of the dharma. The Buddha Shakyamuni accumulated merit for three measureless eons, attained enlightenment, and turned the wheel of the dharma solely for the sake of sentient beings. If we understand that vital point, the vision of the Buddha will be fulfilled and the benefit of sentient beings will be accomplished. It is necessary to hear the teachings and reflect on them for a long time with great exertion. Without exertion, it is impossible to develop qualities in our being.

If we make an effort toward the dharma, we will realize its profound

importance more and more. Otherwise, we will just think, “Oh, that is the dharma,” and not gain any confidence in it. But if we continue making an effort for a long time, our confidence will be strong. Just to receive one verse of dharma, a bodhisattva abiding on the bhumis would arouse the courage to cross the three worlds, even if they were engulfed in flames. When we have understood its importance, we will be able to give up our body, life, and happiness for the sake of the dharma. Seeing them to be of no more value than a mustard seed, we will think, “I can get them at any time, so I can let them go,” which is a sign of confidence in the dharma. It is very important to keep practicing until we develop special confidence in the view and meditation. The reason it is so important I have explained according to what I know. If each of you will take the time to practice properly, you will realize the primordial purity of trekchö, the view of dzogchen.

The Special Teaching of Khepa Shri Gyalpo

THREE WORDS THAT STRIKE THE VITAL POINT

Homage to the guru.

The view is Longchen Rabjam (Infinite Great Expanse).
The meditation is Khyentse Öser (Light Rays of Knowledge and Love).
The action is Gyalwey Nyugu (Son of the Victorious Ones).
For the one who practices in this way,
There is no doubt about enlightenment in one lifetime.
But even if not, there is still happiness—a la la.

The view, Longchen Rabjam, is as follows:
To hit the vital point with the three lines,
First, let your mind rest loosely.
Without projecting, without concentrating—without thoughts.
While relaxed and remaining evenly in that state
Suddenly exclaim a mind-shattering PHAT.
Forceful, short and sharp—emaho!
Nothing whatsoever—totally disengaged.
Disengaged but utterly open.
A total openness which is indescribable.
Recognize this as the dharmakaya awareness.
To recognize your nature, that is the first vital point.

After this, whether you are thinking or still,
Whether you are angry or attached, happy or sad,
At all times and on all occasions

Acknowledge the recognized dharmakaya
And let the child luminosity unite with the already known mother.
Rest in the state of inexpressible awareness.
Destroy again and again stillness, bliss, clarity, and thinking.
Let the syllable of knowledge and means suddenly strike down.
No difference between meditation and postmeditation.
No division between sessions and breaks.
Rest continuously in the undivided state.
However, as long as you have not attained stability,
It is essential to practice giving up distractions.
Divide your meditation into sessions.
At all times and in all situations
Maintain the single continuity of dharmakaya.
Resolve that there is nothing other than this.
To decide on one thing, that is the second vital point.

At this time, your likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows,
And all your passing thoughts without exception
Leave no trace in the state of recognition.
By recognizing dharmakaya in what is liberated,
As in the analogy of drawing on water,
There is unceasing self-occurring self-liberation.

Whatever occurs is fresh food for the empty awareness.
Whatever is thought is an expression of the dharmakaya king.
Traceless and naturally free—a la la.
The way thoughts occur is the same as before,
But the way they are freed is the most special key point.
Without this, meditation is but the path of confusion.
Possessing it is the uncultivated state of dharmakaya.
To gain confidence in liberation, that is the third vital point.

This view endowed with three vital points,
And the meditation of combined knowledge and compassion,
Is aided by the general action of the sons of the victorious ones.
Even if the victorious ones of the three times were to confer together,
They would have no oral instructions superior to this.

The dharmakaya treasure revealer of awareness-display
Discovered this as a treasure from the expanse of knowledge.
It is unlike extracts of earth and stone.
It is the testament of Garab Dorje.
It is the heart essence of the three lineages.
It is entrusted with secrecy to heart disciples.
It is the profound meaning and words from the heart.
It is words from the heart, the essential meaning.
Do not let the essential meaning fade away.
Do not let the instruction dissipate.

This was the special teaching of Khepa Shri Gyalpo.

• • •

In accordance with oral teachings from Kyabje Dilgo Khyentse and Tulku Pema Wangyal, and later numerous times from Kyabje Tulku Urgyen and Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, this was translated at Samye Chimphu in 1987 by Erik Pema Kunsang.



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