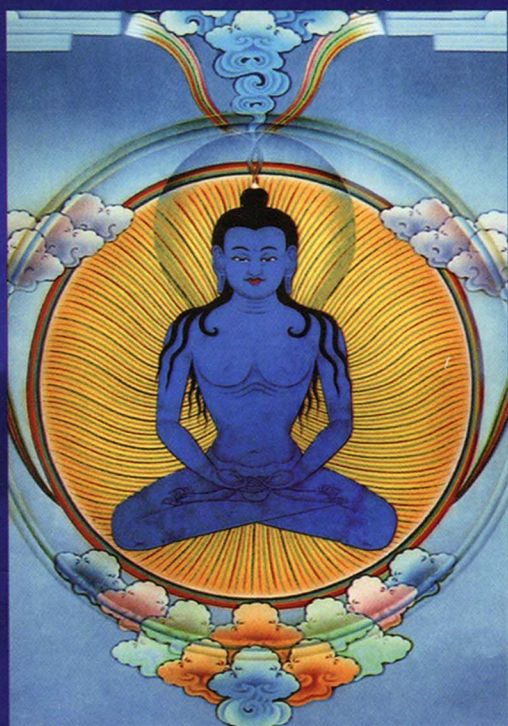


**John Myrdhin Reynolds**

# THE PRECEPTS OF THE DHARMAKAYA

Advanced Instructions on the Practice of Bönpo Dzogchen  
According to the Zhang-Zhung Tradition of Tibet



*Translation of*

**THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS**

THE ROOT TEXT AND ITS COMMENTARY FROM THE ZHANG-ZHUNG NYÄN-GYÜD

# THE PRECEPTS OF THE DHARMAKAYA

# THE PRECEPTS OF THE DHARMAKAYA

*Translation of*

## THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS THE ROOT TEXT AND ITS COMMENTARY FROM THE ZHANG-ZHONG-NYAN-GYÜD

Advanced Instructions on the Practice of Dharmasamgraha  
According to the Zhang-Zhong Tradition of Tibet

John Myrdhin Reynolds



Vajra Books



# THE PRECEPTS OF THE DHARMAKAYA

*Translation of*

## THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS THE ROOT TEXT AND ITS COMMENTARY FROM THE ZHANG-ZHUNG NYÄN-GYÜD

**Advanced Instructions on the Practice of Bönpo Dzogchen  
According to the Zhang-Zhung Tradition of Tibet**

**John Myrdhin Reynolds**



Vajra Books

*Published & Distributed by*

**Vajra Books**

Jyatha, Thamel, P.O. Box 21779, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel.: 977-1-4220562, Fax: 977-1-4246536

e-mail: [bidur\\_la@mos.com.np](mailto:bidur_la@mos.com.np)

[www.vajrabooks.com.np](http://www.vajrabooks.com.np)

© 2014. by John Myrdhin Reynolds.

Translated by John Myrdhin Reynolds

Bönpo Translation Project

Vidyadhara Institute

Berlin, Germany

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system or technologies now known or later developed without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN 978-9937-623-15-5

Printed in Nepal

# CONTENTS

Preface	vii
CHAPTER 1.	
<b>General Introduction to the Translation of     the Twenty-One Little Nails</b>	1
CHAPTER 2.	
<b>Translation of the Root Text, the Exceedingly Secret     Teaching of the Fruit, the Twenty-One Little Nails:</b> <i>gZer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig</i>	41
CHAPTER 3.	
<b>Tibetan Version of the Root Text of the Twenty-One     Little Nails</b>	71
CHAPTER 4.	
<b>Translation of the Commentary to the Twenty-One Little     Nails: <i>gZer-'grel</i></b>	81
CHAPTER 5.	
<b>Further Annotations to the Translation of the Commentary:     The Introductory Section</b>	165
CHAPTER 6.	
<b>Further Annotations to the Translation of the Commentary:     The Individual Little Nails</b>	193
Bibliography	291
Glossary	299
Index	309



## PREFACE

While visiting New Delhi, India, in 1991, I purchased a re-print copy of Bönpo Dzogchen texts from Dr. Lokesh Chandra at his International Academy of Indian Culture. The original block-prints had been earlier brought out of Tibet by Yongdzin Rinpoche, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, at present the most learned Bönpo Lama of our day. He had obtained this block-print from his own monastery of Tashi Menri in Tsang Province, the foremost Bönpo monastery and academic center in Central Tibet. As the result of their collaboration, this collection of the texts of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd was published in New Delhi as *History and Doctrine of Bönpo Nispanna-Yoga* (1968). This was my first contact with the Bönpo Tradition of Tibet.

I had this copy of these texts in my possession for several years, but in 1987 while at Merigar in Italy, I became especially interested in this cycle of Bönpo Dzogchen teachings because of the inspiration of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, the foremost teacher of Dzogchen practice to students in the West. In that year and the following year, I began to undertake the translation of a number key texts in this collection. Finally, in 1989 I met Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak in person at the retreat community in Conway, MA, during his first visit to the US. Subsequently, in San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as later in retreats in Austria and South Devon, UK, I continued to translate a number of texts from this cycle of Dzogchen teachings, including the two practice manuals for this tradition, the *rGyal-ba phyag-khrid* and the *'Od-gsal bdun-skor*. These latter translations have now been published by Vajra Publications in Kathmandu as *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-zhung Tradition of Tibet* (2011). Earlier we had published, also with Vajra Publications, a general survey of the Zhang-



zhung Nyän-gyüd, entitled *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung* (2005). This volume also included a translation of the preliminary practices text, or Ngondro, associated with this tradition.

The two Dzogchen texts translated here, the root text and its commentary of *The Twenty-One Little Nails* (gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig), belong to the fourth cycle of this Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd collection known as the exceedingly secret cycle (yang gsang skor), which focuses on the fruit or result of Dzogchen practice, and in particular on the removing of doubts with regard to the Natural State of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid gnas-lugs) being the source of the Thödgal visions experienced in practice. In this tradition, the practice of contemplation, or Trekchod, is combined with the practice of vision, or Thödgal, so this question exists for the practitioner—What is the source of these visions which appear in contemplation practice, as well as the karmic visions which appear as our ordinary daily life? The practice of Thödgal gives us proof that these latter visions are also illusions lacking any inherent existence. Included here besides the translations of the root text and its commentary is the Tibetan of the root text in transliteration, and also further annotations to the translations drawn from the extensive oral explanations of Yongdzin Rinpoche given on a number of occasions. Hence, I have kept the final two chapters in a more informal style, where Yongdzin Rinpoche sometimes repeated matters, but from a slightly different angle.

I received the transmission of these precepts and instruction in them from Yongdzin Rinpoche on several occasions, most notably at Haarlem in the Netherlands and at Jemez Springs in New Mexico in the US. The latter retreat was organized by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche in the summer of 1995 and the transcripts of these retreat teachings have been published by the Ligmincha Institute (1996). While staying in Amsterdam in 1995, I translated both the root text and the commentary of *The Twenty-One Little Nails* and privately distributed these translations in a limited edition as *The Twenty-One Little Nails: Advanced instructions in the Practice of Bönpo Dzogchen according to the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud*, Dortmund, Germany (2005).

I wish to thank again Martin Bugter of Deventer in the Netherlands who first urged me to begin this series of translations years ago, and also Sodus Vita of Amsterdam for providing her generous hospitality

while I worked on these translations. I also thank Molly Thoron-Duran for her efforts at proofreading and editorial suggestions, my German translator Reinhold Jacob for his proofreading, and my publisher Bidur Dangol of Vajra Books for doing so much to publish works and studies relating to the Bönpo tradition. But most of all, I wish to thank again Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche for his great kindness, inexhaustible patience, and profound wisdom, and especially for transmitting these precepts and so clearly elucidating their meaning for us in the West. It is the hope of the translator that this translation of the root text and its commentary for *The Twenty-One Little Nails* will be of use to practitioners of Dzogchen now and in the future.

MU-TSUG SMAR-RO!

JOHN MYRDHIN REYNOLDS

Triten Norbutse Bönpo Monastery,  
Kathmandu, Nepal, March 2014



# 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS

### I. Bön and Buddhism in Tibet

#### Yungdrung Bön

In general, the Dzogchen teachings were originally found only in the two old unreformed Tibetan schools of the Buddhist Nyingmapas and the non-Buddhist Bönpos. In both cases, these teachings are substantially the same in meaning and terminology, and both traditions claim to have an unbroken lineage coming down to the present time from the eighth century CE and even before. Both of these schools assert that Dzogchen did not originate in Tibet itself, nor in India, but had its sources in Central Asia and were subsequently brought to Central Tibet by certain masters, or great adepts. There thus would appear to exist two ancient and authentic lineages for the Dzogchen teachings, the Nyingmapa and the Bönpo.

In the histories of Tibet, those composed by native authors in medieval times and those composed in modern times both by Tibetans and by Western scholars, the pre-Buddhist religious culture of Tibet is designated as "Bön." Often in the past this has been equated with a kind of primitive North Asian shamanism, at least in Western books. However, the practitioners of Bön, known as Bönpos, continue to exist today in large numbers among the Tibetan population. Like the Buddhists, the Bönpos have priests and monks known as Lamas and they assert that at least part of their religious tradition was not native to

Tibet. Rather, it was brought to Central Tibet sometime before the seventh century from the previously independent kingdom of Zhangzhung, in Western Tibet, and more remotely from Tazik (stag-gzig), or Iranian speaking Central Asia to the northwest. [1] Until recently many Western books asserted that Bön represented some sort of primitive shamanistic or magical religious practice with blood sacrifices and congress with spirits. However, in addition to extensive ritual texts relating to what clearly appear to be shamanistic and animistic practices, this ancient tradition possesses an even larger corpus of texts, also claiming to be pre-Buddhist in origin, relating to the higher spiritual teachings of the Buddhas in terms of Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen.

### Difference in Lineage

The Buddhist Tibetans call their religious tradition, *chos*, originally meaning “custom,” and clearly distinguish this from Bön. However, to the outsider Yungdrung Bön nowadays appears little different from the other four schools of Tibetan Buddhism in terms of their doctrines and monastic practices. Contemporary Bönpos possess monasteries and monks and nuns, indeed, a monastic system much like the Buddhist one, as well as the Madhyamaka philosophy fully comparable with the other four Tibetan Buddhist schools which claim Indian origins. According to the Bönpo Lamas themselves, the main difference between Bön and the Buddhist schools is not one of teachings or practice, but is a matter of lineage.

The Buddhist schools of Tibet all look back to the North Indian prince, Siddhartha Gautama, as their “historical” Buddha Shakyamuni, who flourished in Northern India some 2500 years ago, as the source of their higher spiritual teachings, known as the Buddha Dharma. However, the Bönpo Lamas, instead look back even further in time to another “prehistoric” Buddha, Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche (ston-pa gshen-rab mi-bo-che), born in Olmo Lungring (‘ol-mo lung-ring) in remote Central Asia, as their Buddha (sangs-rgyas) and as the source of their transmissions of the Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen teachings. The latter is given the title of Tönpa, or Teacher (ston-pa), literally “the one who reveals,” and this term indicates as well the founder of a spiritual tradition. Indeed, both of these numinous figures, Shakyamuni and

Tönpa Shenrab, are said to be manifestations of Buddha enlightenment in our world, an epiphany that is technically known as the Nirmanakaya (sprul-sku) in both traditions. Modern Western scholars may question the historical existence of this latter figure, but there is no doubt that he is regarded by the Tibetans as the source of this spiritual tradition known as Bön. Indeed, Tönpa Shenrab is given a fabulous date within the Bönpo tradition, which asserts that he flourished in Central Asia some eighteen thousand years ago. [2]

### Meaning of the Term “Yungdrung Bön”

This form of Bön, with its monks and monasteries, is generally known by its practitioners as Yungdrung Bön (g.yung-drung bon), “the Eternal Teaching.” The term Yungdrung Bön could be translated into Sanskrit as “Svastika-dharma,” where the swastika, or sun-cross, is the symbol of the indestructible, the eternal, the everlasting, and the perennial. The usage of the term “yungdrung” (g-yung-drung) corresponds in almost every respect to the Buddhist term “vajra,” or diamond (rdo-rje), which is also considered to be indestructible. The term Bön has the same usage as the word “dharma,” the teaching of the Buddhas about the nature of reality, the practice of which is said to bring release from the cycle of death and rebirth in Samsara and also the ultimate enlightenment of a Buddha. One theory is that the word *bon* originally came from an old Tibet verb, *'bond-pa*, meaning “to call or summon the spirits.” Certainly this is what a shaman does. The word for Bön in the Zhang-zhung language is *gyer*, which has been taken into Tibetan as *gyer-ba*, “to chant.” It has also been pointed out that in the Central Asian Iranian language known as Soghdian, there is the word BWN, which would be vocalized *bun*, and is employed in Buddhist texts to translate the Sanskrit term “Dharma.” This might possibly also be the source of the Tibetan word. [3]

### Three Applications of the Term Bön

According to Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche, the leading native-born scholar of the Bönpo tradition, there are three distinct applications of this term. [4] In the histories of Tibet composed by

native-born monk scholars since the beginning of the Middle Ages, they have designated all of the pre-Buddhist religious culture of Tibet as "Bön." This term, therefore, included indigenous Tibetan shamans and belief in the existence of the spirits generally, not only in Tibet proper, but in adjacent regions as well in ancient times. These writers gave a rather sinister reputation to this pre-Buddhist culture, denigrating their own indigenous culture and attributing everything positive to the civilizing influence of imported Indian Buddhism. This propaganda was usually accepted uncritically until recently in the West, depicting Bön as some kind of primitive shamanism. Indeed, shaman healers are found among the Tibetans even today, known as Lhapa and Pawo. They are so called because, upon entering into trance, or an altered state of consciousness, they are possessed by a spirit guide, a Lha or a Pawo, who can speak through the medium of the shaman. This spirit guide then diagnoses the cause of the illness afflicting the patient and prescribes a cure, usually entailing some sort of healing ritual (gto), or even a ransom rite (glud). But the practice of the shaman does not nowadays represent a separate religion from Buddhism or Bön.

Ancient sources such as the texts preserved in the Tun Huang library and Chinese accounts from the time of the T'ang dynasty, clearly indicate that in those days there were many kinds of religious practitioners operating in Tibet, particularly priests performing rituals and sacrifices. Some of these practitioners were no doubt shamans in the classical Siberian sense. But these ritualists did not form a single unified body which could oppose the importation of Indian Buddhism.

Indeed, according to Bönpo tradition, some of these ritual practices that we might term shamanic because they deal in a face-to-face manner with the spirits and their other world, are said to have actually been taught by Tönpa Shenrab himself when he briefly visited Kongpo in Southeastern Tibet in prehistoric times. [5] He taught primitive humanity various methods for invoking the aid and the positive energies of the celestial gods (lha gsol-ba), the rites for exorcising evil spirits and expelling negative energies (sel-ba), and the summoning of prosperity and good fortune (g.yang 'gug) in order to benefit and protect human beings. However, it was said that he felt the Tibetans of that time were still too primitive, living in caves and much oppressed by evil spirits, to understand and benefit from his higher spiritual teachings

aiming at liberation and enlightenment. Nevertheless, he prophesied that these teachings would come to Tibet at a future time. The ritual practices relating to the spirits have been incorporated into the Bönpo canon of scriptures and are known as the Causal Ways of Bön (bon rgyu'i theg-pa). These aim to secure the benefit and prosperity of human beings in this present life, rather than liberation and enlightenment in some distant future life. Moreover, like Buddhism generally, Yungdrung Bön was totally opposed to the practice of blood sacrifice (dmar mchod), and the origin of such practices, including meat eating by humans, were attributed to the cannibalistic Sinpo (srin-po) demons who once inhabited much of Tibet, and not to Tönpa Shenrab

The higher spiritual teachings of Tönpa Shenrab, including Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen, are known as the Fruitional Ways of Bön ('bras-bu'i theg-pa). They aim not so much at benefits in this present life, as at securing a fortunate rebirth in the future and ultimately attaining Buddha enlightenment and liberation from suffering in Samsara. He expounded his teachings among his disciples in Olmo Lung-ring on earth and also in a higher spiritual dimension as Chimed Tsugphüd. [6] After his passing into Parinirvana, his disciples, lead by Mucho Demdruk (mu-cho ldem-drug) spread his teachings far and wide in Tazik or Central Asia, as well as China, India, and the Himalayan regions, translating them into local languages. In particular, Yungdrung Bön became the established religious culture in ancient Zhang-zhung in the time of the Jyaruchän kings (bya-ru-can). It is said that Yungdrung Bön came to Central Tibet in the time of the second king of the Yarlung dynasty, Mutri Tsänpo (mu-khri btsan-po), when Bönpo Lamas were invited from Zhang-zhung. Thereafter Bönpo Lamas served as priests and advisors to the kings of Tibet before the coming of Indian Buddhism. Thus, Yungdrung Bön may be clearly distinguished from shamanism and Tibetan folk culture.

Yungdrung Bön is sometimes called Old Bön (bon rnying-ma) to distinguish it from New Bön (bon gsar-ma). New Bön arose since the fourteenth century, relying upon the discoveries of a different system of Terma texts than those cited by Yungdrung Bön above. These texts tend to focus on ritual and meditation practices, but also include lengthy hagiographies of masters like Dränpa Namkha. As a whole, this system is quite similar to the Nyingmapa one and here Padmasambhava is also



regarded as an important figure, being made into the son of Dränpa Namkha. Nowadays, New Bön flourishes widely in Eastern Tibet. The recent great Bönpo master Shardza Tashi Gyaltsän (shar-rdza bkra-shis rgyal-mtshan), who attained the Rainbow Body in 1935, did much to bridge both traditions, the old and the new.

## II. Development of the Bönpo Tradition

### Tönpa Shenrab and Olmo Lung-ring

Thus, the Bönpo Lamas look to their earlier Buddha from Tazik, or Central Asia, as the source of their tradition. According to Bönpo belief, Tönpa Shenrab was never merely a priest or a shaman, but a fully enlightened Buddha (*sangs-rgyas*). He was a Nirmanakaya manifestation of Buddhahood, appearing in time and history, whereas his Sambhogakaya aspect, known as Shenlha Ödkar (*gshen-lha 'od-dkar*), "the white light Shen deity," abides beyond time and history in Akanishtha (*'og-min*), the highest plane of existence. The ultimate aspect of Buddha enlightenment, known as the Dharmakaya, is called Kuntu Zangpo (*kun tu bzang-po*, Skt. *samantabhadra*), "the all-good." [7] The title Shenrab Miwoche (*gshen-rab mi-bo-che*) means "the great human being who is the supreme Shen practitioner." The meaning of the old word *gshen* is uncertain and it is sometimes used as a synonym for Bön and Bönpo. In ancient times, there were many different kinds of Shen or Shenpo (*gshen-po*). Yongdzin Rinpoche suggests "practitioner" as a translation, while other scholars have suggested priest, ritualist, and sacrificial priest. The name of the clan to which Tönpa Shenrab was Mu (*dmu*), which in the Zhang-zhung language means "sky or heaven." Later the term Shen was attached, becoming *dMu-gshen*, which would mean something like "the priest from heaven."

The Shen clan (*gshen gdung-rus*) continues even today as one of the principal Bönpo family lineages. In the early days, the transmission of the Bönpo teachings was often through such family lineages of married Lamas. [8]

Tönpa Shenrab was said to have already been enlightened in his spiritual pre-existence as Chimed Tsugphüd (*'chi-med gtsug-phud*). In this guise, on a higher plane of existence, he transmitted the teachings

of Dzogchen and Tantra to a prince from Tazik in Central Asia, who had succeeded in ascending to heaven. He was named Sangwa Düpa (gsang-ba 'dus-pa), which, interestingly enough, this would translate into Sanskrit as Guhyasamaja. He returned from his celestial ascent to earth and thereafter he propagated the teachings of Bön and subdued many gods and demons for the benefit and protection of humanity. It is said that this prince in a future incarnation became the Buddha Shakyamuni in India. According to the Bönpo Lamas, this would account for the similarities in teaching and practice between Indian Buddhism and Bön. They both have the same ultimate source. [9]

According to traditional Bönpo accounts in the hagiographies of Tönpa Shenrab, namely, the *mDo-'dus*, the *gZer-myig*, and the *gZi-brjid*, [10] it is said that he appeared as a human being and as a royal prince in the country of Olmo Lung-ring ('ol-mo lung-ring), located somewhere in Tazik (stag-gzig), the Iranian-speaking region of ancient Central Asia. This territory would correspond to the present day republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and to parts of Northern Afghanistan. In this region, Iranian speaking people are still known as Tajiks. However, Olmo Lung-ring is not considered by the Bönpos to be an ordinary geographical location that a tourist might visit. It is a sacred hidden land, or Beyul (sbas-yul), which the Bönpos nowadays identify with Shambhala. Shambhala is well known in the West as the mysterious land that is the source of the Kalachakra Tantra. In the middle of Olmo Lung-ring, there is the holy, nine-tiered, indestructible Swastika Mountain (g.yung-drung dgu brtseg) as a kind of *axis mundi*, or center of the world. Similar to the Buddhist understanding of Shambhala, Olmo Lung-ring exists in a higher spiritual dimension and only those who have evolved to a higher level spiritually are able to travel and find entrance there. [11]

The teachings of Tönpa Shenrab, already set down in writing in his own time or in the subsequent period by Mucho Demdruk and others, and they are said to have been brought at a later time from Olmo Lung-ring in Tazik to the country of Zhang-zhung in Western and Northern Tibet where they were translated into the Zhang-zhung language. Zhang-zhung appears to have been an actual language, related to, but distinct from Tibetan, and apparently related to the West Himalayan Tibeto-Burman dialect of Kinnauri. Thus, it was not some artificial creation

fabricated by the Bönpos in order to have an ancient source language corresponding to the Indian Sanskrit of the Buddhist scriptures. [12]

### Yungdrung Bön in Zhang-zhung

Until the eighth century, the country of Zhang-zhung was an independent kingdom with its own language and religious culture. It lay primarily in what is now Western and Northern Tibet and the center of the country was dominated by the majestic presence of the sacred mountain of Gangchen Tise, or Mount Kailas. Examining the available evidence, it now appears likely that before Indian Buddhism came to Central Tibet in the 7th and 8th centuries, Zhang-zhung had extensive contacts with the Buddhist cultures that flourished around it in Central Asia, including the Soghdians, who for a time dominated the Silk Route, and also in the Indo-Tibetan borderlands. Just to the west of Zhang-zhung there once existed the vast Kushana empire that was largely, although not exclusively, Buddhist in its religious culture. This was an area in which Indian Buddhism interacted with various strands of Iranian religion--Zoroastrian, Zurvanist, Mithraist, Manichean, as well as Indian Shaivism and Nestorian Christianity. This was also true of the oasis cities of the Silk Route to the northeast of Zhang-zhung, such as Khotan and Kashgar.

Some scholars have seen this region beyond India as playing a key role in the development of certain aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, and later also in the development of Tantric form of Buddhism known as Vajrayana. [14] For example, the revelation of the *Guhyasamaja Tantra* is said to have occurred to king Indrabhuti in Uddiyana, probably Eastern Afghanistan, and was later brought to India proper by the Mahasiddhas Nagarjuna and Saraha. [13] Moreover, the *Kalachakra Tantra* is said to have been brought from Shambhala in Central Asia to Nalanda in India in the 10th century by the Mahasiddha Tsilupa. All this suggests that certain trends within Yungdrung Bön, rather than being later plagiarisms and imitations of Indian Buddhism concocted in the tenth century, actually go back to a kind of syncretistic Indo-Iranian Buddhist religious culture that once flourished in the independent kingdom of Zhang-zhung before it was forcibly incorporated into the expanding Central Tibetan empire in the eighth century. This tradition known as Gyer in the Zhang-zhung language and as Bön in the Tibetan

was not particularly monastic, but more Tantric in nature, and its diffusion was stimulated by the presence of various Mahasiddhas in the region, such as the illustrious Tapihritsa and his predecessors, who dwelt in caves about Mount Kailas and in the lake country to the east in Northern Tibet. Even into this century, Kailas remains an important site of pilgrimage, not only for Buddhists and Bönpos, but drawing Hindu sadhus and yogis from India as well. [14]

### Hidden Treasure Texts and Continuous Transmission

Beginning with the reign of the second king of Central Tibet, Mutri Tsänpo, it is said of certain Bönpo texts, in particular the Father Tantras (pha rgyud), that they were brought from Zhang-zhung to Central Tibet and translated into the Tibetan language. [15] The Bönpos assert that Tibetan acquired a system of writing at this time based on the *sMar-yig* script used in Zhang-zhung, which therefore would have been ancestral to the *dbu-med* script now often used for composing Tibetan manuscripts, especially among the Bönpos. [16]

The Bönpos subsequently experienced two persecutions in Central Tibet, the first under the eighth king of Central Tibet, Drigum Tsänpo (gri-gum btsan-po), and later the second under the great Buddhist king of Tibet, Trisong Detsän (khri-srong lde'u-btsan, 754-797) in the eighth century of our era. The first persecution was said to have been due to the king's fear of the growing prestige and power of the Bönpo Lamas and the second persecution to the jealousy of the Indian Buddhist monks. According to the tradition, on both occasions, the persecuted Bönpo sages, such as Dränpa Namkha and Lishu Tag-ring, concealed their books in various places in Tibet and adjacent regions such as Bhutan. These caches of texts began to be rediscovered in the tenth century. Thus they are known as Termas, rediscovered texts, literally "hidden treasures" (gter-ma). [17]

This mixed culture found in Zhang-zhung, being both Tantric and shamanic, was suppressed in the eighth century when, at the instigation of a jealous princess and the Tibetan king Trisong Detsän, the last native king of Zhang-zhung, Ligmincha, was ambushed and assassinated when he left his castle of Khyung-dzong, "the garuda castle," on the Dang-ra lake in Northern Tibet. Zhang-zhung and its people

were then absorbed into the expanding Tibetan empire and this ancient kingdom disappeared as an independent entity. The Zhangzhungpas were pressed into the service of the Tibetan army as it moved westward into Ladakh and Baltistan. [18] Today the Zhangzhungpas survive as the nomad peoples of Western and Northern Tibet, often possessing the same ancient clan names; nevertheless, having been converted to the Drigung Kagyüdpä school of Buddhism, they have forgotten their ancient heritage. The old caves, once the dwelling places of the Bönpo Mahasiddhas, are now thought to be the domain of ghosts, places to be shunned and avoided. Ancient ruins, believed to antedate the Tibetan empire, are still to be seen at Khyung-lung west of Mount Kailas and on the shores of the Dang-ra lake to the east in Northern Tibet. [19]

Certain other texts were never concealed as Termas, but remained in circulation and were passed down from the time of the eighth century and even earlier in a continuous lineage. These are known as *snyan-rgyud*, literally “oral transmission”, even though they are usually said to have existed as written texts even from the earliest period. One example of such an “oral tradition” is the *Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud*, which, in the eighth century, the master Tapihritsa gave permission to his disciple Gyerpungpa to write down in the form of his pithy secret oral instructions. Or else, the texts were dictated during the course of ecstatic visions, or altered states of consciousness, by certain ancient sages or certain deities to Lamas who lived in later centuries. One such example of this process was the famous lengthy hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab known as the *gZi-brjid*, dictated in a series of visions to Lodän Nyingpo (blo-ldan snying-po, b.1360) by the ancient sage Tangchen Mutsa Gyarmed (stang-chen dmu-tsha gyer-med) of Zhang-zhung. [20] This classification is rather similar to the Nyingmapa classification of its canon of scriptures into Kama (bka'-ma) and Terma (gter-ma). [21] This form of Yungdrung Bön, sometimes known as Old Bön, has flourished in Tibet down to our own day.

### Shenchen Luga and the Revival of Bön

In the year 1017, Shenchen Luga (gshen-chen klu-dga') came from Eastern Tibet to Drigtsam Thakar ('brig-mtsham mtha' dkar) in Tsang Province, near the ancestral seat of the Shen clan. [26] In the early days,

the teachings and practices of Yungdrung Bön were largely transmitted by married Lamas belonging to certain prominent Tibetan families and clans, which were principally five: Mu-Shen (dmu-gshen), Dru (bru), Pa (spa), Zhu, and Me'u (rme'u). Later Khyung-po was added as a sixth. According to some sources, Shenchen Luga was said to have belonged to the Shen clan (gshen gdung-rus). [22]

Responding to certain signs and indications from the Dakinis, Shenchen Luga discovered two large wooden boxes buried beneath some rocks. They contained a large number of Bönpo texts in the Tibetan language, including the *Khams-chen*, the Bönpo version of the Prajnaparamita Sutra in sixteen volumes, as well as other important Bönpo texts. One might imagine that this large collection had once represented the library of the Shen clan which had been hidden for safety during the persecution of Bön in Central Tibet in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It was principally this discovery by Shenchen Luga that led to the revival of Bön in Central Tibet in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This revival based on rediscovered Terma texts was similar in character to the revival of Buddhism among the Nyingmapas at the same time. In part, this renaissance was a reaction to the development of the Sarmapa, or New Tantra movement, of that century that was inspired by the new translations of Indian Buddhist texts, many of them previously unknown in Tibet. This large collection of Bönpo Termas became widely known as the System of the Southern Treasures (lho gter lugs) because of the location of their discovery in Southern Tibet. Moreover, these texts came to be classified into the Nine Successive Vehicles to Enlightenment (theg-pa rim dgu), known to the West as the Nine Ways of Bön.

### **Dru Lineage: Yeru Wensakha and Menri Monasteries**

Among his disciples, Shenchen Luga commissioned Druchen Namkha Yungdrung (bru-chen nam-mkha' g.yung-drung), together with his son, Khyunggi Gyaltsän (khyung gi rgyal-mtshan), to copy and study intensively the philosophical texts, which he had recovered from this treasure hoard of the Shen clan.

According to the Bönpo histories, the Dru lineage became pre-eminent in the transmission of the Bönpo philosophical tradition (mtshan-nyid). The Dru clan (gdung-rus bru) originally came from

Drusha (bru-sha), or Gilgit, now located in modern day Pakistan. Druchen Namkha Yungdrung himself wrote a commentary on the *Srid-pa'i mdzod-phug*, the principal Bönpo cosmological text, and his son Khyunggi Gyaltsän wrote a commentary that established the philosophical and exegetical tradition of this lineage (mtshan-nyid kyi bshad srol). Both father and son had listened to the master Shenchen expound the philosophy and cosmology of this text. Then in 1072, Druje Yungdrung Lama (bru-rje g.yung-drung bla-ma, b. 1040) established the Bönpo monastery of Yeru Wensakha (g.yer-ru'i dben-sa-kha) in Tsang Province that became the fountainhead of this tradition and the foremost Bönpo monastery of its time.

When it was destroyed in a disastrous flood at the end of the 14th century, said to have come about because of the curse of a Hindu sadhu, it was rebuilt on higher ground by Nyammed Sherab Gyaltsän (mnyammed shes-rab rgyal-mtshan, 1356-1415) in 1405 and renamed Tashi Menri (bkra-shis sman-ri), "the auspicious medicine mountain." It soon again became the leading Lama's college in Tibet for the Bönpos. [24] Later Yongdzin Rinpoche Lopon Tenzin Namdak served as a principal teacher, or Lopon, here for a time.

Moreover, we are fortunate to possess a practice manual or handbook (phyag-khrid) for the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd composed in the 13th century by the learned scholar and abbot of Yeru Wensakha monastery, Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung (bru-chen rgyal-ba g.yung-drung, 1242-1290). He belonged to the Dru clan and served as an abbot of Menri. The title of the text, the *Gyalwa Chaktri* (rgyal-ba phyag-khrid), "the Handbook of the Victorious One," refers to the author.

### Menri Revival in India

After the Bönpo Lamas fled Tibet following the completion of the Communist Chinese conquest and occupation in 1959, through the efforts of Yongdzin Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Menri monastery was re-established in exile at Dolanji in Himachal Pradesh, India. Prior to this re-establishment, the A-tri system of Dzogchen practice was mainly taught and practiced at Menri in Tibet. It was Lopon Sangye Tenzin (slob-dpon sangs-rgyas bstan-'dzin, 1928-1977) who was singularly responsible for reviving the teaching and practice of the Zhang-zhung

Nyän-gyüd at the monastery. His principal disciple, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, then began transmitting this tradition of Dzogchen to the West, to both Europe and America, beginning in 1989. [25]

At the request of Lopon Tenzin Namdak, H.H. the Dalai Lama and his Government in Exile have now recognized Bön as the fifth Tibetan religious school, along side the Nyingmapas, the Sakyapas, the Kagyüdpas, and the Gelugpas, and has given the Bönpos representation on the Council of Religious Affairs at Dharamsala. [26]

### III. Classification of the Bönpo Scriptures

#### The Three Cycles of Bönpo Teaching

The teachings of Bön revealed by Tönpa Shenrab are classified differently in the three traditional hagiographical accounts of his life. In general, Tönpa Shenrab was said to have expounded Bön in three cycles of teachings:

- I. The Nine Successive Vehicles to Enlightenment (theg-pa rim dgu);
- II. The Four Portals of Bön and the Treasury which is the Fifth (sgo bzhi mdzod lnga); and
- III. The Three Cycles of Precepts that are Outer, Inner, and Secret (bka' phyi nang gsang skor gsum).

These cycles of texts are found in the Kangyur (bka'-'gyur), the great collection in many volumes of the authoritative sacred word of the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab, and elucidated in the commentaries found in the Katen (bka'-brten), which were composed by various masters in the tradition. Both of these collections in Tibetan have recently been republished in China.

#### Southern and Central Treasures

The Nine Ways, or Nine Successive Vehicles to Enlightenment, are delineated according to the three different systems of hidden treasure texts (gter-ma) that were said to have been put into concealment during the earlier persecutions of Bön and were rediscovered in later centuries. These hidden treasure systems are designated according to the locations



where the concealed texts were discovered, as southern, central, and northern. Very little is known regarding this third system.

The best known in the West is the System of the Southern Treasures (lho gter lugs). These were the treasure texts rediscovered at Drigtsam Thakar ('brig-mtsham mtha' dkar) in Southern Tibet and at Paro (spagro) in Bhutan. Here the Nine Ways of Bön are first divided into the Four Causal Ways, which contain many myths and magical and shamanistic rituals, and which are principally concerned with working with energies for worldly benefits. These are followed by the five higher spiritual vehicles known as the Fruitional Ways. Here the purpose is not gaining power or insuring health and prosperity in the present world, but realization of the ultimate spiritual goal of liberation from the suffering experienced in the cycles of rebirth within Samsara and the attaining of Buddha enlightenment. The final and ultimate vehicle found in this nine-fold classification is that of Dzogchen.

There is also the System of the Central Treasures (dbus gter lugs). These treasure texts were rediscovered at various sites in Central Tibet, including the great Buddhist monastery of Samye (bsam-yas). In general, this classification of the Bönpo teachings is rather similar to the system of the Nine Vehicles found in the traditions of the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism. Some of these Bönpo texts are said to have been introduced from India into Tibet by the great native-born Tibetan translator Vairochana of Pagor, who translated works from both the Buddhist and the Bönpo traditions. [27]

### The Nine Ways of Bön

The Nine Ways of Bön, or rather, the nine successive vehicles of Bön (bon theg-pa rim dgu), as they are classified in the System of the Southern Treasures, are also expounded at length in as many chapters in the *gZi-brjid*, the most extensive hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab. Portions of these chapters have been translated by Prof. David Snellgrove in consultation with Lopen Tenzin Namdak. [28]

Here the Nine Ways are listed as follows:

1. The Way of the Practice of Prediction (phywa gshen theg-pa): Literally *theg-pa* means a vehicle or conveyance, rather than a road or a way. *gShen*, a word of obscure origin and meaning, but according to

Lopon Tenzin Namdak, it may here be translated as “practice” or “practitioner.” The term *phywa* means prediction or prognostication. This way or vehicle is principally concerned with divination (*mo*), astrological and geomantic calculations (*rtsis*), medical diagnosis (*dpyad*), and the performing of healing rituals (*gto*).

2. The Way of the Practice of Visible Manifestations (*snang gshen theg-pa*): This vehicle is principally concerned with visible manifestations (*snang-ba*) perceived as the positive activities of the gods (*lha*) who will come to the aid of humanity when properly invoked. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on invoking and calling upon the gods (*lha gsol-ba*) for such aid. This includes such classes of deities as the Thugkar (*thugs-dkar*), the Drabla (*sgra-bla*), the Werma, and so on.
3. The Way of the Practice of Magical Power (*'phrul gshen theg-pa*): This vehicle is principally concerned with magical rituals to ensure prosperity and control over the spirits evoked, and especially emphasize the rites of exorcism (*sel-ba*) in order to eliminate negative energy and the negative provocations by evil spirits (*gdon*) who come to disturb human existence. The practitioner works with these energies in terms of evocation, conjuration, and ritual application (*bsnyen sgrub las gsum*).
4. The Way of the Practice of Existence (*srid gshen theg-pa*): Here the term “existence” or “becoming” (*srid-pa*) properly refers the processes of death and rebirth. This way is also known as *'Dur gshen*, the practice of ceremonies for exorcising the spirits of the dead (*'dur*) who are disturbing the living. It is, therefore, principally concerned with the three hundred and sixty kinds of rites for accomplishing this, as well as methods for ensuring the good fortune and the long life of the living.  
 These four causal vehicles constitute the Four Causal Ways of Bön (*bon rgyu'i theg-pa bzhi*). They are followed by the higher ways of a spiritual nature, the ultimate goal of which is liberation and enlightenment. These are collectively known as the Fruitional Ways (*'bras-bu'i theg-pa*).
5. The Way of the Virtuous Lay Practitioners (*dge-bsnyen theg-pa*): This way is principally concerned with morality and ethics, such as the ten virtuous deeds (*dge-ba bcu*), the ten Perfections or Paramitas,

- and so on, as well as pious activities such as erecting stupas, and so on, especially on the part of lay practitioners (dge-bsnyen, Skt. upasika).
6. The Way of the Ascetic Sages (drang-srong theg-pa): The term *drang-srong* (Skt. rishi), meaning a sage, has here the technical significance of a fully ordained monk who has taken the full complement of vows, corresponding to the Buddhist bhikshu (dge-slong). The principal concern is with the vows of the monks and nuns and the rules of the monastic discipline ('dul-ba) applicable to both.
  7. The Way of the White A (A-dkar theg-pa): This vehicle is principally concerned with the Tantric practice of transformation by way of visualizing the meditation deity and its mandala, as well as the practices associated with the mandala. Here are included the Outer or Lower Tantras (phyi rgyud) concerned with ritual action (bya-ba'i rgyud) and with conduct (spyod-pa'i rgyud).
  8. The Way of the Primordial Shen (ye-gshen theg-pa): This vehicle is concerned with certain secret Tantric practices including transforming oneself in visualization practice into the meditation deity (yi-dam), the proper relationship with the Guru and with the Tantric consort, as well as with the procedures of the Generation Process (bskyed-rim) and the Perfection Process (rdzogs-rim) and the ritual conduct connected with them. This class, which represents the Inner or Higher Tantras (nang rgyud), is divided into the Father Tantras (pha rgyud) and the Mother Tantras (ma rgyud). The practices of the Father Tantras chiefly focus upon the five meditation deities known as the Five Supreme Divine Citadels (gsas-mkhar mchog lnga), representing the enlightened aspects of Body, Speech, Mind, Quality, and Activity.
  9. The Ultimate Way (bla-med theg-pa): This ultimate and unsurpassed vehicle (bla na med-pa) contains the teachings and practices of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection, which describes the process of enlightenment in terms of the Base, the Path, and the Fruit, as well as the practice of contemplation in terms of view, meditation, and conduct.

## IV. The Origin of Dzogchen

### The Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings

Just as is the case of the Nyingmapas among the Tibetan Buddhists, the Bönpo tradition possesses as its highest teaching the system of contemplation known as Dzogchen, “the Great Perfection,” (*rdzogs-pa chen-po*). The term *rdzogs-pa* has two meanings: “to complete, to be finished,” and “everything is completed or perfected.” Both meanings apply in this case and, therefore, in Dzogchen everything is complete and nothing is lacking. *Chen-po* means “great or total” so that everything is included and there is nothing more, or beyond it, or higher than it. These teachings reveal in one’s immediate experience the Primordial State (*ye gzhi*) of the individual, that is to say, the individual’s inherent Buddha-nature, or Bodhichitta, which is beyond all time and conditioning and conceptual limitations. This Natural State (*gnas-lugs*) is spoken of in terms of its intrinsic primordial purity (*ka-dag*) and its spontaneous perfection in manifestation (*lhun-grub*).

Both the Buddhist Nyingmapas and the Bönpos assert that their respective Dzogchen traditions were brought to Central Tibet in the eighth century. The Nyingmapa transmission came from the Mahasiddha Shrisimha living in Northern India and was brought to Central Tibet by Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and the translator Vairochana. The Bönpo transmission came from a line of Mahasiddhas dwelling around Mount Kailas and the lake country of Zhang-zhung in the west and north of Tibet. Thus, as we have said, there appear to be two different historically authentic lineages for the transmission of these teachings.

### Three Principal Groups of Bönpo Dzogchen Transmissions

According to the *Legs-bshad mdzod* of Shardza Rinpoche, [29] the texts that elucidate the Dzogchen teachings are innumerable, but they may be condensed into the following three groups:

- I. The Four Cycles of the Transmissions of Precepts (*bka’ brgyud skor bzhi*):
  1. The General Exposition of the View (*phyi lta-ba spyi-gcod*),
  2. The Oral Instructions giving Clear Guidance (*nang man-ngag dmar-khrid*),

3. Intrinsic Awareness Seeing Nakedly (gsang-ba rig-pa gcer mthong),
4. Discovering the Source to be the Natural State (yang-gsang gnas-lugs phugs-chod);

II. The Three Cycles of Proclamations (bsGrags-pa skor gsum) [30]

III. The Nine Cycles of the Lesser Mind Series (sems smad sde dgu): [31]

1. The Cycle of the Nine Secrets of the Bodhichitta (byang-sems gab-pa dgu skor),
2. The Cuckoo of Awareness (rig-pa'i khu-byug),
3. The Seven Lesser Sections of the Mind Teachings (sems phan sde bdun).

The Four Cycles of the Transmissions of Precepts listed above refer to the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd.

### The Four Traditions of Bönpo Dzogchen

In general, within the Bön tradition, there exist different lines of transmission for the Dzogchen teachings, of which four represent the principal transmissions of precepts. The first three of them are Terma traditions based on rediscovered treasure texts from largely the 11th century. The fourth is an oral tradition (snyan brgyud), based, it is said, on a continuous transmission through an uninterrupted line of realized masters. These four transmissions of Bönpo Dzogchen are as follows:

#### 1. Atri (A-khrid)

The first cycle here of Dzogchen teachings is called *A-khrid* (pronounced A-tri), that is, the teachings that guide one (khrid) to the Primordial State (A). The white Tibetan letter A is the symbol of Shunyata and of primordial wisdom. The source of this tradition was Meutön Gongdzäd Ritröd Chenpo (rme'u-ston dgongs-mdzad ri-khrod chen-po), who was frequently just known as Dampa, "the holy man." [32] The Atri, was in part drawn from the Gabpa Gukor (gab-pa dgu skor), "the Nine Cycles of Secrets." He also extracted Dzogchen precepts from the *Khro rgyud* cycle of texts. Together with the *Zhi-ba don gyi skor*, these texts formed

part of the *sPyi-spungs yan-lag gi skor* cycle of teachings that belong to the Father Tantras, originally attributed to Tönpa Shenrab in his spiritual pre-existence as Chimed Tsugphüd. To this collected material, Meutön added his own mind treasure (dgongs gter) and organized the practice of the cycle into eighty meditation sessions extending over a period of time. The system was later condensed by his successors. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung wrote a practice manual in which the number of sessions in retreat (thun mtsham) was further reduced to fifteen. This popular practice manual is known as the *A-khrid thun mtsham bco-linga-pa*. [33] The *A-khrid* tradition, where the practice is very systematically laid out in a specific number of sessions, in many ways corresponds to the Semde (rdzogs-chen sems-sde), or Mind Section, of the Nyingmapa tradition. [34]

## 2. Dzogchen (rDzogs-chen)

In this context, the term *rDzogs-chen* does not mean Dzogchen in general, but the reference is to a specific transmission of Dzogchen, the root text of which is the *rDzogs-chen yang-rtse'i klong-chen*, “the Great Vast Expanse of the Highest Peak which is the Great Perfection.” It represents a commentary drawn from the Dragpa Korsum (bsgrags-pa skor gsum), “the Three Proclamations” tradition of Bönpo Dzogchen. It was rediscovered by the great Tertön Zhödön Ngodrub Dragpa (bzhod-ston dngos-grub grags-pa) in the year 1080. This discovery was part of a famous cycle of treasure texts hidden behind a statue of Vairochana Buddha at the Khumthing temple at Lhodrak. This root text is said to have been composed in the eighth century by the Bönpo master known as Lishu Tag-ring (li-shu stag-ring). [35]

## 3. Yetri Thasel (Ye-khri mtha'-sel)

The third major cycle of Dzogchen is the Yetri Thasel, or “Removing Limitations from the Primordial State.” It is said that in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Bönpo master Lungtön Lha-nyen (lung-ston lha-gnyan) actually met in person Tsewang Rigdzin (tshe-dbang rig-'dzin), the son of Dränpa Namkha, in the guise of an Indian sadhu. The latter revealed to him the Dzogchen teachings he had received from his father Dränpa Namkha (dran-pa nam-mkha'). Having acquired the power of long life

(tshe dbang) by virtue of his yoga practice, Tsewang Rigdzin is said to have lived for centuries. Some of these texts, such as the commentary entitled the *Nam-mkha' 'phrul-mdzod*, “the Magical Treasury of the Sky,” attributed to Dränpa Namkha himself, present Dzogchen in a much more systematic and intellectual manner, and are also very much comparable to the Dzogchen Semde class of the Nyingmapas. [36]

#### 4. Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd (sNyan-rgyud)

The fourth cycle of transmission of the Dzogchen teachings within the Bön tradition is the uninterrupted lineage of the oral transmission from the country of Zhang-zhung, to which belong the two texts translated below. Because the Zhang-zhung Nyän-Gyüd tradition has a continuous lineage extending back to at least the eighth century of our era, and so does not represent Terma texts rediscovered at a later time, it is of particular importance for research into the question of the historical origins of Dzogchen. [37]

### V. Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd: Lineage of Transmission

#### Original Source is the Dharmakaya

It was the Dharmakaya, the Primordial Buddha himself, Kuntu Zangpo, who originally revealed the Dzogchen precepts in Akanishtha (‘og-min), the highest plane of existence, in eternity, that is, outside of time and history, to the Sambhogakaya Buddha, Shenlha Ödkar, and then to Nirmanakaya Buddhas, or Sugatas, representing a lineage of nine luminous figures in all. This successive revelation was called “the Nine-fold Mind Transmission of the Sugatas” (bder-gshegs dgongs brgyud dgu). [38] A Sugata (bde-bar gshegs-pa), literally “well gone,” is an epithet for a Buddha. It was transmitted directly mind-to-mind, that is to say, instantaneously and telepathically. These Nine Sugatas are as follows:

1. The Teacher in Eternity, Kuntu Zangpo (kun tu bzang-po),
2. The Teacher of Compassion, Shenlha Ödkar (gshen-lha ‘od-dkar),
3. The Teacher who is an Emanation, Shenrab Chenpo (gshen-rab chen-po),
4. Tsadmed Öddän (tshad-med ‘od-ldan),

5. Trulshen Nangdän ('phrul-gshen snang-ldan),
6. Barnang Khujiyuk (bar-s nang khu-byug),
7. Zangza Ringtsun (bzang-za ring-btsun),
8. Chimed Tsugphüd ('chi-med gtsug-phud), and
9. Sangwa Düpa (gsang-ba 'dus-pa).

It is said that the last of these Nine, Sangwa Düpa, [39] had ascended to the cosmic mountain Sumeru and there received the Dzogchen precepts from Chimed Tsugphüd himself, the spiritual pre-existence of the Nirmanakaya Buddha Tönpa Shenrab Miwoche. He later reappeared on earth somewhere in Central Asia, or Tazik. Sangwa Düpa initially transmitted the precepts to individuals representing three races of different beings: Lhabön Yongsu Dagpa (lha-bon yongs su dag-pa) of the Devas, or the celestial gods above, Lubön Banam (klu-bon ba-nam) of the Nagas, the chthonic water spirits below, and Mibön Tride Zambu (mi-bon khri-lde zam-bu) of the human beings in between. From the latter, a prince in the country of Tazik, it passed down through realized masters in Tazik and Zhang-zhung, some twenty-four in number. This Oral Transmission of the Siddhas (grub-thob snyan-brgyud) was transmitted orally from mouth to ear in terms of human and divine languages and the Oral Transmission originally consisted of a line of Twenty-Four Masters, or Siddhas, also called "August Personages" (gang-zag nyi-shu rtsa bzhi). [40] Each master in the lineage practiced, gained experience, and transmitted the precepts to a single disciple, and each of them realized the Rainbow Body of Light ('ja' lus) by virtue of the practice of Dzogchen.

### **Tapihritsa**

According to tradition, it is said that Tapihritsa lived in Northern Tibet, in the lake region lying to the east of Mt. Kailas, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century of our era. [41] He was born into the Rasang clan and was given the name Tapihritsa, which means "son of a king" in the Zhang-zhung language. His father Rasang Lugyal (ra-sangs klu-rgyal), himself a Bönpo Lama, gave him his first Dzogchen instructions. At the age of fifteen, he met his own master, Tsepung Dawa Gyaltsän (tshe-spungs zla-ba rgyal-mtshan), who conferred upon him the complete precepts for the practice



of Dzogchen. The latter is regarded as the last of the Twenty-Four Masters, who transmitted the Dzogchen precepts in the country of Zhang-zhung. Tapihritsa then practiced these precepts in a solitary retreat in the cave of the lion rock of Tagthab (stag-thabs seng-ge'i brag), and it is said that after nine years he attained realization as the Rainbow Body of the Great Transfer ('ja'-lus 'pho-ba chen-po), that is to say, he dissolved his material body into pure radiant energy that vanished into space. Having thus attained total enlightenment, he was no longer obliged to transmigrate in Samsara. Consequently he could emanate Nirmittas (sprul-pa), or diverse visible manifestations, and so he appeared as a young servant boy to Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö.

### **The Rainbow Body and the Great Transfer**

The Rainbow Body ('ja'-lus) is the name for the process where, at the time of death, the practitioner, who has become adept at the practice of Thödgal (thod-rgal), dissolves the gross material elements of the physical body into their corresponding subtle forms of pure radiant energy, these being visible as the coloured lights corresponding to each element, and hence the reference to the rainbow. The physical body is said to dissolve gradually into space and to disappear entirely, like the rainbow fading into the empty sky. This entire process is said to take about seven days and at its completion, only the clothes, the hair of the head, and the nails of the fingers and the toes remain behind. These items remain and do not dissolve into radiant energy because they are not pervaded by consciousness as is the rest of the body.

A number of Rainbow Bodies have been reported in Tibet in recent decades, some of these events even being witnessed by the skeptical Chinese Communists. [42] Usually the process occurs in a closed retreat or hermitage, so that only such phenomena as rainbow lights are witnessed by outside observers. At the end of seven days, the hermitage is opened and all that is found remaining is the clothing, and so on, the body itself having disappeared entirely. But if this process is prematurely interrupted, which has happened on a number of occasions in Eastern Tibet under the Chinese Communist regime, it is reported that the corpse of the Lama was found to have shrunken to a miniature size, to about half a meter. This miniaturized corpse had on occasion been

burned by the Communists, as was the case with Changchub Dorje Rinpoche of Khandro Gar near Derge, or else at times preserved by Tibetans in a reliquary in a monastery, such as at Gyarong near the Chinese border.

The Body of Light of the Great Transfer ('pho-ba chen-po'i 'od lus) differs somewhat from the Rainbow Body described above, although it also is realized by way of the Thödgal practice. The Great Transfer means that the practitioner realizes Buddhahood in one's present life time without the necessity of undergoing the dying process known as the Chikhai Bardo ('chi-kha'i bar-do). Rather, one's physical body simply fades away and dissolves into space, in the same way as does as the rainbow in the sky. However, whenever there exists the need for benefiting others, the enlightened being is said to possess the capacity to re-manifest or reappear in a Body of Light ('od lus), in whatever form is appropriate to the circumstances, in order to teach disciples with whom there exists a karmic connection. Tapihritsa is regarded as an example of this Body of Light of the Great Transfer, as are Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra in the Nyingmapa tradition. Having previously obtained enlightenment and liberation by way of Dzogchen practice and having manifested the Great Transfer, Tapihritsa subsequently reappeared in the guise of a wise child (khye'u chung) in order to teach the arrogant scholar, priest, and magician Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo.

In general, in the context of Dzogchen, by means of the practice of contemplation, or Trekchöd, one comes to realize the Dharmakaya. This is Buddhahood as such and there is nothing more to do. But this Dharmakaya, the ultimate aspect of Buddha enlightenment, is infinite and without limitations; it is invisible, having no form of its own. Its representation as the Adibuddha figure is only a convention and a concession to understanding by the finite human intellect. Thus, in order to communicate with and benefit other sentient beings still caught up in Samsara, an enlightened being manifests a specific visible form, or Rupakaya, that will be perceptible and comprehensible to the sentient being with whom he would communicate the teachings of the Dharma. The Rainbow Body is realized through the practice of vision, or Thödgal, which in the texts of the this Zhang-zhung tradition is known as Clear Light practice ('od-gsal).

### **Tapihritsa as a Nirmanakaya**

Tapihritsa is called an incarnation, or Nirmanakaya (sprul-pa'i sku), in the texts. The Dharmakaya having no form in itself, being only pure awareness and space, it is the Rupakaya that becomes visible to disciples and other sentient beings. The Sambhogakaya, being only a pure Body of Light and lacking in any gross materiality, does not actually manifest within the distorted and constricted spaces of Samsara, but remains outside time, ever-present in the pure unconditioned state called Akanishtha ('og-min). This Body becomes revealed and visible only to certain advanced disciples whose mind and vision are entirely purified, for which reason they are known as Aryas, or exalted ones ('phags-pa). These are said to be the Great Bodhisattvas who have attained at least the Seventh Bhumi, or seventh stage of the Bodhisattva's path to enlightenment. Such a vision is a very private affair. But in public, to the ordinary run of sentient beings within the confines of Samsara, an enlightened being reveals itself as a Nirmanakaya. Thus, the Trikaya, or Three Bodies of the Buddha, is not three different persons, but only one. Such a Body, the Nirmanakaya, although a pure emanation of light, appears to sentient beings to be perfectly material. It impinges fully on all the five senses; it is not only seen and heard, but touched, tasted and smelled. Nonetheless, it is still a Nirmita or emanation (sprul-pa). Tapihritsa appeared to his disciple Gyerpungpa as such a Nirmanakaya, first as a small boy and then as a naked adolescent youth suspended in the sky in a transparent sphere of rainbow light. That was because his disciple's mind and vision was still obscured by the defilement of pride. What the disciple sees, how we perceive an enlightened master such as Tapihritsa, depends on the purified mind and pure vision of said disciple.

### **Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo**

In the next century, there appeared the great Mahasiddha and Tantrika by the name of Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo (gyer-spungs snang-bzher lod-po), who was a master of the Tantric and magical practices associated with the meditation deity or Yidam (yi-dam), Zhang-zhung Meri. This included such wondrous actions as the dispatching of Tso (btswa), or magical missiles. He also served as the purohita, or personal

priest, for Ligmincha, the king of Zhang-zhung. [43] While making a retreat at the deer-faced cave on the north shore of the Darok lake, Tapihritsa appeared to him in the form of a small boy gathering firewood, who confounded all the wisdom and knowledge of the older man. The latter was still filled with arrogant pride due to his great intelligence and learning. Therefore, he still had many obscurations.

For this encounter, Tapihritsa had emanated himself as a small boy, claiming to be an orphan and looking for employment. He came to the tent of the patron of Gyerpungpa, a rich local nomad chieftain who owned many herds of animals. The boy worked for a time as a servant, looking after this chieftain's cattle and sheep. Then one day he went secretly to the place where Gyerpungpa was practicing meditation in solitude in a rock cave. The boy spoke to Gyerpungpa politely in nine ways. However, Gyerpungpa believed the young boy was being sarcastic and mocking him. Thus, he interrogated the boy and asked him why he had become a servant and why he was carrying firewood. Moreover, perceiving that this boy was exceptionally intelligent, he asked, who was his teacher? The boy replied that he had no teacher. Who taught the Dharmakaya, he asked in turn. He said, moreover, that the burden he was carrying was discursive thoughts and that he had become a servant because all things were equal to him. When the young boy replied in this way to the older man's questions, doubts arose in Gyerpungpa's mind. He accused the young boy of making fun of him and became very angry. Therefore, he announced that the next day they would go into the presence of the king of Zhang-zhung, who at that time was staying nearby. They would hold a formal debate before him. If the boy lost, he would receive the punishment of the king. However, if he won, Gyerpungpa would put his foot on his head and become his disciple. But the young boy ridiculed the very idea of a debate as a way of ascertaining the truth. In the Dharmakaya, who is the winner and who is the looser, he asked.

Thereupon Gyerpungpa realized that this young boy was actually an emanation, indeed, a Nirmanakaya. At that moment, the patron, the local nomad chieftain, joined them. He said that all of his cattle had scattered into the mountains. Why had the boy not looked after the cattle as he was commanded. But Gyerpungpa told his patron that, despite appearances, this young boy was an emanation of a higher

spiritual being. Immediately the boy explained that in reality he was Tapihritsa and that he had come in order to teach Gyepungpa and his patron. When they both recognized the young boy as an actual Nirmanakaya, Tapihritsa instantly remanifested himself as a luminous naked youth suspended in the sky inside a rainbow sphere of light (thig-le). He then delivered his first series of teachings to the Mahasiddha and the latter's patron. At the conclusion of this discourse, the miraculous boy of light faded away into the empty spaces of the sky. [44]

Tapihritsa returned again for a second time when Gyerpungpa was living on an island in the Darok Lake. [45] He appeared there on two successive seasons. The Twenty-One Little Nails represented the final session of teaching with Tapihritsa. Perceiving what would occur in future times, Tapihritsa gave permission for Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö to set down these Dzogchen precepts for the first time in writing. This the latter did in the Zhang-zhung language. [46] Moreover, previously the precepts had been communicated by a master to only a single disciple (gcig brgyud), but now Tapihritsa also gave permission for them to be bestowed upon more than one disciple by a master. In the lineage of this transmission, both Tapihritsa and Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö are regarded as emanations, or Nirmanakayas, and they both came to attain the Rainbow Body of Light, as had all the preceding Twenty-Four Masters.

### Later Lineages

Gyerpungpa then looked for a suitable Shen practitioner upon whom to bestow these precepts of Dzogchen coming from the Dharmakaya. He had two disciples, one an old man, Phawa Gyalzik Sechung (pha-ba rgyal-gzigs gsas-chung), and the other a young boy, Mushen Tsogge (dmu-gshen tsog-ge). From the latter it passed to four more individuals in the same region. Collectively they are known as the Six Mahasiddhas of Zhang-zhung. In the 9th century, the last of this line was Pönchen Tsänpo (dpon-chen btsan-po). He was bilingual and also spoke Tibetan. Thus, he translated the Dzogchen precepts, which he had written on little pieces of wood and carried with him in a blue bag, into the Tibetan language for the benefit of his two Tibetan disciples, Lhundrub Muthur

(lhun-grub mu-thur) and Shengyal Lhatse (gshen-rgyal g.yung-drung lha-rtse). [47]

Thereafter the lineages for the Precepts Transmission and the Experiential Transmission split apart for a time, the one going to Western Tibet and the other going to Southern Tibet and Nepal. But in the 11th century, they were collected and recombined through the efforts of Yangtön Sherab Gyaltsän (yang-ston shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan) of Dolpo, which is now in Nepal. He and his master Orgom Kundul were largely responsible for the collection in its present form. In this way, the texts of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd have come down to our own time as a continuous and uninterrupted transmission (snyan-brgyud), never having been a Terma, that is, concealed and rediscovered centuries later. [48]

## VI. The Two Translations

### Precepts Transmission and Experiential Transmission

As we have said, the texts found in the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd are divided into two types of transmission:

1. The Precepts Transmission (bka'-rgyud) and
2. The Experiential Transmission (nyams-rgyud).

The first transmission is said to represent the four cycles of Dzogchen precepts originally communicated by the master Tapihritsa to his disciple Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo and recorded by him, whereas the second transmission consists of the teachings of the various masters in the lineage of transmission drawn from their own personal experiences in Dzogchen practice. This includes masters before and after the time of Tapihritsa and Gyerpungpa. These four cycles, together with the Experiential Transmission, constitute the main corpus of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd.

According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, [49] in general the *Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud*, together with the *bsGrags-pa skor gsum* and the *Gab-pa dgu skor*, appear to derive from the same Zhang-zhung tradition of Dzogchen, although the former represents a continuous tradition (snyan-brgyud) from early times, whereas the latter two collections are

Termas, or rediscovered treasure texts. These two Terma collections belong to the tradition of the Southern Treasures.

### Four Cycles of Precepts in the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd

The Dzogchen precepts (bka') from the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd are classified into four cycles, which are outer, inner, secret, and exceedingly secret respectively. These are collectively known as the Four Cycles of the Transmission of the Precepts (bka' brgyud skor bzhi). According to the tradition, the precepts were transmitted orally by Tapihritsa and subsequently written down by his disciple Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo. This is said to have occurred on several occasions in Zhang-zhung at the Darok Lake in Northern Tibet. Furthermore, this collection of precepts represents a continuous transmission (snyan-brgyud) from early times, uninterrupted until the present day.

These four cycles in the Transmission of Precepts (bka' brgyud) are as follows:

1. The Outer Cycle (phyi skor)-- The Explanation of the General Exposition of the View represents the Outer Aspect of the Teachings (phyi lta-ba spyi-gcod du bshad-pa): The teachings presented here introduce the Dzogchen view in general (lta-ba spyi-gcod), while distinguishing among the philosophical views of Sutra, Tantra, and Upadesha (or Dzogchen) in order to establish the supremacy of the Dzogchen view (lta-ba).
2. The Inner Cycle (nang skor)-- The Explanation of the Secret Oral Instructions that provide clear and vital guidance for practice represents the Inner Aspect of the Teachings (nang man-ngag dmar-khrid du bshad-pa): These teachings focus upon the practice of meditation (sgom-pa) in terms of entering into and remaining in the state of contemplation, that is, finding oneself in the Natural State, which is elsewhere known as Trekchöd.
3. The Secret Cycle (gsang skor)-- The Explanation with regard to Intrinsic Awareness Seeing Nakedly, which represents the Secret Aspect of the Teachings (gsang-ba rig-pa gcer mthong du bshad-pa): The teachings presented here especially focus upon the practice of vision or Clear Light ('od-gsal), which is otherwise known as

Thödgal. This practice of vision is here, properly speaking, considered to represent the activity, or conduct (spyod-pa).

4. The Exceedingly Secret Cycle (yang gsang skor)-- The Explanation regarding the Discovering of the Source of Thödgal visions, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid gnas-lugs), represents the Exceedingly Secret Aspect of the Teachings (yang gsang gnas-lugs phug chod du bshad-pa): The teachings found here focus on the removing of any doubts with regard to the Natural State of the individual as the source of visions. The emphasis is on the Fruit, or the final result ('bras-bu).

The text of the "Twenty-One Little Nails" (gzer-bu nyer-shu rtsa gcig), is regarded as belonging to the fourth category of Dzogchen teachings of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, which focuses on the Fruit or final result ('bras-bu), whereas the precious sections dealt with the view (Ita-ba), the meditation practice (sgom-pa), and the conduct or activity (spyod-pa). According to the commentary, this text removes doubts with regard to the practice of Thödgal and explains the searching for the source of the Thödgal visions, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, this being the exceedingly secret aspect of the teachings. [50]

According to Yongdzin Rinpoche, Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd may be classified as Dzogchen Upadesha, or Mangagide (man-ngag gi sde), in terms of the Nyingmapa classification. These Upadeshas, or secret oral instructions, are said to represent the very words of an enlightened master. They are considered scripture (bka'). The term "little nail"(gzer-bu) refers to the essential point (gnad) in any conversation or teaching, in this case, the essential points of the practice of Dzogchen. Since the teaching was originally oral and without written notes, we can hang our memory on these little nails. If we fix something with a nail, it cannot move from that spot. Therefore, through these Twenty-One Little Nails, we can recognize the final nature of Dzogchen.

Of the two translations presented here, [51] the root text (rtsa-ba) has the title, "Here is contained the text of 'The Twenty-One Little Nails,' according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection teachings" (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig gi gzhung bzhugs-so). The second



and longer text, the translation of which follows, is regarded as commentary ('grel-pa), and is entitled, "Here is contained 'The Commentary on the Twenty-One Little Nails,' according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyer gcig gi 'grel-pa bzhugs-so).

In the Menri edition, the xylograph print brought from Tibet by Lopon Tenzin Namdak and later reprinted in New Delhi, these texts are located as follows: *gZer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig* (ff. 503-519), this being the root text (rtsa-ba) of "The Twenty-One Little Nails," orally transmitted by Tapihritsa to Gyerpungpa and concerned with actualizing one's understanding of the Natural State, and *gZer-bu nyer-gcig gi 'grel-pa* (ff. 521-581), this being the commentary ('grel-pa) to the Twenty-One Little Nails. [52] Although this commentary was traditionally attributed to Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo, its scholastic style and systematic approach suggest a later author, perhaps Yangtön Chenpo Sherab Gyaltsän in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Be that as it may, the historical existence of these two enlightened masters in the 8<sup>th</sup> century cannot be doubted. And since there time, many masters and practitioners have attained realization through the practice of these methods coming from ancient Zhang-zhung.

## Notes to Chapter One: Introduction

1. On the relations of the old Tibetan kingdom with Central Asia generally, see Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1987. On Zhang-zhung in particular, see Tsering Thar, "The Ancient Zhang Zhung Civilization," in *Tibet Studies*, Lhasa 1989, pp. 90-104. Also see Namkhai Norbu, *The Necklace of gZi*, LTWA, Dharamsala 1981.
2. The dates here and elsewhere are taken from *Sangs-rgyas kyi bstan-rtsis ngo-mtshar nor-bu'i phreng-ba* by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Abbot of Menri monastery, Nyima Tenzin (nyi-ma bstan-"dzin, b. 1813) and composed in 1842. These dates are quoted in Samten G. Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, Oxford University Press, London 1972. For a translation, see Per Kvaerne, "A Chronological Table of the Bön-po: The bsTan reis of Nyi-ma bstan-'jin," in *Acta Orientalia*, vol. 33, Copenhagen 1971, pp. 205-282.
3. On the derivation of the term *bon* from an old Tibetan verb, see Geza Uray, "The Old Tibetan Verb Bön," in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 17. no. 3, pp. 323-334, Budapest 1964. As for the close connection of Zhang-zhung and the Soghdians to the north on the Silk Route, see Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, *ibid.* In view of this connection, as suggested by Beckwith, the term *bon* might possibly be a borrowing from the Central Asian Iranian language of Soghdian, where the word *bwn* means "dharma." This word also occurs as the first element in the title of the Zoroastrian book dealing with the process of creation, the *Bundahishn*. Beckwith has also pointed to a possible Indo-Iranian substratum in the Zhang-zhung language. Again see Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-36. The Soghdians were a major trading people along the Silk Route to the northwest of Tibet and many Buddhist texts in the Sogdian language have been recovered from Central Asia.
4. Oral communication from Lupon Tenzin Namdak. See also his history of Bön, *g.Yung-drung bon gyi bstan-pa'i 'byung khungs nyung bsdu*, Kalimpong 1962.
5. Kongpo in Southeastern Tibet in prehistoric times. This event is part of the standard hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab. See Helmut Hoffmann, *The Religions of Tibet*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1961, where he summarizes the text of the *gZer-myig*, pp. 85-97.
6. On Chimed Tsugphüd ('chi-med gtsug-phud) and the lineages for the Bönpo Dzogchen teachings, see Chapter Three in Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-Zhung: An Introduction to the Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings of the Oral Tradition of Zhang-Zhung, known as the Zhang-Zhung sNyan-rGyud*, Vajra

Publications, Kathmandu 2005, particularly the translations of the Small Text, p. 34, and the Hagiographies, pp. 39, 46-47.

7. On the Bönpo understanding of the Trikaya, or Three Bodies of the Buddha, and in particular on Kuntu Zangpo as the Dharmakaya, see Chapters One and Two in Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*

8. On the meaning of the word *gshen*, see Dondrup Lhagyal, "Bönpo Family Lineages in Central Tibet," in Karmay and Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bon Studies*, Saujanya, Delhi 2004, p.437.

9. On Sangwa Dupa (gsang-ba 'dus-pa), see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, especially the translations of the *rNam-thar* and the *Yig-chung*.

However, this similarity of the Bönpo texts to many Indian Buddhist texts and teachings was explained in medieval Tibetan histories written by Buddhist monk scholars as simple plagiarism. Shenchen Luga (gshen-chen klu-dga') was considered by many Buddhist writers to be the main villain in this conspiracy. Until recently, before the actual Bönpo texts became available, most Western scholars accepted this accusation at face value. However, most of the Tertons (gter-ston), or discoverers of these Bönpo hidden treasure texts, were simple illiterates and not learned scholars. They could have hardly composed these texts. On Bönpo Terma discoveries, see Karmay, *Treasury* (1972).

10. There exist three principal biographies or hagiographies of Tönpa Shenrab in the Bönpo tradition:

- 1) *mDo 'dus* or *Dus gsum sangs-rgyas byung-khungs kyi mdo*,
- 2) *gZer-myi*g or '*Dus-pa rin-po-che*'i *rgyud gzer-myi*g, and
- 3) *gZi-brjid* or '*Dus-pa rin-po-che dri-ma med-pa gzi-brjid rab tu 'bar-ba*'i *mdo*.

A summary of the hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab, drawn from the *gZer-myi*g, will be found in Helmut Hoffmann, *The Religions of Tibet*, George Allen and Unwin, London 1961, pp. 84-98. A brief version of the hagiography may be found in Richard Gard and Sangye Tandar, *The Twelve Deeds: A Brief Life Story of Tonpa Shenrab, the Founder of the Bon Religion*, LTWA, New Delhi 1995. Although the monastic career of Tönpa Shenrab in his later life bares many resemblances to the account of Shakyamuni Buddha's Great Renunciation and subsequent teaching activities, as found, for example, in the *Lalitavistara*, his life story is otherwise of an origin quite independent of anything remotely Indian Buddhist. Indeed, the noted Russian scholar Kuznetsov saw Tönpa Shenrab as being of Central Asian or Iranian origin. See B.I. Kuznetsov, "Who was the Founder of the Bön Religion," in *Tibet Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1, Dharamsala 1975. Certain contemporary Tibetan scholars see Tönpa Shenrab as being a native-born Tibetan, rather than a prince or priest coming from a

Central Asian origin. See Namkhai Norbu, *The Necklace of gZi: A Cultural History of Tibet*, LTWA, Dharamsala 1981. Karmay also appears to suggest this. See Samten G. Karmay, "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bön," in *The Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 33, Tokyo 1975, pp. 171-218. Lopon Tenzin Namdak, following Bönpo tradition, is adamant in asserting that Tönpa Shenrab was not a Tibetan, but originated in 'Ol-mo lung-ring, which he identifies with Shambhala. But much research needs to be done with regard to this question.

11. 'Ol-mo lung-ring was a mystical domain and not a precise geographical location somewhere northwest of Tibet in historical times. On the significance of 'Ol-mo lung-ring and Shambhala, see Edwin Birnbaum, *The Way to Shambhala: A Search for the Mythical Kingdom beyond the Himalayas*, Anchor Press/ Doubleday, New York 1980, pp. 12-13, 44, 79-81, 102; and especially see Daniel Martin, *Mandala Cosmology. Human Body Good Thought and the Revelation of the Secret Mother Tantras of Bon*, Asiatische Forschungen Band 124, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1994. On the significance of mystical geography in general, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt Brice & World, New York 1957, and also Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1977.

12. On the Zhang-zhung language, see Erik Haarh, "The Zhang-zhung Language: A Grammar and Dictionary of the Unexplored Language of the Tibetan Bönpos," in *Acta Jutlandica* XL: 1, Copenhagen 1968, pp. 7-43. On the relationship of Kinnauri to the Zhang-zhung language, see D.D. Sharma, *A Descriptive Grammar of Kinnauri*, Studies in Tibeto-Himalayan Languages 1, Mittal Publications, Delhi 1988.

13. On the origin of the Mahayana in the Northwest of India, see Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, Louvain 1988. And on the origin of Dzogchen in the same region, see Samten G. Karmay, "A Discussion of the Doctrinal Position of the rDzogs-chen from the 10th to the 11th Centuries, in *Journal Asiatique* 1-2, Paris 1975, pp. 147-155; as well as his *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, ibid. Also see Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996.

14. This possibility has already been suggested by David Snellgrove in *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, Serinia Publications, London 1987.

15. Samten G. Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, pp. 30-38. Some texts assert that it was the first king of Tibet, Nyatri Tsänpo (gnya'-khri btsan-po), who first acquired these scriptures from Zhang-zhung.

16. On the *sMar-yig* script of Zhang-zhung, see Tshering Thar, "The Ancient Zhang Zhung Civilization," *ibid.* Also see Namkhai Norbu, *The Necklace of gZi*, *ibid.*, for examples of this script.

17. On the Bönpo Terma tradition, see Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.* All of the early Terma discoveries of the Bönpos were *sa-gter*, that is, the actual physical texts written in previous times and concealed in various places of Tibet and Bhutan. Most of the actual individuals who discovered these collections of Terma texts were not learned Lamas, but simple farmers and hunters, who could not have possibly forged or otherwise plagiarized these texts. Among the most famous of these early "Tertons" were three Nepali thieves known as the three Atsaras, who in the year 961 CE stole a heavy locked wooden chest from the *Cha-ti dmar-po* temple at Samye monastery. Escaping into the mountains with their loot and thinking that it contained gold, they broke into the chest. But when they opened it, they found only some old texts. Greatly disappointed, they sold these old books to some local village Bönpo Lamas for some gold and a horse.

18. Again see C. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, *ibid.*

19. Oral communication from Lopon Tenzin Namdak. The Lopon spent two years in that region hiding from the Chinese Communists.

In terms of Tibetan history, the tendency is for scholars, both Western and native Tibetan, to begin by focusing on the Indian Buddhist heritage that first came to Central Tibet in the time of king Songtsan Gampo in the 7th century CE. However, Tibet's ancient history was not purely Buddhist. As was pointed out in Namkhai Norbu's *The Necklace of gZi*, *ibid.*, the civilization of Tibet originated at a much earlier time than the 7th century and this occurred in association with the ancient kingdom of Zhang-zhung located in the lake district of Northern Tibet, just south of the vast barren Changtang (byang-thang) plateau, and in the Mt. Kailas region of Western Tibet. Although certain prehistoric monuments were noticed in Western Tibet by G. Tucci when he visited that region, the proto-history of Tibet has otherwise largely been ignored. But it was John Vincent Bellezza, relying upon Bönpo texts, who has been able recently to survey more systematically this region, including the lake country in Northern Tibet. He also noted the similarity of certain of these megalithic monuments and foundations to Iron Age Celtic hill forts.

Both the lakes of Darok (da-roq sman mtsho) and Dang-ra (dang-ra g.yu mtsho) have oral histories speaking of a time of much denser population and more advanced civilization in ancient times. At the Darok (da-roq) and Namtso (gnam-mtsho) lakes, the majority of archaeological sites are located on headlands along the northern shore, thereby giving them a southern exposure. Again, the ruins at Dang-ra and Namtso show a relatively advanced material culture as early as the Neolithic. But it is hard to tell, according to Bellezza, if a particular structure is Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, or the historical

period. According to Lupon Tenzin Namdak, these sites predate the annexation of the Zhang-zhung kingdom by the Yarlung dynasty to the south into their growing Tibetan empire. The sheer numbers of ruins suggest that at one time the material culture of the northern lake country was more highly developed than in the later feudal period. Until the 1950s permanent structures at Namtso consisted of five monasteries, some small hermitages, and some small houses belonging to nomad chieftains. But the settlements at the Dang-ra lake were much more extensive, with four monasteries in full operation, several hermitages, and eight agricultural villages. Nevertheless, this lake country was sparsely settled. The amount of abandoned agricultural land around the shores of the Dang-ra Lake indicates that in the time of the Zhang-zhung kingdom, this lake could boast of a more expanded population and sophisticated infrastructure. On the southern shore of the lake is found the ruins of *Khyung-rdzong*, “the garuda castle,” at times the residence of the Zhang-zhung kings of the *Lig-mirgya* dynasty. See John Vincent Bellezza, “A Preliminary Archaeological Survey of of gNam mtsho and Dang ra g.yu mtsho,” in *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 21, Dharamsala 1996, pp. 58-84.

However, the nomads who now inhabit what was once the Zhang-zhung kingdom and who are descendents of the ancient Zhangzhungpas, some groups even baring the old clan names, as was also noted by Lupon Tenzin Namdak, have, consequent to their conversion to Kagyüdpä Buddhism centuries ago, completely forgotten their Bönpo heritage. They now associate these megalithic structures with the epic hero Gesar of Ling and his lady Lhamo Drugmo (Lhamo ‘brug-mo), who, it is said, had struggled for years in that country in order to defeat the demon king Düdlutsän (bdud klu btsan) with the help from the local mountain god Nyenchen Thanglha (gnyan-chen thang-lha).

On this region and its archeological remains, see John Vincent Bellezza, “High Country Culture: A Civilization Flourished in the Himalayas before Buddhism Reached Tibet,” *Discovering Archaeology* v.1 n.3, May-June 1999, pp. 78-83; as well as Bellezza, “Pre-history of Tibet,” *Himal*, December 1999, Kathmandu, pp.42-43.

20. According to Lupon Tenzin Namdak, Tangchen Mutsa Gyermed (stang-chen dMu-tsha gyer-med) was a disciple of Dränpa Namkha, the prince of Zhang-zhung and not the later Tibetan Dränpa Namkha who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> cen., as is asserted by Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.*, pp.xxxvii, xxxvx. This sage appeared to Lodän Nyingpo (blo-ldan snying-po) in a series of visions, dictating a number of texts, which the later wrote down. At this time, it is said that Lodän Nyingpo was 23 and 24 years old and these visions came to him spontaneously without his conscious control. Even though this process would be designated a Mind Treasure (dgongs-gter) or a pure vision (dag-snang), by the Nyingmapas, the Bönpos classify such vision revelations as *snyan-brgyud* or oral

transmissions, even though they do not represent a continuous oral transmission from the earliest time. In all, Lodän Nyingpo received four cycles of oral transmissions in visions from the Vidyadhāras and the Dakinis. See Karmay, *Treasury* (1972), pp. 183, 340.

21. On the Nyingmapa Terma tradition, see Eva Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1977. Also see Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, Wisdom Publications, London 1986, and Tulku Thondup, *The Tantric Tradition of the Nyingmapas*, Buddhayana, Marion MA 1984.

22. Shenchen Luga (gshen-chen klu-dga', 996-1035) discovered the largest single cache of old Bönpo texts in 1017. See Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.*, p. 126-135. On Shenchen Luga, also see Dan Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2009. The System of the Southern Treasures (lho gter lugs), represents what is generally called "the Nine Ways of Bön" (bon theg-pa rim dgu).

According to a number of hostile medieval Tibetan historians, it was Shenchen Luga who plagiarized a large number of Buddhist texts in order to fabricate the Bönpo works he discovered. This accusation has often been repeated in Western works. However, according to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, Shenchen Luga was barely literate, certainly no scholar, and was in no way equipped to fabricate the *Khams-chen*, the Bönpo Prajnaparamita in sixteen volumes, let alone the many other works he discovered. It is more probable that Shenchen Luga did indeed discover the library that had belonged to the Shen clan, of which it is said he was a descendent, and which was concealed in two large wooden boxes on their estate lands at the time of the persecutions of Bön in the 8th and 9th centuries.

On the genealogies of the clans of dMu-gshen, Bru Zhu, sPa, rMe'u, and Khyung, see Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.*, pp. 3-14. On these Bönpo family lineages, see Dondrup Lhagyal, "Bönpo Family Lineages in Central Tibet," in Karmay and Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bön Studies*, Saujanya Publishing, Delhi 2004, pp. 429-508.

23. On the lineage of Dru (bru), see Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.*, pp. 6-8. The monastery of Yeru Wensakha (bru yi dgon-chen g.yas-ru dben-sa-kha) was founded in 1072 by Druchen Yungdrung Lama (bru-chen g.yung-drung bla-ma, b. 1040). Also on the Dru (bru) clan and the founding of its monastery of Yeru Wensakha, see again Dondrup Lhagyal, "Bönpo Family Lineages in Central Tibet," *ibid.* pp. 445-452.

24. See Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, pp.497n3.

25. See Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.* pp.367-380. On the A-tri system of Dzogchen practice, see Per Kvaerne and Thubten Rikey.

*The Stages of A-khrid Meditation, Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1996.

26. This does not mean that the Dalai Lama considers the Bönpos to be Buddhists. According to most Tibetan Lamas, the Buddhists follow *chos* and the Bönpos follow *bon*. Nevertheless, both Buddhists (*chos-pa*) and Bönpos might be considered “Insiders” (*nang-pa*), as opposed to “Outsiders” or Non-Buddhists (*phyi-pa*), such as Hindus, Jains, Muslims, and Christians.

27. Vairochana of Pagor, who translated works from both the Buddhist and the Bönpo traditions. See Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, Brill, Leiden 1988.

28. The Nine Ways of Bön, or rather, the nine successive vehicles of Bön (*bon theg-pa rim dgu*), as classified in the System of the Southern Treasures (*lho gter lugs*), is expounded in as many chapters in the *gZi-brjid*, the most extensive hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab. These extracts from chapters in the *gZi-brjid* have been translated by David Snellgrove in consultation with Lopon Tenzin Namdak. See David Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, Oxford University Press, London 1967.

29. For the translation of this text, the *Legs-bshad mdzod* by Shardza Rinpoche (*shar-rdza bkra-shis rgyal-mtshan*, 1859-1935), see Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.*, especially pp. 52-53.

30. The treasure texts of the *bsGrags-pa skor gsum*, “The Three Cycles of Proclamations,” were discovered by *gZhod-ston dNgos-grub grags-pa* behind an image of Vairochana Buddha at the *Khom-thing* temple in *Lho-brag* in Southern Tibet around 1100 CE. These Three Cycles of Revelation are so-called because Chimed Tsugphüd (*‘chi-med gtsug-phud*), the spiritual pre-existence of the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab (*ston-pa gshen-rab*), revealed the Dzogchen teachings successively to three sages belonging to three different races of living beings, namely,

1. Lhashen Yongsu Dagma (*lha-gshen yongs su dag-pa*), the sage among the Devas (*lha*), who live in the heavens above (*steng*),
2. Mishen Milü Samlek (*mi-gshen mi-lus bsam-legs*), the sage among human beings (*mi*), who live on the surface of the earth in between (*bar*), and
3. Lushen Yeshe Nyingpo (*klu-gshen ye-shes snying-po*), the sage among the Nagas (*klu*), who live in the netherworld below (*‘og*). These three correspond to the three zones of the world in ancient Bönpo cosmology (*sa gsum*).

31. The other tradition of Dzogchen, the *Gab-pa dgu skor*, “the Nine Cycles of the Secrets,” discovered by Shenchen Luga and also known as “the Nine Cycles of the Lesser Mind Series of Teachings” (*sems smad sde dgu*), consists principally of nine texts known as the *Byang-sems gab-pa dgu skor*, “the Nine



Cycles of Secrets concerning the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind.” Also included here are the *Rig-pa'i khu-byug*, “the Cockoo of Awareness,” and the *Sems phran sde bdun*, “the Seven Lesser Series concerning the Mind Teachings.” The *Gab-pa dgu skor* was rediscovered by Shenchen Luga (gshen-chen klu-dga') in 1017 at a site in Tsang province, along with a large collection of other texts buried in two large wooden boxes.

32. On the life of Meutön (rme'u-ston dgongs-mdzad) and on the *A-khrid* system generally, see Per Kvaerne, “Bönpo Studies: The A-khrid System of Meditation,” Part One: “The Transmission of the A-khrid System,” in *Kailash* v. I, n. 1, pp. 19-50.

33. Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung (bru-chen rgyal-ba g.yung-drung, 1242-1209), composed the practice manual entitled the *A-khrid thun mtshams bco-linga-pa*, “the Fifteen Sessions of Practice for A-khrid.” For the translation of most of this text, see Per Kvaerne and Thubten Rikey, *The Stages of A-khrid Meditation: Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1996. And on the *A-khrid* system generally, see Per Kvaerne, “Bönpo Studies: The A-khrid System of Meditation,” Part One: “The Transmission of the A-khrid System,” in *Kailash* v. I, n. 1, pp. 19-50, Part Two: “The Essential Teachings of the A-khrid System, in *Kailash* v. I, n. 4, pp. 248-332, Kathmandu 1973.

34. On the *rDzogs-chen sems-sde*, see Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, *ibid.*, and also see Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen*, Arkana Penguin Books, London 1993.

35. This Terma tradition is often simply called *rDzogs-chen*. Its principal text, the *rDzogs-chen yang-rtse'i klong gsal*, was attributed to the Bönpo master Nyachen Lishu Tag-ring (snya-chen li-shu stag-rings) who lived in the 8th century and hid many texts during the persecution of Bön. It was reprinted in India in 1973. Again see Karmay, *Treasury*, *ibid.* Also see the transcripts of Lopon Tenzin Namdak's teachings from this tradition, available at Shenten Dargye Ling in France, in both English and French.

36. On the Yetri Thasel (ye-khri mtha'-sel) tradition, see Donatella Rossi, “The *Lo-rgyus chen-mo* in the Collection of the Ye khri mtha' sel attributed to Dränpa Namkha,” in Karmay and Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bon Studies*, Saujanya Publishing, Delhi 2004.

37. On the historical origins of Dzogchen, see Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996, pp. 215-286. Also see Samten G. Karmay, *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, Brill, Leiden 1988, and Per Kvaerne, “The Great Perfection in the Tradition of the Bönpos,” in Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster (eds), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley CA 1983, pp.367-392.

38. On the significance of the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo and on the Mind Transmission, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, Chapter 2, pp. 17-28; and on the Direct Mind-to-Mind transmission, see Chapter 3, pp.29-48.
39. On Sangwa Düpa, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, p. 34, 47-48.
40. On the Oral Transmission of the Siddhas, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, Chapters 3 and 4, pp.29-77.
41. On the enlightened master Tapihritsa and his disciple Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo, and the former's teachings to the latter, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, pp.79-118. On the Zhang-zhung and Darok Lake, see John Bellezza, "Pre-history of Tibet," *Himal*, December 1999, Kathmandu, pp. 42-43, and John Bellezza, "High Country Culture: A Civilization Flourished in the Himalayas before Buddhism Reached Tibet," *Discovering Archaeology*, v.1, n.3, May-June 1999, pp.78-83.
42. For example, see Chogyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1966, who records one such incident during his youth.
43. On the life of Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö (gyer-spungs snang-bzher lod-po), see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, Chapter 5, pp.79-92; and on his connection with the Tibetan king Trisong Detsän and the persecution of Bön in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, see pp. 92-106 and Chapter 7, pp. 119-128. This Ligmincha (lig-mi-rgya), whose name in the Zhang-zhung language means "the king of men," is said, according to Bönpo sources, to have been the last native king of the country of Zhang-zhung. Nevertheless, according to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, "Ligmincha" is a dynastic title born by a series of such kings, who appeared later than the Jyaruchän (bya-ru-can) kings of Zhang-zhung. The latter name means "having the horns of a bird," that is, the Garuda (bya khyung), descriptive of the headdress of these kings.
44. This first revelation to Gyerpungpa was known as "The Prophetic Sayings of Tapihritsa" (rJe ta-pi-hri-tsa'i lung-bstan). For the translation of this discourse, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, Chapter 6, pp.107-117. Also "The Nine Respectful Polite Speeches," pp. 117-118.
45. See "The Intermediate Encounter" (mjäl thebs bar-ma) in Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, pp. 116-117.
46. According to tradition, Tapihritsa gave permission to his disciple to set down the precepts (bka') of Dzogchen for the first time in writing, whereas previously they had been transmitted only in an oral fashion (snyan-rgyud). Moreover, in the text, it is said that the latter did so on conch-white paper with turquoise blue ink. However, although the Chinese invented paper around this time, it seems unlikely it was known in this remote area of Northern Tibet.

More likely the precepts were originally written down on flat pieces of wood, and occasionally on the horn of a yak. Pönchen Tsänpo was said to have carried a blue bag in which he kept pieces of wood on which the Dzogchen precepts were written.

47. On the Six Mahasiddhas from Zhang-zhung Mar, who succeeded Gyerpungpa in the lineage of transmission, as well as their successors, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, Chapter 8, pp.129-161. On Pönchen Tsänpo and his Tibetan disciples, see pp. 137-139, 141-150.

48. On Yangtön Sherab Gyaltsän and Orgom Kundul, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.* pp. 155-157, 163-167.

On the later lineages after Yangtön Sherab Gyaltsän, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, Chapter 9, pp.163-190, 497-500 n.1-17.

49. Oral communication.

50. *Yang gsang gnas-lugs phugs gcod du bshad-pa gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig bstan-pa.*

51. See the Tibetan text of the *Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud* in *History and Doctrine of Bönpo Nispanna Yoga*, Sata-Pitaka Series Indo-Asian Literatures, Volume 73, International Academy of Tibetan Culture, New Delhi 1968; Introduction in English by Lokesh Chandra.

TRANSLATION OF THE ROOT  
TEXT, THE EXCEEDINGLY SECRET  
TEACHING ON THE FRUIT:  
THE TWENTY-ONE LITTLE NAILS:  
gZer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig

Here is contained the text of “The Twenty-One Little Nails,” according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig gi gzhung bzhugs-so).

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the all-pervading and the all-encompassing Great Compassion!

### Introduction

In order to send the streams of consciousness of those fortunate individuals (who are disciples) back into the Base, there exists this nectar of the profound Oral Transmission of the unsurpassed innermost Secret Doctrine, which is Dzogchen. These instructions were revealed (by the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo himself). [1] They uncover the very root of the Base that is the Natural State [2] and represent the highest peak and the ultimate vehicle to enlightenment among all the doorways into Bön. Kuntu Zangpo revealed these Dzogchen teachings, which also represent the very heart of all the Tantras and the very essence of all the Agamas, and taught them as the most excellent among all upadeshas. Truly, they are similar to the eyes of the body.

This Mind Transmission was originally transmitted directly mind-to-mind, whereas subsequently the Oral Transmission was transmitted from mouth to ear with words. [3] Thereafter, these instructions regarding the practice of Dzogchen were written down (by Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo at the behest of the Lord Tapihritsa) by using turquoise blue ink on conch-shell white paper. These two individuals, who were actually Nirmittas, or emanations, taught these instructions to those who were karmically suitable as Shen practitioners. [4] Thereafter the instructions were transmitted successively to certain individuals belonging to later generations (in Zhang-zhung and in Tibet).

May these little nails, which represent twenty-one essential points (pertaining to the innermost practice of Dzogchen), [5] strike the targets which are the minds of those fortunate individuals (who are practitioners!) SAMAYA! [6]

## 1. The Little Nail of Recognizing the Basis of Everything

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is one's own Self-Awareness manifestly revealed!

The individual who is terrified from the very depths of one's heart at the prospects of death and rebirth in Samsara, (and is, therefore, a suitable practitioner for the Dzogchen teachings), should retire into solitude at a remote hermitage, amidst pleasant surroundings. Having come to recognize the Kunzhi, which is the basis of everything, thereupon one should clearly and definitely decide just what is Rigpa, [7] this being the King that is the spontaneously-born and co-emergent awareness. [8] Being profound, very subtle, and difficult to understand, this Rigpa is indeed very rare and precious. For that reason, the Primordial Buddha revealed a very special method for recognizing it.

The procedure for this method is the making a distinction between the mind and the Nature of Mind. (This is as follows.) The essential point of the body (being the appropriate five-point posture) is held tightly, while the horse of the breath is controlled and the doorways of the lamps (or eyes) remain in their own original condition (that is, the eyes are kept half open).

Then, as for the upadesha regarding the making of a distinction between mind and the Nature of Mind: one does not analyze external (appearances) and one does not examine internal (thoughts), nor does one link them with the past or the future (by way of memories or anticipations).

As for demonstrating the full measure of distinguishing between mind and the Nature of Mind: Having dissolved the impurities (as represented by discursive thoughts) into the vast expanse of the Natural State, thereupon the purity (which is Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness) becomes clearly visible as light. Having removed these coverings of the mind (as represented by negative emotions, discursive thoughts, and so on), thereupon Rigpa arises in its nakedness. Having removed the masses of clouds, which are one's own thoughts, then primordial awareness becomes unobscured and unveiled.

As for recognizing the Nature of Mind as distinct from mind, (there are four considerations regarding the Nature of Mind:)

- 1) it is without thoughts,
- 2) it becomes the basis of everything,
- 3) it is a neutral state (displaying neither virtue nor vice), and
- 4) everything possible originates from it and this is unceasing.

These four (represent the qualities of) the Kunzhi and the Nature of Mind.

On the other hand, whatever arises in terms of memories and thoughts (this representing the mind, or thought process), if one remains relaxed (and does not grasp at thoughts), it will liberate of itself. If one just lets it be, it will merge into the Base (which is the Natural State). This is the quality of the thought process or mind.

As for clearly and definitively deciding upon what is mind and what is the Nature of Mind, (this may be accomplished as follows:)

- 1) By means of the three kinds of vows or bindings, one renounces all activities that represent distractions,
- 2) By way of the three relaxations, the thought process itself settles into its natural condition of rest,
- 3) By way of the three methods of just letting things be, one adheres to the original condition of Rigpa,

- 4) By means of the three non-pursuits, the current of karmic traces is interrupted,
- 5) By way of the three cords, one prolongs the duration of the state which has become now familiar,
- 6) By means of the three methods of concealment, one attends to the uncorrupted meaning,
- 7) By way of the three arisings, phenomena are purified into the energy of Rigpa,
- 8) By way of the three liberations, one definitively decides without duality, and
- 9) By way of the three non-obscurations, the full measure of the fruit is apprehended.

The Little Nail of the Recognizing of the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi ngos-'dzin gyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 2. The Little Nail for the Severing of the Roots of Delusion

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is primordially purified of all delusions!

The fortunate disciple, who has abandoned all worldly activities, finding in a supreme place for practice that is without distractions or worldly entertainments, will come to recognize the secondary conditions of delusion and will search for the source of these delusions. One strives to keep the mind focused on the sounds, one fixates the mind on the lights, and one purifies as energy the rays, thereby searching for their source in the dimension of space (that is, Shunyata).

One takes the measure of the medium count of the pulse (that is, neither too fast nor too slow) and one counts the pulse without interruption, neither too long nor too short. One counts one hundred pulse beats as one. By way of eighteen times ten thousand such movements of the pulse, one will finally arrive at the full measure of familiarity with the visions of Thödgal. [9]

As for the rays of Rigpa and the (white) threads of compassion, [10] at the beginning, there will occur visions similar to water falling from the face of a steep mountain. Secondly (after one has trained a little more), they will be similar to water flowing slowly in the current

of a river. Thirdly, even later, they will become like a hawk hovering on its wings (apparently remaining motionless in the same place in the sky). Fourthly, the visions occur similar to a tortoise in a large bowl who cannot escape from it. Fifthly, they will be similar to the sky where the four elements are exhausted and dissolve into the Base.

The Little Nail for the Severing of the Roots of Delusion ('khrul-pa rtsad gcod kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

### **3. The Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is all-pervading and all-encompassing without any partiality or one-sidedness!

The Kunzhi that arises universally is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing. Thus, it is called the Dharmadhatu, or the Dimension of Reality. The nine essential characteristics of this dimension of space having arisen, it is undivided like the sky and it pervades everywhere as a total, even consistency or sameness.

The Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality, the Dharmadhatu (bon-nyid dbyings kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

### **4. The Little Nail of the Primal Awareness of the Nature of Mind**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the self-awareness that is without obscurations and coverings!

When the Kunzhi is present and when the primal cognitions of awareness (rig-pa'i ye'shes) arise within it as spontaneously-born and co-emergent, this is called the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid). The five essential characteristics of primal awareness having arisen, they manifest individually and in an unmixed manner like the rays of the sun (in the sky), abiding equally (and being the same everywhere). [11]

The Little Nail of the Primal Awareness of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid ye-she kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!



## 5. The Little Nail Of The Miniature-Sized Dharmakaya

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the primordially pure Self-Awareness!

As for the King that is the self-originated Awareness and which embodies luminous clarity, this self-originated primal awareness (rang-byung ye-shes) abides as the root and the base of everything. [12] This formless primal awareness is free of any colour, shape, or form. This inexpressible primal awareness is free of any name, word, or letter. This thoughtless primal awareness is free of any thoughts, analysis, or mental processes. This miniature-sized primal awareness (residing in the heart) is the invisible Dharmakaya. [13] It is also known as Shenlha Karpo, the white Shen Deity who cannot be imputed or named; he is the basis of everything and the awareness that is the essence itself.

From this miniature-sized total primal awareness that is clear luminosity in itself, there arises naturally the miniature-sized great light that is visible. This light arises in itself without any coming together as one or as separating again as many. It is luminously clear and visible without being material and it lacks any inherent existence. It is without any form or colour and is lacking in any partiality. It transcends any measure of weight and any measure of size. Therefore, it is called the Dharmakaya that is totally visible. [14] This is also the root Deity that can be imputed and named. Truly, it is Shenlha Karpo, the white Shen Deity. It is also called the awareness that is visible to higher insight.

When there arises the eye of primal awareness with respect to this miniature-sized divine form, it gazes everywhere into the ten directions, but its body has no front or back. Even without looking, it sees everything. This eye is without any obscurations, or coverings and veils. Being without any exterior or interior, this intrinsic awareness arises as total, direct penetration and transparency everywhere. Being without limit or center, it abides (in that state) that is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing. This awareness is the basis for the arising of everything, yet it is not itself tainted or corrupted by anything whatsoever. Before the advent of this intrinsic awareness, which is Rigpa, the King that has abided everywhere from the very beginning, [15] there did not even exist the kalpas (the cycles of time) or the worlds of Samsara and Nirvana.

Yet, at the very beginning of everything, this King that is Awareness has existed. Furthermore, there were created no Buddhas before it because they could not arise without the Precepts, or the Word (bka'), nor were there any sentient beings created before it because they did not yet come forth from karmic causes. There were no individual persons created before it because they were not created from efforts. There existed no primary causes and no secondary conditions before it because everything was naturally unconditioned. The vessel, which is the universe, did not yet originate from very subtle atoms and the physical body was not yet created from the causes which are the elements. It did not come forth from the semen (of the father) nor was it born from the womb of the mother. There was not yet Nirvana or Samsara arising from the causes represented by understanding or delusion, respectively. This self-originated primal awareness simply abided as the root and base of everything. It has been clearly visible as self-arisen light from the very beginning. It was without injury or healing, benefit or harm, increase or decrease, birth or death, spreading or diminishing, happiness or sorrow-- it was without any antidotes. Thus, one speaks of the arising of the light that is without any beginning or end.

The Little Nail of the Miniature-sized Dharmakaya (mtshon-gang bon-sku'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## **6. The Little Nail of the Sambhogakaya that is Unification**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, that Self-Awareness which is the perfect Sambhogakaya!

From the vast expanse of space of the Kunzhi, which is empty, clear, and lacking in any substance or self, there arises the miniature-sized primal awareness that is inherently luminous and without thoughts. Therefore, Dimension and Primordial Awareness are without duality and represent an even consistency (being the same everywhere).

With respect to that, therein the three visible manifestations arise naturally as energy, [16] whereupon the external object and the internal self-awareness are not separate, and yet they are not mixed. All external visions and sounds and all internal particulars of the thought process are perfect in themselves.

Therefore, the unification of Dimension and Primordial Awareness, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. Similarly, the unification of Space and Vastness, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of Skilful Means and Discriminating Wisdom, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of external object and internal consciousness, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of cause and effect, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of body and mind, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of the external vessel of the universe and the nectar which is its living inhabitants, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of the Divine Father and the Divine Mother, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. The unification of the Divine Form (Body) and Primordial Awareness, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. And the unification of the Deity and the Celestial Palace, being always linked together as a pair, represent the Treasury of the state of the Great Perfection. (These are the essential characteristics of the Sambhogakaya.) [17]

The Little Nail of the Sambhogakaya which embodies the Unifications (zung-'brel rdzogs-sku'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 7. The Little Nail of the Impartial Nirmanakayas

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the Self-Awareness that is the Nirmanakaya!

These two, the external objects that are visible and the internal primal cognitions of awareness, are not separate, and yet they are not mixed. [18] They represent the energy that is unified (being always linked as a pair). From this unification, all visions and sounds and all particulars of the thought process (that is, everything external and internal) arise, such as the six sense consciousness aggregates, the six

sense objects, and the six sense faculties that connect them. From this unification, emanates impartially all of the diversity of Samsara and Nirvana. Without any special actions (on the part of a creator), this diversity arises simply as self-arising energy.

In terms of this spatial dimension of visible manifestations, it is inexhaustible and does not diminish (because of the above process). In the sky of Rigpa, there exist no shadows, but only a luminous clarity. Being self-originated and self-liberated, everything is perfected in this single Unique Sphere.

The Little Nail of the Nirmanakayas that are without partiality (phyogs-med sprul sku'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 8. The Little Nail of the Illustrative Examples

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who clears away the darkness of doubts!

The connecting or linking together as a pair of the external object and the (internal) awareness may be illustrated by examples, such as the processes of light being reflected on the water, or being refracted by the crystal, or emanating from the sun, or spreading out from the butter lamp.

On the four occasions, there are the abiding of the Base, the coming together of body and mind (at conception), the separating again of body and mind (at death), and subsequently the arising of delusions (in the Bardo of Existence) respectively. This process may be without obscuration or with obscuration, that is, in a manner that is clear or that is shadowed. But when one sees things as they are in themselves, and by virtue of this understanding, one becomes liberated as a Buddha. Thereby, having obtained power and control over the visions that arise (on these occasions), one turns the wheel of true independence.

However, seeing them as something other than oneself (as existing objectively and independently), sentient beings become deluded by this lack of understanding. Following after and pursuing these visions, one is deceived by illusions, thinking that they are manifestations due to another. Without any karmic cause, these visions came forth from the power of their own nature. They are without any full measure of time and they arise without a beginning or end. [19] Having once definitively deciding upon the heart-essence of reality (that is, the Natural State), which is without delusion, it is not possible to become deluded again.

Once discovering the source of the visions, one does not become deceived again by external appearances.

The Little Nail of the Examples that illustrate (the real meaning) (mtshon byed dpe'i gzer-bu) is now completed.

## 9. The Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is Self-Awareness, neither united with nor separated from anything!

The primal awareness that is self-awareness is hidden and concealed (in the Tsita, or physical heart). [20] As for the Tsita, within it there is the Base that abides, and this Base is similar to the vast dimension of the sky and to the great ocean. As for the Tsita of the lights that are visible, it is similar to a pavilion and canopy of five coloured rainbows. As for the Tsita of the flesh, which is material, it is similar to a highly refined and precious vessel. [21] Moreover, as for the miniature-sized primal awareness that is clear luminosity, it resembles a butter lamp set inside a clay pot. As for these three, the sounds, the lights, and the rays, they are similar to the rays of light coming forth from a butter lamp (in a dark room). [22]

Furthermore, the King that is Awareness arises from the interior of the Tsita. This basis of everything, the Kunzhi, arises from the vast expanse of emptiness, whereas appearances, or visions, arise from the interior hollow space of light in the heart. Therefore, the illusions of the world arise from the middle of the body.

This source of everything, which is completely pure in itself, represents the Treasury of Space. However, gradually by various stages, its projections become polluted and obscured. When there exists no doorway of the senses for them to exit, one will not come to see them. But when the doorway to the treasury is opened, the interior of the treasury will be revealed. [23]

The Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness (rang-rig khong shar gyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 10. The Little Nail of the Pathways Without Deviations

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is Self-Awareness without distortions!

From the miniature-sized primal awareness that is self-awareness, the visible lights arise as five kinds of radiance. From them, in turn, there arise as the five kinds of pure (or subtle elements). From that, in turn, they arise as the five kinds of impure (or gross elements). It is by means of these twenty-five that the body and the mind are produced (in terms of their evolution). [24]

Rigpa may arise along any of the pathways of the channels. When it arises upward (along the central pathway), this represents the road to Nirvana and when arising and proceeding downward, this is the road to Samsara. [25] Arising from the right side (in the white channel), this is the pathway of the faults of the defilements and arising from the left side (in the red channel), this is the pathway of the virtuous qualities. In this way, the three doors of body, speech, and mind represent the pathways leading to the Samsara of the three worlds. Arising at the four doors, there exist the pathways to the four kinds of birth processes. Arising at the five doors, there are the pathways of the five streams (leading to the sense faculties and to the destinies of rebirth). [26] Arising at the nine doors (of the orifices in the body), these are the pathways for the nine stages. However, the central pathway represents the true road for the non-duality of Samsara and Nirvana.

Initially Rigpa arises from the empty dimension of the Kunzhi; then it arises along the hollow tube (or interior space) of visible light (the kati channel); and finally it arises as the continuum of enlightenment (in the space in front of the eyes). Rigpa arises in an unadulterated manner on these pathways naturally. This total primal awareness is the process that illuminates everything. Being without any distortions, it is the pathway for the thigleys. [27] Nevertheless, there exists nothing (fatally attractive) at this doorway for the pathway to Samsara. It is said that the little man of the mind, who is Rigpa, mounts and rides upon the horse of the functional mind (yid), which is principally memory. Without any impediments, he moves by means of the wings of the vital winds (or psychic energies), and thus he traverses along this pathway to enlightenment, which is the central pathway (of the kati), and thereby arrives at the secret door of bliss, which is at the crown of the head. [28]

The King who is Awareness arises in its nakedness. Thereby one escapes from the abundant proliferations of the mental processes and the discursive thoughts. One comes to see one's own face which is self-originated primal awareness. The darkness of delusion and ignorance is thus cleared away. The three worlds and the nine levels are stirred up from their depths. The pathways of the five poisons, which are the emotional defilements (or the kleshas), are now interrupted. The great ocean of Samsara, consisting of the six realms of rebirth, becomes dried up and the gateways to Samsara, represented by the four kinds of birth, are now emptied. Thereupon the Trikaaya self-arises continuously.

The Little Nail of the Pathways that are without deviations (gol med lam gyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 11. The Little Nail of the Lamps that Remove the Darkness

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who removes the darkness of ignorance!

The primal cognitions of self-awareness arise at the five doors of the senses. The five objects are clearly illuminated by this, and there are no discursive thoughts arising as yet. (Rather, it is mental consciousness and the thought processes that attach discursive thoughts to the sense objects.) [29]

The pathway of seeing for Rigpa is the doorway of the (Four) Lamps. The lamp of the water globe-like eye that lassos everything at a distance removes the gloom of darkness from the world. The lamp of the visions of higher insight removes the darkness of the thought process, whereby it is emptied and exhausted. [30] The lamp of the primal cognitions of self-awareness removes the darkness of ignorance inflicted by the thought process. The lamp of the Dimension of the Kunzhi removes the darkness of the thought process where one grasps at partialities and one-sidedness. Thus, the King that is Awareness arises and sees (everything denuded of discursive thoughts and conceptions). It arises in the empty space of the Kunzhi. The visions arise in the hollow tube of light (or interior space of the kati channel) and total luminous clarity arises at the doorway of the lamp that is the eyes.

Just as the lotus blossom is projected out of the muck of the swamp, so the King that is Awareness is projected out through the hollow tube

of the kati channel. Just as the sun is free of all darkness in itself, so the King that is Awareness is naturally free of all darkness and obscurations (due to discursive thoughts). Thereupon, the six eyes of the higher insight spontaneously arise at the forehead (like a third eye). [31] These eyes see (everything) in its nakedness and thus the Primordial State is realized in its complete perfection.

The Little Nail of the Lamps that removes the Darkness (mun sel sgron-ma'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 12. The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is neither united with nor separated from the Trikaya!

The primal cognitions of self-awareness represent the primordially pure Dharmakaya. The linking of the body and the mind represents the enjoyment of the Sambhogakaya. The diversity of various different actions and activities represent the Nirmanakaya. [32]

Because Rigpa arises from the interior of the Base, its heart-essence is neither united nor separated (in terms of anything). Because the pathway of Rigpa is forcefully purified, there exist here no deviations on the path. Because the Fruit (or result) arises at the doorways of the senses, the Trikaya is revealed (in the empty space in front of the eyes) as unobscured and without coverings (by discursive thoughts). The self-awareness arising from the vast expanse within the physical heart is indeed the Dharmakaya. On the pathway of the kati channel, the Nature is the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya (as pure visions) is self-arising at the doorways of the lamp of the eyes. The self-originated primal awareness from the interior space abides as Primordial Buddhahood. But it abides as Buddhahood coming into completion when it is spontaneously perfected along the hollow tube of the kati channel. With respect to seeing (the visions) in the space in front of the eyes, it sees Fully Manifest Buddhahood without any obscurations. Because one recognizes this as the face of the Kunzhi, one meets with the Mother who is the actual Natural State.

The darkness of the obscurations and the coverings is cleared away by the emerging of this previously concealed primal awareness. Because



the light of naked Rigpa overflows effulgently, the Trikaya spontaneously arises into visible manifestation. [33] Moreover, because one recognizes these secondary causes of delusion, one comes to definitively decide upon the source of delusions. Because one has already had the Natural State pointed out directly (by the master), one comes to exhaust all doubts and all dualistic thinking. Because one opens the door to the Treasury of Rigpa, one comes to discover the interior source that is the Treasure of the Kunzhi.

The Twelfth Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points (gnad gsum ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

### 13. The Little Nail of the Mandalas

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the root deity who is Self-Awareness!

As for the visible display of the Mandalas of the spontaneously perfected mudras, or divine forms, the space and the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, in which they manifest and which is empty and luminously clear, is the Dharmadhatu, the Dimension of Reality. Primal awareness is the miniature-sized self-originated Dharmakaya (dwelling in the center of the heart), whereas these three, the sounds, the lights, and the rays, represent the Sambhogakaya, and the three-fold magical apparitions that emanate everywhere represent the Nirmanakaya. [34] The five visible lights are the basis for the realms and the mandalas (that appear in the visions). The pavilions of thigleys spontaneously come to form the celestial palaces of the Five Families of the Buddhas. [35] In terms of the Body of Higher Insight, various different Rupakayas will arise. The three-fold unification (of Body, Speech, and Mind) is the basis for the emanations of the Trikaya. But they usually occur five by five, such as the Five Bodies, the Five Families, the Five Wisdoms (or primal cognitions), the five Lords and Ladies, the five principal deities and their retinues, and so on, being inconceivable emanations in terms of their numbers. Indeed, this Great Mandala is natural and not created by the efforts of the mind.

With regard to the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind), the Mandalas of the Trikaya are perfect and complete. Because these Mandalas arise of themselves spontaneously, they are unsought for and uncreated (by

any agent or creator). Nevertheless, because these visions are without any inherent existence, one should be without any attachment to them or desire for them.

The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Mandalas (dkyil-'khor ngo-sprad kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

#### **14. The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to its Uniqueness**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Divine Form that is self-originated and unique!

The Nature of Mind represents the essence of the mind, space represents the inherent radiance of mind, and the Dharmata, the Nature of Reality (bon-nyid), represents the ultimate culmination of mind. [36] They pervade and encompass everywhere without any exterior or interior. The full measure of these visions represents the visible manifestation of the enlightened Body. The full measure of the sounds represents the creative manifestation of the enlightened Speech. The full measure of memories and thoughts represents the creative manifestation of the enlightened Mind. The full measure of origination represents the creative manifestation of the enlightened Qualities. And the full measure of activities represents the creative manifestation of the enlightened Activities. They are all perfected within this Unique Sphere.

The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Uniqueness or Singularity (nyag-gcig ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

#### **15. The Little Nail of the Definitive Decision**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is without any obscurations or karmic traces!

Because one has clearly and definitively decided upon the karmic traces in relation to the Kunzhi, by way of liberating the knots of attachments, one cuts through the cords of grasping. Because one cuts off the roots of the karmic seeds, it is said that one will not revert again (to Samsara).

Luminous clarity and emptiness constitute the Base, whereas the elements and all phenomenal existence represent energy. However, if one follows after these visions, this represents the the system of delusion. But if one looks upon this as a fault, it also represents a deviation from the view (because this represents a discursive thought). However, if one relaxes in the face of this self-arising, that represents the proper method of the Path, that is to say, liberating them into the vast expanse of space. If one understands this without duality, thereby the Fruit will become visibly manifest spontaneously.

The primal awareness that is without activity represents the Base, whereas the diversity of activities represents energy. However, if one follows after them, this represents the system of delusion. But if one looks upon this as a fault, it also represents a deviation from the view. However, if one relaxes in the face of this self-arising, this represents the proper method of the Path, liberating them into the vast expanse of space. If one understands this without duality, thereby the Fruit will become visibly manifest spontaneously.

The primal awareness that is inexpressible represents the Base, whereas the diversity of expressions in words represent energy. However, if one follows after them, this represents the system of delusion. But if one looks upon this as a fault, it also represents a deviation from the view. However, if one relaxes in the face of this self-arising, that truly represents the proper method of the Path, liberating them into the vast expanse of space. If one understands this without duality, thereby the Fruit will become visibly manifest spontaneously.

Primal awareness without discursive thoughts represents the Base, whereas the diversity of memories and thoughts represent energy. However, if one follows after them, this represents the system of delusion. [37] But if one looks upon this as a fault, it also represents a deviation from the view. However, if one relaxes in the face of this self-arising, that truly represents the proper method of the Path, liberating them into the vast expanse of space. If one understands this without duality, thereby the Fruit will become visibly manifest spontaneously.

Self-originated primal awareness represents the Base, whereas the five poisons and the kleshas, or negative emotions, represent energy. However, if one follows after them, this represents the system of delusion. But if one looks upon this as a fault, it also represents a

deviation from the view. However, if one relaxes in the face of this self-arising, that truly represents the proper method, of the Path, liberating of them into the vast expanse of space. If one understands this without duality, thereby the Fruit will become visibly manifest spontaneously.

The primary cognitions of self-awareness are the Base, whereas the sounds, lights, and rays represent energy. However, when one grasps at their being material and real, this represents the system of delusion. If one looks upon this as the supreme view, it also represents a deviation from the correct view. However, deciding clearly and definitively upon their nature is the proper method and liberating them as self-manifestations represents the proper Path. If one understands that they are without any inherent nature and are insubstantial, thereby the Fruit itself will arise as energy (in terms of visions).

The Little Nail of the Clear and Definitive Decision regarding the Mother and the Son (ma bu dmar thag bcad-pa'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## **16. The Little Nail of the State of Sameness that is Beyond Conception**

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who goes beyond everything and is himself nowhere established!

The Dimension of the Kunzhi is without distinctions and does not fall into partialities. The primal cognitions of Rigpa are without action and without expression in words. The mental processes of memories are without a base in words. Nevertheless, they are unceasing. However, one should be without desire or aversion with respect to these three, the sounds, the lights, and the rays. One should not apprehend them as either polluted or unpolluted, inferior or supreme. One sees them as neither purity nor impurity, neither as virtuous qualities nor as defects.

Samsara and Nirvana are inseparable and cannot to be set apart. Enlightened Buddhas and ordinary sentient beings are not two distinct orders of being. [38] There is no entering on to the path of Rigpa nor any travelling upon it. The Bodhichitta in itself is without any philosophical tenets or vehicles to enlightenment. There is no good or bad, high or low in this condition of the sameness and equality (of all manifestations of phenomena).

The Little Nail of the State of the Sameness (of everything) that is beyond Conception (la zla mnyam-nyid kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

### 17. The Little Nail of the Final Extinction

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Body of the Ultimate King!

The four elements dissolve into the dimension of space and all phenomenal existence becomes exhausted and extinguished into the Base (at the time of the final visions). The Tantras, the vehicles, and the doorways to Bön are all exhausted into the Dimension of Reality (the Dharmadhatu). Mind and the contents of mind are exhausted into the dimension of the Nature of Mind. [39] All of the different actions and agents are exhausted into the dimension that is without action. All the various different verbal expressions are exhausted into the dimension that is without expression. The masses of thoughts, memories, and notions are exhausted into the dimension that is without thought. The different paths that are created by the thought process are exhausted into the dimension which transcends the thought process. [40] The philosophical tenets that grasp at partialities are exhausted into the dimension that is without partialities. These three, the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are exhausted into the dimension of Rigpa. Everything without exception belonging to Samsara and Nirvana becomes exhausted and extinguished into the Bodhichitta, which is the Base (the Nature of Mind).

However, the arising of visions and appearances are not thereby exhausted, annihilated, stopped, or blocked. However, they arrive at their source of origination and at their ultimate goal of liberation. Nevertheless, they do not become exhausted and cease entirely; they occur uninterruptedly in the three times (in terms of the enlightened activities of a Buddha).

The Little Nail of the Final Extinction (zad-pa mthar-thug gi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

### 18. The Little Nail of the Thoughts at Dying

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who protects all living beings with his compassion!

At the final time (after death) when the body and the mind separate (and when consciousness finds itself) at the Boundary between the two, happiness and sorrow, then to the individual of superior capacity, one should teach the upadesha of the self-arising of primal awareness. [41] One should expound the instruction to the deceased that the diversity of appearances (in the dying process is actually without any inherent existence) and represent equality (that is to say, they are all of the nature of one's own mind). One will come thereby to see one's own face--there is no doubt of this!

To the individual of intermediate capacity, one should teach the upadesha that these self-manifestations are in fact maya, or illusions. One should expound the instruction that the deceased should be without any desire or attachment with regard to them. Thereby the doors to rebirth will be closed-- there is no doubt of this!

And to the individual of inferior capacity, one should teach the instruction regarding (meditating and calling upon) the Guru and the Yidam. One should expound the instruction that the deceased should feel intense longing and devotion (toward the Guru). Thereby the deceased will obtain a happy destiny of rebirth—there is no doubt of this!

The Little Nail of Producing Thoughts at the Time of Dying ('chikha sems bskyed kyi gzer-bu) is hereby completed. SAMAYA!

## 19. The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the perfect Buddha, who is self-liberation itself!

The Basic Nature is revealed at the time of liberation and delusion. This occurs when the external elements disintegrate into their original condition and when the internal elements become concealed (within the folds of the Kunzhi itself). [42] The subject, the objects, and the discursive thoughts are all dissolved and reabsorbed into the vast expanse of the space of the Nature of Mind. At that time, Rigpa abides in its nakedness and self-originated primal awareness finds itself without any obscurations or coverings.

For certain fortunate individuals, who have come to a clear and definitive decision and who have torn open the three nets, the three powers (of the lion and of the garuda) are perfected. If one does not

liberate at that time, then the first Bardo will arise. As for the lights experienced at that time in the Bardo, the realms one perceives are without either centers or boundaries. This is similar to the arising of rainbows in the sky. As for the sounds that are perceived, they are immaterial and resound in the vast expanse of space. For example, this is similar to the process of thunder, which is self-originated and is uninterrupted during the storm. As for the rays, they represent magical apparitions and display themselves in an unpredictable manner, being similar to the opening up of a glossy silk cloth or of a woollen blanket in the bright sunlight.

For the individual who is familiar with such visionary experiences and knows well the contemplation of the Natural State, the divine forms and the mandalas arise as perfect and complete. At that time, by way of the clairvoyant knowledges and the recollections, the three kinds of manifestations arise in a fresh and novel manner, and one does not carry on in the usual and familiar manner with them. Thereupon the current of awareness is carried back into the Base, which is the Natural State. In these visions, one sees one's own face. This is similar to seeing the outlines of one's own face on the surface of the mirror. [43] Self-awareness is itself meeting itself. For example, it is similar to the crown prince being known and recognized as such throughout his city. Ignorance and delusion are awakened and purified into their own original condition. For example, it is similar to the sun rising over an island lying in darkness. The King that is Rigpa remains in its own original condition. For example, this is similar to the crown prince who remains in his own capital.

The sounds, the lights, and the rays are purified in the mind. For example, it is similar to the gathering up of the rays of the sun into their mother (the sun). The impure becomes liberated into the vast expanse of the pure. For example, this is similar to ice dissolving into the lake. What is polluted is pacified into the state of the unpolluted. For example, it is similar to the salt dissolving into water. Karma and the kleshas (the negative emotions) are liberated into the Base. For example, it is similar to lustre of the sky being cleared of the masses of clouds. It stirs up the depths of the Samsara of the three realms. For example, it is similar to where the source of the river having dried up, the flow of the river is cut off and ceases. Samsara and Nirvana are without duality and are purified

into the Base. For example, it is like the fading away of the image of the rainbow when it is dissolving into the sky. (What one sees) arises from the power of the Mandalas of the Trikaya. (For example, these Nirmanakayas) are similar to the rays of the sun or the images of the moon reflected on the water.

For those individuals who have little familiarity with this, the King that is Rigpa remains in concealment. [44] Having abided there for at least from one to three days, within seven days the purity (of the visions) will gradually arise. But these realms will not arise as perfected and complete. Due to the presence of certain secondary conditions, there still may come about liberation for the individual in the Bardo. But if one does not find liberation at that time, there will arise various impure visions. However, one may also see pure visions in the Bardo of Existence, and one still has the possibility to liberate quickly from this continuum of transmigration into a fortunate place of rebirth.

Those individuals who lack access to the doorway of the instructions for Dzogchen will not even recognize the clarity of the Natural State. Their visions are perceived as being real and as manifestations due to other extrinsic causes. Thereby the seal of delusion is affixed upon them and so they continue to wander lost in Samsara. [45] Because of that, the fortunate individual should come to a clear and definitive decision.

The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 20. The Little Nail that Removes Extreme Views

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who removes all the darkness of wrong thoughts!

If one should teach these instructions concerning the ultimate essential points to those unsuitable vessels which do not possess the appropriate karma and good fortune, some of these individuals will then grasp at a substantial self. Thus, they will deviate into the places of rebirth among the Tirthikas who grasp at eternalist views. [46] On the other hand, some may say that these appearances (the visions) do not exist at all and thereby they will deviate into the position of the nihilists, who postulate that phenomena are empty and are totally exhausted into nothingness and cease to exist entirely. [47]



Again, among some individuals eternalism is held to be the supreme view and thereby they will deviate into places of rebirth among the gods or Devas who are long lived and enduring. [48] For some who have proud thoughts, they will become fettered by what they know and with selfishness. Some will grasp at the materiality of phenomena and because they become attached (to phenomena) and grasp at this materiality, they will become bound up with Samsara again. [49] Some individuals will become angry and terrified and so they will deviate into the lower vehicles that are meant for lesser intellects. There exist some individuals who will revile and belittle the Dzogchen teachings, thereby they postpone and delay the matter and will not meet again with the teachings for another kalpa. Some individuals will behave in a crazy manner with regard to these instructions and because they transgress their samaya vows, they will fall into the evil destinies of rebirth.

Therefore, this is a very risky case, and consequently, these excellent upadeshas should be kept concealed as a treasure of the Mind in the Kunzhi. Without it being widely disseminated, it should be kept under the seal of secrecy.

The Little Nail that removes the Extremes of Wrong Thoughts (log rtog mtha' sel gyi gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## 21. The Little Nail of the Visibly Manifest Fruit

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Trikaya become fully manifest!"

Clearly and definitively deciding upon the ultimate meaning with regard to the Natural State without any doubts whatsoever, then these fruits will surely come forth. By means of clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the Kunzhi, all hopes and fears of Samsara and Nirvana will swept aside. By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is Rigpa, thereby all delusions and obscurations will become purified from the very beginning. By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the thought process, primal awareness will arise as energy. By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the basis of delusions, subsequently Rigpa does not change or reverse itself.

By exhausting and overthrowing the emotional defilements, or kleshas, one cuts off the currents of Samsara. [50] By exhausting and overthrowing the paths, one will come into the place of great bliss. By

exhausting and overthrowing all the philosophical tenets adhered to by oneself, as well as by others, one will become without partiality or one-sidedness. By exhausting and overthrowing the elements, one does not diminish into mere space. By exhausting and overthrowing the distinctive characteristics of things, one will not come to transfer somewhere else in terms of the Dimension. By exhausting and overthrowing sentient being, there will be no further birth or death regarding the mind, or stream of consciousness. By exhausting and overthrowing the three doors, the three energies are perfected with respect to the body. By exhausting and overthrowing the three manifestations, there will arise the three-fold mandalas.

Because the two dimensions arise in oneself, one will be blissful in the place (and condition) of the Ultimate Reality (bon-nyid). Because the two lights arise within oneself, one is blissful without limitation or diminishment. Because one arises as the Swastikakaya, or Indestructible Body, one will be free of the enemy of unhappiness (and mortality). Because the six eyes arise within oneself, there will be no obscurations due to anything whatsoever. Because the Trikaya arises in oneself, there will exist no hopes or fears regarding the Fruit, which is the Trikaya. By opening the doorway of the Treasury of the Mind, all needs with respect to oneself will become perfected and fulfilled. [51]

The Little Nail of the Fruit which has become Visibly Manifest (mngon 'gyur 'bras-bu'i gzer-bu) is now completed. SAMAYA!

## Conclusion

The foregoing exposition represents the utmost nectar of the Tantras, the Agamas, and the Upadeshas, the ultimate culmination of all the paths, the highest peak of all the vehicles to enlightenment, the oral transmission of the Siddhas, and the ultimate attainment of those fortunate individuals (who belong to later generations). Therefore, these Little Nails, which are the twenty-one essential points regarding the practice of Dzogchen, are hereby completed. Having been transmitted successively by various Mahasiddhas, this has spread widely.

SARVA MANGALAM!

## Notes to Chapter Two: The Translation of the Root Text

1. *sKal-ldan shes rgyud gzhi la bkyal phyir/ yang gsang bla-med snyan-rgyud zab-mo' bcud*. An individual possessing good fortune (skal-ldan) indicates an individual who has the good karma to come into contact with the teachings once again in one's present life and, therefore, becomes a disciple and practitioner.
2. *gNas-lugs gzhi rtsa gcod-pa'i gdams-pa*. Literally "cut the root," but here it has the meaning "to uncover." It is delusion that is cut by awareness.
3. *dGongs-pas thugs rgyud tshig gis snyan du rgyud*. Before the time of Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö, this Dzogchen tradition was transmitted only in an oral fashion in the Zhang-zhung language.
4. *sPrul-pa'i skyes-bus las-can gshen la bstan*. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, the word *gshen* might be translated as "practice" and *gshen-po* as "practitioner." Generally Shenpo and Bönpo are taken as equivalent, whatever may have been their original and ancient significance. On Tapihritsa and Gyerpungpa, as well as those masters in the later transmission lineages, see Reynolds, *The Oral Transmission from Zhang-Zhung*, *ibid.*, pp. 79-128.
5. *Nyi-shu rtsa gcig kyi gzer-bu 'di*. The term *gzer-bu*, "a little nail" indicates an essential point (gnad) in any discussion or teaching.
6. "Samaya" is Sanskrit for "I promise!"
7. *Kun-gzhi ngos bzung rig-pa dmar thag-chad*. The term *dmar thag-bcad*, literally "to cut the rope with intensity," means to come to a clear and definitive decision due to direct immediate experience where no doubt remains.
8. *Lhan-cig skyes-pa'i rig-pa'i rgyal-po*. Rigpa is often called "the king that is intrinsic awareness" (rig-pa'i rgyal-po) because it is the king, or the chief, ruling over all other mental functions and operations. *Lhan-cig skyes-pa* (Skt. sahaja), literally "together born," indicates that something is co-emergent or arises simultaneously with something else. For example, a very subtle mental consciousness arises in the Bardo simultaneously with the appearance of the sounds, lights, and rays that manifest as the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind.
9. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, this refers to the time it takes from the beginning of the practice of Thödgal until one attains Phowa Chenpo, that is, for a suitable practitioner to arrive at the final visions.
10. *Rig-pa'i zer dang thugs-rje'i nyag-thag ni*. The Thödgal visions initially arise as specks or tiny spots (thig-le) and as threads (nyag-thag) in the empty space in front of the eyes.
11. *Ye-shes kyi mtshan-nyid lnga shar*. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, this means the five primal cognitions (ye-shes) arise and abide as individually

distinguished, although actually these five represent the aspects of a single gnosis, or primal awareness. In many English translations, Yeshe (ye-shes) is translated as “wisdom.” But with regard to the technical use of the term, this is confusing, because Yeshe is an immediate intuition of reality non-dual in nature, which occurs before the mind or thought process, which creates the perception, comes into operation. It is the initial awareness (shes-pa) that arises at the very beginning (ye nas). On the other hand, wisdom (shes-rab) is a higher intellectual function that dualistically discriminates between what is real and unreal, true or false, good and bad, and so on.

12. *gSal-ba rang-'byung rig-pa'i rgyal-po ni/ rang-'byung ye-shes kun gyi gzhir rtsar gnas.* That is to say, Rigpa, or awareness, is fundamental to existence and does not arise from something prior to itself or something simpler and more fundamental than itself. It does not evolve, but is primordial and present from the very beginning.

13. *Ye-shes tshon gang snang-med bon gyi sku.* According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, *tshon-gang*, literally means “thumb-sized,” which suggests something minute or very small, about the size of a single thumb joint. This appellation is purely symbolic because the Dharmakaya has no actual size or form in itself. This aspect of the Dharmakaya is beyond conception by the finite intellect. Therefore, it is said to be unmanifest and invisible (snang-med). It cannot be seen by the eye of the intellect.

14. *sNang-ba chen-po bon gyi sku zhes bya.* There is also an aspect of the Dharmakaya that is visible as primordial light and this is called “the great vision” (snang-ba chen-po). This light is immaterial; it is the light of primordial awareness (ye-rig).

15. *Kun gyi thog-mar rig-pa'i rgyal-po byung.* That is to say, there was no creation and no existence prior to Rigpa, the primordial light.

16. *sNang-ba rnam gsum rang-bzhin rtsal du shar.* The three manifestations or appearances of the sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum) represent the manifestation of the inherent energy (rang rtsal) of the Nature of Mind, The term *zer*, “ray” in this context actually means a form or an image.

17. As for the ten unifications (zung-'brel bcu), literally “joined as a pair,” they are the unification of Dimension and Primordial Awareness (dbyings ye-shes zung-'brel), the unification of Space and Vastness (mkha' klong zung 'brel), the unification of Skillful Means and Discriminating Wisdom (thabs shes zung 'brel), the unification of (external) Object and (internal) Consciousness (yul shes zung 'brel), the unification of Cause and Effect (rgyu 'bras zung 'brel), the unification of Body and Mind (lus sems zung 'brel), the unification of the external vessel of the Universe and the nectar which represent its living Inhabitants (snod bcud zung 'brel), the unification of the Divine Father and the

Divine Mother (yab yum zung 'brel), the unification of the Divine Form (Body) and Primordial Awareness (sku ye-shes zung 'brel), and the unification of the Deity and the Celestial Palace (lha gzhal-yas zung 'brel). These represent the essential characteristics of the Sambhogakaya, which has a visible form, or Rupakaya.

18. *sNang-ba'i yul dang rig-pa'i ye-shes gnyis/ ma phye ma 'dres zung du 'brel-ba'i rtsal*. External appearances or visible objects (snang-ba'i yul) arise before the sense faculties and simultaneously there arises a pure cognition of awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) Thus, appearance and consciousness are linked like the two sides of a coin, representing different aspects.

19. *Las kyi rgyu med rang-bzhin shugs las byung/ dus kyi tshad med thog mtha' med nas shar*. It is the discursive mind which sequences events and therefore creates time, whereas the Natural State is outside any temporal sequence. For the Natural State, there is no temporality or the full measure of time (dus kyi tshad). So, in this context, one cannot speak of a real beginning or end.

20. *Rang-rig ye-shes gab cing sbas*. According to Thödgal practice, the light of awareness or Rigpai Yeshe, abides in the hollow space inside the heart. See Chapter 6, note 6. The heart is the center for the intensity of the natural bioluminescence of the human body.

21. *gNas-pa gzhi'i tsi-ta ni/ nam-mkha'i dbyings dang rgya-mthso 'dra/ snang-ba 'od kyi tsi-ta ni/ gzha'-tshon sna lnga'i gur phub 'dra/ dgos-pa sha'i tsi-ta ni/ 'phra-men rin-chen bum-pa'i 'dra*. The Tsita is the physical heart made of flesh, as distinguished from the visualized heart-center in Tantric practice, usually called *snying-po*. Nevertheless, the hollow space in the center of the physical heart is said to contain this tiny spark of light.

22. *gSal-ba'i ye-shes tshon-gang ni/ bum-pa nang gi mar-me 'dra/ sgra 'od zer dang gsum-po ni/ mar-me 'od zer rtsal dang 'dra/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po khong nas shar/ kun-gzhi stong-pa'i klong nas shar/ snang-ba 'od kyi sbubs nas shar/ sgyu-ma lus kyi dbus shar*. Rigpa or primordial awareness is like a butter lamp placed inside a vase or clay pot. Its light streams out through any holes or openings in the walls of the pot, like a jack 'o lantern on a dark night.

23. *Kun-'byung rnam-dag nam-mkha'i mdzod/ rim-pa du-mas sbags te sgrib/ sgo-mo med na mthong mi 'gyur/ mdzod sgo phye la mdzog phugs bstan*. The practice of Thödgal is the method to open the doorway to the Treasury of the Inner Light.

24. *Rang rig-pa'i ye-shes tshon-gang las/ snang-ba'i 'od gdangs rnam lnga shar te/ de las dans-ma rnam lngar shar/ de las snyigs-ma rnam lngar shar/ nyi-shu rtsa lngas lus sems bskyed*. Out of the inexhaustible effulgence of the Natural State emerges the energies of the five pure lights, which then gradually

become five impure lights and eventually the five elements out of which the universe and the human body is created. Each of these elements has five aspects in terms of the other elements, such as the space of space, the air of space, the fire of space, and so on. Therefore, there is a total of twenty-five elements, as explained below in the translation of the commentary in Chapter 4.

25. *rTsa'i lam rig-pa shar zhes-pa ni/ yar la shar-ba myang 'das lam/ mar la shar-ba 'khor-ba'i lam/ g.yas nas shar-ba skyon gyi lam/ g.yon nas shar-ba yon-tan lam/ sgo gsum kham ssum 'khor-ba'i lam.* The central pathway (dbu-ma'i lam) should be distinguished from the central channel, or Avadhuti; in the practice of Tantra and Yoga. This is a special channel, called kati, and the smooth white channel ('jam dkar rtsa), which connects the heart with the two eyeballs and through which the light of Rigpa moves to become projected from the eyes into the empty space in front of them. Moving upward through this central pathway represents the road to Nirvana and downward represents falling again into rebirth in Samsara.

26. Here the commentary indicates two meanings: the five pathways leading to the five sense faculties and the five pathways leading to the five destinies of rebirth. The latter are made five by making the Devas and the Asuras into a single realm of rebirth.

27. *Kun-gzhi stong-pa'i dbyings las shar/ snang-ba 'od kyi sbubs las shar/ dbu-ma byang-chub rgyud las shar/ ma slad rig-pa gnyug-ma'i lam/ ye-shes chen-po gsal-ba'i lam/ yo-gal med-pa thig-le'i lam.* Thigley (thig-le, Skt. bindu) in Tantra means an essence drop or quantum of energy, but the reference in this context is to tiny points or spheres of light that initially arise in Thödgal visions.

28. *Rig-pa sems kyi mi-pho de/ dran-pa yid kyi rta la zhon/ thogs med rlung gi gshog-pas skyod/ dbu-ma byang-chub lam las gshegs/ spyi-gtsug bde-ba'i gsang sgor byon.* The man is lame and the horse is blind. The vital winds drive the horse forward. Here the reference is to the practice of Phowa, or the transference of consciousness at the time of dying.

29. *Rang-rig ye-shes sgo lngar shar/ yul lnga gsal la rtog-pa med.* Yeshe, or primal awareness, arises at the doors of the senses prior to the functions of the mind coming into operation, such functions as perception, naming, and so on. Therefore, this primal awareness is prior to and more fundamental than perception, which is the program that recognizes an object and applies a name and concept to it.

30. *Lhag-mthong snag-ba'i sgron-ma yis/ stong zad blo'i mun-pa sel/ rang-rig ye-shes sgron-ma yis/ ma rig blo'i mun-pa sel,* that is to say, the darkness of the thought process (blo'i mun-pa). There is one eyeball, but there are four Lamps

associated with it, meaning that these functions occur simultaneously. A Lamp (sgron-ma) means a source of light, in this case, the light of awareness.

31. *Lhag-mthong spyan drug dpral du-shar*. These six eyes (spyang drug) are as follows:

1. the eye of primal awareness which is the arising of Rigpa without obscuration (de yang rig-pa ma sgrib-par shar-ba'i ye-shes kyi spyang),
2. the eye of Rigpa because it arises without confusion (ma rmongs-par shar-bas rig-pa'i spyang),
3. the eye of compassion because it arises unceasingly and unobstructedly (ma 'gags-par shar-bas thugs-rje'i spyang),
4. the eye of discriminating wisdom because it arises without conceptions or imaginings (mi dmigs-par shar-bas shes-rab kyi spyang),
5. the eye of emanation because it arises without admixtures (ma 'dres-par shar-bas sprul-pa'i spyang), and
6. the eye of the Nature of Mind because it arises without modifications or fabrications (ma bcos-par shar-bas sems-nyid kyi spyang). These eyes see everything in its nakedness and thus the Primordial State is realized in its complete perfection.

32. *Rang-rig ye-shes ka-dag bon gyi sku/ lus sems 'brel-ba longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku/ bya-ba byed-pa sna-tshogs sprul-pa'i sku*. The inner light of awareness located in the heart corresponds to the Dharmakaya, which is the ultimate source of this light. The manifestation of the inner light along the translucent kati channel corresponds to the Sambhogakaya, and the manifestation of the light of awareness at the eyeballs and in the empty space in front of the eyes corresponds to the Nirmanakaya. These are the three essential points (gnad gsum).

33. *Ye-shes gab skungs btan-pas sgrib g.yogs mun-pa sangs/ rig-pa gcer-bur phyung-bas sku-gsum mngon du shar*. The light of the Dharmakaya overflows through the kati channel and the eyeballs, thereby illuminating the empty space in front of the eyes, where the visions of Thödgäl appear. This is like images projected by a magic lantern. The Trikaya has actually abided in the Kunzhi in the heart from the very beginning, but now, because of this process of projection, it appears in the space in front of the practitioner. These projections appear as magical apparitions or holograms (cho-'phrul).

34. *Ye-shes tshon-gang rang-'byung bon gyi sku/ sgra 'od zer gsum longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku/ cho-'phrul rnam gsum cir yang sprul-pa'i sku*. The inner light in the heart corresponds to the Dharmakaya, the three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays projected through the kati channel correspond to the Sambhogakaya, and the magical apparitions in the empty space in front correspond to the Nirmanakaya.

35. *Thig-le gur-khang rigs lnga'i gzhal-yas khang*. The thighs, the tiny spots or spheres of light, now manifest in the five colors and spontaneously come to form pavilions or tents (gur-khang) and celestial palaces (gzhal-yas khang) of the Five Buddha Families (rigs lnga).
36. *Sems-nyid sems yi ngo-bo/ nam-mkha' sems kyi rang gdangs/ bon-nyid sems kyi mthar-thug/ phyi nang med-par khyab bdal*. These visions come to pervade all of space, even eclipsing one's normal impure karmic vision. The Dimension of Reality (bon-nyid dbyings) refers the external dimension beheld by the senses and the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid) to the internal dimension of the mind.
37. *rTog-med ye-shes gzhi/ dran rtog sna-tshogs rtsal/ rjes su 'breng-ba 'khrul lugs*. Pursuing these visions as real is like chasing after rainbows. It only leads one into the system of delusion ('khrul lugs).
38. *'Khor-ba dang myang 'das dbyer-med bcad du med/ sangs-rgyas sems-c moment at the Boundary providesan gnyis-med tha-dad med*. Nirvana and Samsara, enlightened Buddhas and deluded sentient beings all have the same source, that is, the Natural State.
39. *Sems-nyid dbyings su sems dang sems 'byung zad*. This Dimension of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid dbyings) is the Dharmadhatu. When the text simply says "Dimension" (dbyings), generally this means the Dharmadhatu.
40. *bLo 'das dbyings su blos byas lam sna zad*. At the end of the process, the intellect, as well as its concepts and philosophical notions regarding the nature of reality, are simply dissolved and reabsorbed into the Natural State.
41. *Lus sems 'bral-ba tha-ma'i dus/ bde sdug gnyis kyi so-mtshams sul dbang-po rab kyi gang-zag la ye-shes rang shar man-ngag bstan*. This refers to the instructions and advice to be given to an individual of superior capacity when that individual approaches certain death. The Boundary (so-mtshams) occurs after death when the Clear Light manifests, but before the onset of the Bardo visions, both pure and archetypal in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality and impure and karmic in the Bardo of Existence. This moment at the Boundary provides the maximum opportunity to realize liberation and enlightenment by recognizing the Clear Light as one's own self-manifestation. "Happiness" means liberation into Nirvana, or else, a fortunate rebirth, and "sorrow" means falling again into rebirth in Samsara and especially taking a rebirth in unfortunate circumstances.
42. *Phyi'i 'byung-ba rang sar zhig/ nang gi 'byung-ba bag la zha/ bzung 'dzin rnam-rtog klong du thim*. The Kunzhi is primordially pure and is in no way tainted or distorted by karmic traces of thoughts and actions. Nevertheless, these karmic traces may be concealed and retained in the folds of the Kunzhi



(bag la zha), like nuts might be held in the folds of a blanket, without in any way affecting the quality of the blanket.

43. *sNang-ba bdag zhal bdag gis mthong/ me-long ngos la byad mthong 'dra/ rang-rig bdag dang bdag tu mjal/ rgyal bus rang ngo shes-pa 'dra.* One sees one's own face in the mirror of space, which is the Kunzhi.

44. *Goms-pa chung-ba'i gang-zag rnams/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po bag la zha.* Rigpa in concealment means that one is unaware and unconscious.

45. *gDams-pa'i sgo med gang-zag rnams/ gnas-lugs gsal yang ngo mi shes/ snang-ba gzhan-snang bden-par mthong/ 'khrul-pa'i rgyar chud 'khor-bar 'khyams.* Even though after death one finds oneself caught up in the karmic visions of the Bardo, still there exists the possibility to recognize them as the self-manifestations of one's own mind and understand that they represent the inherent energy of the Natural State. Thereby one may realize liberation. Therefore, one should pray to one's Guru and remember the Dzogchen teachings.

46. *'Ga' zhig 'di la bdag tu 'dzin/ rtag 'dzin mu-stegs gnas su gol.* The Tirthikas (mu-stegs-pa) are non-Buddhists and non-Bönpos, who assert that there exists an eternal, immutable, unchanging ultimate reality, either a self or a substance.

47. *'Ga' zhig snang-ba med ces smra/ stong zad chad-pa'i gnas su gol.* Nihilism (chad-pa'i Ita-ba) asserts the materialist view that consciousness is totally destroyed and ceases to exist entirely with the death of the body and the brain.

48. *'Ga' zhig 'di la mchog tu lta 'dzin/ tshe ring ther-zug gnas-so gol.* There is the belief in many religions that the adherent will go to heaven after death and remain there for all eternity as a god or an angel. This represents an eternalist view (rtag-pa'i Ita-ba)

49. *'Ga' zhig 'di la rlom-par sems/ ngar 'dzin shes-bya'i sgrog tu chud.* This means one has no respect for spiritual practices and believes only in materialistic methods to prolong life. Also, that after the death of the body and the brain, there is no more consciousness, only annihilation and nothingness.

50. *Nyon-mongs zad sar bskyal-bas 'khor-ba'i chu rgyun bcad.* It is the defilements or negative emotions, the kleshas, that provide the fuel to keep the machinery of Samsara running. When that fuel is exhausted, the machine ceases to run.

51. *dByings gnyis rang la shar-bas bon-nyid gnas na bde/ 'od gnyis rang la shar-bas nub mtha' med-par bde/ g.yung-drung sku la shar-bas mi bde dgra dang bral/ spyang drug rang la shar-bas gang gis sgrib tu med/ sku-gsum rang la shar-bas 'bras-bu re dogs med.* The two dimensions are those of the Dharmakaya and the Rupakaya, which are realized upon attaining enlightenment.

## TIBETAN VERSION OF THE ROOT TEXT OF THE TWENTY- ONE LITTLE NAILS

rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa  
gcig gi gzhung bzhugs-so//

Kun tu bzang-po khyab bdal thugs-rje che la phyag 'tshal-lo//

skal-ldan shes rgyud gzhi la bskyal phyir/ yang gsang bla-med  
snyan-rgyud zab-mo'i bcud/ gnas-lugs gzhi rtsa gcod-pa'i gdams-pa/  
bon sgo'i mthar thug theg-pa'i yang rtser bstan/ rgyud kyi tsi-ta lung gi  
snying-por phyung/ mig dang 'dra-ba'i man-ngag dam-par gdams/  
dgongs-pas thugs rgyud tshig gis snyan du rgyud/ dung shog dkar la  
g.yu ris sngon-por rgyud/ sprul-pa'i skyes-bus las-can gshen la bstan/  
phyi-rabs gang-zag rnams la rim-par brgyud/ nyi-shu rtsa gcig gnad kyi  
gzer-bu 'di/ skal-ldan blo'i 'ben la phog-par shog/ SAMAYA//

KA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig mngon du ston la phyag 'tshal-lo/  
skye shis gting nas 'jigs-pa'i gang-zag gis/ dben la nyams dga'i ri-khrod  
dgon-pa ru/ kun-gzhi ngos bzung rig-pa dmar thag-chad/ lhan-cig  
skyes-pa'i rig-pa'i rgyal-po ni/ zab cing cha 'phra rtogs dka' rig-pa  
dkon/ de phyir khyad-par ngo yi bzung thabs bstan/ sems dang sems-  
nyid dbyer-ba'i thabs-lam ni/ lus kyi gnad bsdam rlung gi rta bzung/  
sgron-ma'i sgo rang sor bzhag/ sems dang sems-nyid dbyer-ba'i man-  
ngag ni/ phyi ru mi dpyad/ nang du mi brtag/ snga phyir mi 'brel/ sems  
dang sems-nyid phyed-pa'i tshad bstan-pa/ snyigs-ma klong du thim  
nas dangs-ma 'od du gsal/ blo'i g.yang-lugs bud nas rig-pa gcer-bur  
shar/ rtog-pa'i sprin tshogs sangs nas ye-shes sgrub g.yogs med/ sems  
dang sems-nyid ngo yi bzung-ba ni/ rtog-pa med-pa/ kun gyi gzhi

gyur-pa/ lung du ma bstan-pa/ 'byung rung ma 'gags-pa dang bzhi ni/ kun-gzhi ste sems-nyid-do/ dran zhing rig-pa/ cir yang 'char-ba/ glod na grol-ba/ bzhag na 'dres-pa dang gzhi ni blo ste sems-so/ sems dang sems-nyid dmar thag-bcad-pa ni/ bsdam-pa gsum gyis g.yeng-ba'i las spang/ glod-pa gsum gyis blo rnal du dbab/ bzhag thabs gsum gyis rig-pa'i sa bzung/ mi 'brenng-ba gsum gyis bag-chags rgyun bcad/ thag-pa rnam-pa gsum gyis goms-pa'i ngang bsring/ sba thabs gsum gyis don ma nyams-par btsa'/ shar-ba gsum gyis rig-pa'i rtsal sbyang/ grol-ba gsum gyis gnyis-med du la dor/ mi sgrib-pa gsum gyis 'bras-bu'i tshad bzung/ kun-gzhi ngos-'dzin gyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

KHA/ kun tu bzang-po 'khrul-pa ka nas dag la phyag 'tshal-lo/ 'jig-rten bya-ba btang-ba'i skal-ldan gyis/ 'du-'dzi g.yeng-ba med-pa'i gnas mchog tu/ 'khrul rkyen ngos-bzung 'khrul-pa'i phu thag-bcad/ sgra la yid btul/ 'od la sems bzung zhing/ zer la rtsal sbyang/ dbyings la phu thag-bcad/ rtsa'i 'phar grangs-par ma'i tshad bzung-pa/ mi ring mi thung bar ma chad-pa'i grangs/ brgya gcig rtsis khri phrag bco-brgyad kyis/ snang-ba'i goms tshad mtha' ru phyin-par 'gyur/ rig-pa'i zer dang thugs-rje'i nyag-thag ni/ dang-po ri gzar kha nas chu 'bab 'dra/ gnyis-pa chu-bo klung du phebs-pa 'dra/ gsum-pa bya khra gzan tshol lta-bur 'gyur/ bzhi-pa rus-sbal mkhar gzhong tshud-pa 'dra/ lnga-pa 'byung bzhi zad-pa'i nam-mkha' 'dra/ 'khrul-par rtsad gcod kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

GA/ kun tu bzang-po khyab bdal phyogs ris med la phyag 'tshal-lo/ khyab bdal chen-po spyi la shar-ba'i kun-gzhi ni/ bon-nyid dbyings zhes bya ste/ dbyings kyi mtshan-nyid dgú shar nas/ nam-mkha' bzhin du ma phye mnyam-pa chen-por yongs la bdal-ba'o/ bon-nyid dbyings kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

NGA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sgrib g.yogs med la phyag 'tshal-lo/ lhan skyes rang la shar-ba'i kun-gzhi ni/ sems-nyid rig-pa'i ye-shes zhes bya ste/ ye-shes kyi mtshan-nyid lnga shar nas/ nyi-ma bzhin du ma 'dres so-sor shar la mnyam-par gnas/ sems-nyid ye-shes kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

CA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig ka nas dag la phyag 'tshal-lo/ gsal-ba rang-'byung rig-pa'i rgyal-po ni/ rang-'byung ye-shes kun gyi gzhir rtsar gnas/ gzugs-med ye-shes kha-dog dbyibs gzugs bral/ brjod-med ye-shes ming tshig yi-ger bral/ rtog-med ye-shes rtog dpyod blo dang bral/ ye-shes tshon-gang snang-med bon gyi sku/ gshen lha dkar-po

gdags-med kun gyi gzhi/ ngo-bo nyid kyid rig-pa zhes su grags/ gsal-ba'i ye-shes chen-po tshon-gang las/ snang-ba'i 'od chen tshon-gang rang-bzhin shar/ ma 'dus mi 'bral nyid la nyid shar 'od/ gsal la dngos-med snang la rang-bzhin med/ gzugs dang kha-dog ris su chad-pa med/ che chung chags tshad gzhal-ba'i tshad las 'das/ snang-ba chen-po bon gyi sku zhes bya/ gshen-lha dkar-po gdags yod rtsa-ba'i lha/ lhag-mthong snang-ba'i rig-pa zhes su grags/ tshon-gang sku la rang-rig spyang shar na/ phyogs bcu yongs gzigs mdun rgyab med-pa'i sku/ ma bltas kun mthong sgrib g.yogs med-pa'i spyang/ phyi dang nang med zang-thal chen-por shar/ mtha' dang dbus med khyab bdal chen-por gnas/ kun gyi 'char gzhi gang gis dri-med/ ye gnas rgyal-po rig-pa'i snga rol tu/ 'khor dang myang-'das bskal srid 'byung-ba med/ kun gyi thog-mar rig-pa'i rgyal-po byung/ sangs-rgyas ma grub bka' las shar-ba med/ sems-can ma grub las la byung-ba med/ gang-zag ma grub rtsol-bas bsgrub-pa med/ rgyu dang rkyen med rang-bzhin 'dus ma byas/ phra rab rdul las snod du chags-pa med/ 'byung-ba'i rgyu las lus su grub-pa med/ sta las ma chad mngal las 'khrungs-pa med/ rtogs 'khrul rgyu las 'das dang 'khor-ba med/ rang-'byung ye-shes kun gyi gzhi rtsar gnas/ gdod nas rang shar 'od du gsal-ba la/ gsad gso phan gnod 'phel 'grib bcos bsal med/ skye shi dar rgud bde sdug gnyen-po med/ thog mtha'-med nas 'od du shar zhes bya/ mtshon-gang bon-sku'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rdzogs-pa'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo/ stong gsal bdag-med kun-gzhi'i klong yangs nas/ rang gsal rtog-med ye-shes tshon-gang shar/ dbyings dang ye-shes gnyis-med mnyam-pa la/ snang-ba rnam gsum rang-bzhin rtsal du shar/ yul rang rig-pa mi phyed 'dres-pa med/ snang grags blo'i bye-brag ma lus rdzogs/ dbyings shes zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ mkha' klong zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ thabs shes zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ yul shes zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ rgyu 'bras zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ lus sems zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ snod bcud zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ yab yum zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ sku dang ye-shes zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ lha dang gzhal-yas zung-'brel rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod/ zung-'brel rdzogs-sku'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sprul-pa'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo/ snang-ba'i yul dang rig-pa'i ye-shes gnyis/ ma phye ma 'dres zung du 'brel-ba'i rtsal/ snang grags blo'i bye-brag ma lus shar/ tshogs drug yul drug

'brel dbang-po drug/ 'khor dang myang 'das sna-tshogs phyogs-med sprul/ byed-pa med-par rang-'byung rtsal du shar/ snang-ba'i dbyings la zad cing bri-ba med/ rig-pa'i mkha' la gsal dang 'grib-pa med/ rang-'byung rang-grol thig-le gcig la rdzogs/ phyogs-med sprul sku'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

CHA/ kun tu bzang-po the-tshom mun-pa sel la phyag 'tshal-lo/ yul dang rig-pa zung 'brel/ tshon-pa'i dpe/ chu shel nyi-ma mar-me 'od kyi tshul/ gnas dang 'du 'bral 'khrul dang des bzhi la/ sgrib-med sgrib-bcas gsal dang 'grib-pa'i tshul/ nyid la nyid mthong sangs-rgyas 'di yis grol/ snang-ba dbang thob rang-dbang 'khor-lo bsgyur/ rang la gzhan mthong sems-can 'di yis 'khrul/ snang-ba'i rjes 'breng gzhan dbang sgyu-mas slus/ las kyi rgyu med rang-bzhin shugs las byung/ dus kyi tshad med thog mtha' med nas shar/ 'khrul med snying-po thag-bcad 'khrul mi srid/ snang-ba'i phugs bcad snang-bas bslu mi 'gyur/ mtshon byed dpe'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

JA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig 'du 'bral med la phyag 'tshal-lo/ rang-rig ye-shes gab cing sbas/

gnas-pa gzhi'i tsi-ta ni/ nam-mkha'i dbyings dang rgya-mthso 'dra/ snang-ba 'od kyi tsi-ta ni/

gzha'-tshon sna lnga'i gur phub 'dra/ dgos-pa sha'i tsi-ta ni/ 'phra-men rin-chen bum-pa'i 'dra/ gsal-ba'i ye-shes tshon-gang ni/ bum-pa nang gi mar-me 'dra/ sgra 'od zer dang gsum-po ni/ mar-me 'od zer rtsal dang 'dra/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po khong nas shar/ kun-gzhi stong-pa'i klong nas shar/ snang-ba 'od kyi sbubs nas shar/ sgyu-ma lus kyi dbus shar/ kun-'byung rnam-dag nam-mkha'i mdzod/ rim-pa du-mas sbags te sgrib/ sgo-mo med na mthong mi 'gyur/ mdzod sgo phye la mdzod phugs bstan/ rang-rig khong shar gyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

NYA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig yo-gal med la phyag 'tshal-lo/ rang rig-pa'i ye-shes tshon-gang las/ snang-ba'i 'od gdangs rnam lnga shar te/ de las dans-ma rnam lngar shar/ de las snyigs-ma rnam lngar shar/ nyi-shu rtsa lngas lus sems bskyed/ rtsa'i lam rig-pa shar zhes-pa ni/ yar la shar-ba myang 'das lam/ mar la shar-ba 'khor-ba'i lam/ g.yas nas shar-ba skyon gyi lam/ g.yon nas shar-ba yon-tan lam/ sgo gsum khams gsum 'khor-ba'i lam/ sgo bzahir shar-ba skye bzhi'i lam/ sgo lnga shar-ba rgyud lnga'i lam/ sgo dgur shar-ba sa dgu'i lam/ dbu-ma 'khor 'das gnyis-med lam/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po lam las shar/ lam gang las shar zhe na/ kun-gzhi stong-pa'i dbyings las shar/ snang-ba 'od kyi sbubs las shar/ dbu-ma

byang-chub rgyud las shar/ ma slad rig-pa gnyug-ma'i lam/ ye-shes  
 chen-po gsal-ba'i lam/ yo-gal med-pa thig-le'i lam/ 'khor-ba'i lam sgo  
 'di la med/ ci ltar 'pho zhe na/ rig-pa sems kyi mi-pho de/ dran-pa yid kyi  
 rta la zhon/ thogs med rlung gi gshog-pas skyod/ dbu-ma byang-chub  
 lam las gshegs/ spyi-gtsug bde-ba'i gsang sgor byon/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po  
 gcer-bur shar/ rnam-rtog blo'i g.yang-lugs/ rang-'byung ye-shes bdag  
 zhal mthong/ ma rig 'khrul-pa'i mun-pa sangs/ khams gsum sa dgu dong  
 nas sprugs/ nyon-mongs dug lnga'i lam rgyud chad/ ris drug 'khor-ba'i  
 rgya-mtsho skams/ skye bzhi 'khor-ba'i sgo-mo stongs/ sku gsum rang  
 shar rgya-lag phyed/ gol med lam gyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

TA/ kun tu bzang-po ma rig mun sel la phyag 'tshal-lo/ rang-rig  
 ye-shes sgo lngar shar/ yul lnga gsal la rtog-pa med/ rig-pa'i mthong  
 lam sgron-ma'i sgo/ rgyang zhags chu'i sgron-ma yis/ 'jig-rten smag gi  
 mun-pa sel/ lhag-mthong snag-ba'i sgron-ma yis/ stong zad blo'i mun-  
 pa sel/ rang-rig ye-shes sgron-ma yis/ ma rig blo'i mun-pa sel/ kun-gzhi  
 dbyings kyi sgron-ma yis/ phyogs 'dzin blo'i mun-pa sel/ rig-pa'i rgyal-  
 po mthong la shar/ kun-gzhi stong-pa'i mkha' la shar/ snang-ba 'od kyi  
 sbubs la shar/ kun gsal sgron-ma'i sgo la shar/ padma 'dam las thon  
 bzhin/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po sbubs nas thon/ nyi-ma smag dang bral-ba  
 bzhin/ rig-pa'i rgyal-po smag sgrib bral/ lhag-mthong spyan drug dpral  
 du shar/ gcer mthong dgongs-pa yongs rdzogs yin/ mun sel sgron-ma'i  
 gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

THA/ kun tu bzang-po sku-gsum 'du bral med la phyag 'tshal-lo/  
 rang-rig ye-shes ka-dag bon gyi sku/ lus sems 'brel-ba longs-spyod  
 rdzogs-pa'i sku/ bya-ba byed-pa sna-tshogs sprul-pa'i sku/ rig gzhi  
 khong nas shar-bas snying-po 'du 'bral med/ rig lam rtsal sbyang-bas  
 lam la gol-sa med/ 'bras-bu sgo la shar-bas sku-gsum sgrib g.yogs med/  
 tsi-ta'i klong nas rang-rig bon gyi sku/ rtsa'i lam la rang-bzhin rdzogs-  
 pa'i sku/ sgron-ma'i sgo la rang shar sprul-pa'i sku/ khong nas rang-  
 'byung ye-shes sangs-rgyas-par gnas/ sbubs nas lhun-grub rdzogs  
 sangs-rgyas-par gnas/ mthong la sgrib-med mngon sangs-rgyas-par  
 mthong/ kun-gzhi ngo'i bzung-bas gnas ma dang mjal/ ye-shes gab  
 skungs btan-pas sgrib g.yogs mun-pa sangs/ rig-pa gcer-bur phyung-  
 bas sku-gsum mngon du shar/ 'khrul rkyen ngos bzung 'khrul-pa phu  
 thag-chod/ gnas-lugs mdzub tshugs byas-pas the-tshom yid gnyis zad/  
 rig-pa'i mdzod sgo phye-bas kun-gzhi'i mdzod phugs rtol/ gnad gsum  
 ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

DA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rtsa-ba'i lha la phyag 'tshal-lo/ lhun-grub phyag-rgya'i dkyil-'khor bstan-pa ni/ stong gsal kun-gzhi mkha' klong bon-nyid dbyings/ ye-shes tshon-gang rang-'byung bon gyi sku/ sgra 'od zer gsum longs-spyod rdzogs-pa'i sku/ cho-'phrul nram gsum cir yang sprul-pa'i sku/ snang-ba'i 'od lnga zhing-khams dkyil-'khor gzhi/ thig-le gur-khang rigs lnga'i gzhal-yas khang/ lhag-mthong sku la sna-tshogs gzugs-sku shar/ zung 'brel nram gsum sku-gsum nram-sprul gzhi/ lnga lnga sku lnga rigs lnga ye-shes lnga/ yab yum gtso 'khor sprul-pa bsam mi khyab/ rtsol-bas ma bsgrub rang-bzhin dkyil-'khor che/ byang-chub sems la sku-gsum dkyil-'khor rdzogs/ dkyil-khor rang la shar-bas btsal zhing sgrub tu med/ snang la rang-bzhin med-pas zhen cing chags su med/ dkyil-'khor ngo-sprad kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

NA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-'byung nyag-gcig sku la phyag 'tshal-lo/ sems-nyid sems yi ngo-bo/ nam-mkha' sems kyi rang gdangs/ bon-nyid sems kyi mthar-thug/ phyi nang med-par khyab bdal/ snang tshad sku'i rol-pa/ grags tshad gsung gi rol-pa/ dran tshad thugs kyi rol-pa/ byung tshad yon-tan gyi rol-pa/ byas tshad phrin-las kyi rol-pa/ thig-le gcig la kun rdzogs/ nyag gcig ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu rdzogs/ SAMAYA//

PA/ kun tu bzang-po bag-chags sgrib-pa med la phyag 'tshal-lo/ kun-gzhi'i bag-chags gdar thag-bcad-pa'i phyir/ zhen-pa'i mdud bkrol 'dzin-pa'i thag-pa bcad/ sa-bon rtsad bcad phyir mi ldog-par bstan/ stong gsal nam-mkha' gzhi/ 'byung-ba snang-srid rtsal/ rjes su 'bren-gba 'khrul lugs/ skyon du lta-ba gol-sa/ rang sar glod-pa thabs/ klong du grol-ba lam/ gnyis su med-pa rtogs-pa/ mngon du gyur-ba 'bras-bu/ byar med ye shes gzhi/ bya-ba sna-tshogs rtsal/ rjes su 'bren-gba 'khrul lugs/ skyon du lta-ba gol-sa/ rang sar glod-pa thabs/ klong du grol-ba lam/ gnyis su med-pa rtogs-pa/ mngon du gyur-pa 'bras-bu/ brjod med ye-shes gzhi/ brjod-pa sna-tshogs rtsal/ rjes su 'bren-gba 'khrul lugs/ skyon du lta-ba gol-sa/ rang sar glod-pa thabs/ klong du grol-ba lam/ gnyis su med-pa rtogs-pa/ mngon du gyur-pa 'bras-bu/ rtog-med ye-shes gzhi/ dran rtog sna-tshogs rtsal/ rjes su 'bren-gba 'khrul lugs/ skyon du lta-ba gol-sa/ rang sar glod-pa thabs/ klong du grol-ba lam/ gnyis su med-pa rtogs-pa/ mngon du gyur-pa 'bras-bu/ rang-'byung ye-shes gzhi/ nyon-mongs dug lnga rtsal/ rjes su 'bren-gba 'khrul lugs/ skyon du lta-ba gol-sa/ rang sar glod-pa thabs/ klong du grol-ba lam/ gnyis su med-pa rtogs-pa/ mngon du gyur-pa 'bras-bu/ rang-rig ye-shes

gzhi/ sgra 'od zer gsum rtsal/ dngos-por 'dzin-pa 'khrul lugs/ mchog tu lta-ba gol-sa/ dmar thag bcad-pa thabs/ rang snang du grol-ba lam/ rang-bzhin med-pa rtogs-pa/ rtsal du shar-ba 'bras-bu/ ma bu dmar thag bcad-pa'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

PHA/ kun tu bzang-po mi gnas pha-rol phyin la phyag 'tshal-lo/ kun-gzhi'i dbyings la rgya-chad phyogs lhung med/ rig-pa'i ye-shes spyad-med brjod du med/ dran-pa'i blo la gzhi med 'gog-pa med/ sgra 'od zer gsum chags-med sdang du med/ zag-bcas zag-med dman dang mchog mi bzung/ dangs dang snyigs-ma yon-tan skyon mi lta/ 'khor dang myang 'das dbyer-med bcad du med/ sangs-rgyas sems-can gnyis-med tha-dad med/ rig-pa'i lam la 'jug med bgrod du med/ byang-chub sems la grub-mtha' theg-pa med ces-pas/ mnyam-pa'i gnas la bzang ngan mtho dman med/ la zla mnyam-nyid kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

BA/ kun tu bzang-po mthar-thug rgyal-po'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo/ nam-mkha'i dbyings su 'byung gzhi snang-srid zad/ bon-nyid dbyings su bon sgo theg rgyud zad/ sems-nyid dbyings su sems dang sems 'byung zad/ byar-med dbyings su bya byed sna-tshogs zad/ brjod-med dbyings su brjod-pa sna-tshogs zad/ rtog-med dbyings su bsam dran rtog tshogs zas/ blo 'das dbyings su blos byas lam sna zad/ phyogs-med dbyings su phyogs 'dzin grub-mtha' zad/ rig-pa'i dbyings su sgra 'od zer gsum zad/ byang-chub sems su 'khor 'das ma lus zad / snang-ba zad chad 'gags-pa ma yin te/ 'byung-ba'i phugs dang grol mtha' 'di la thug/ zad-med 'gag-med dus gsum rgyun-chad med/ zad-pa mthar-thug gi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

MA/ kun tu bzang-po thugs-rjes 'gro-ba skyob la phyag 'tshal-lo/ lus sems 'bral-ba tha-ma'i dus/ bde sdug gnyis kyi so-mtshams su/ dbang-po rab kyi gang-zag la ye-shes rang shar man-ngag bstan/ sna-tshogs mnyam-nyid gdams-pa gdab/ bdag zhal mthong-bar the-tshom med/ dbang-po 'bring gi gang-zag la/ rang-snang sgyu-ma'i man-ngag bstan/ ma chags zhen med gdams-pa gdab/ skye sgo chod-par the-tshom med/ dbang-po tha-ma'i gang-zag la/ yi-dam bla-ma'i gdams-ngag bstan/ mos-gus 'dun-pa'i gdams-pa gdab/ bde gnas thob-par the-tshom med/ 'chi-kha sems bskyed kyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

TSA/ kun tu bzang-po rang-grol rdzogs sangs-rgyas la phyag 'tshal-lo/ grol dang 'khrul-pa'i dus bstan-pa/ phyi'i 'byung-ba rang sar zhi/ nang gi 'byung-ba bag la zha/ bzung 'dzin rnam-rtog klong du



thim/ de tshe rig-pa gcer-bur gnas/ rang-'byung ye-shes sgrib g.yogs  
 med/ dmar thag-chod-pa'i skal-ldan 'ga'/ rgya gsum ral nas rtsal gsum  
 rdzogs/ gal-te de las ma grol na/ de nas bar-do dang-po 'char/ 'od ni  
 zhing-khams mtha' dbus med/ mkha' la gzha'-tshon shar-ba 'dra/ sgra  
 ni dngos-med klong na lding/ rang-'byung rgyan med 'brug sgra'i tshul/  
 zer ni cho-'phrul nges med ston/ za-'og snam-bu kha phye 'dra/ goms  
 shing 'dris-pa'i gang-zag la/ sku dang dkyil-'khor rdzogs-par 'char/ de  
 tshe mngon-shes rjes-dran gyis/ snang-ba rnam gsum sun-mar 'char/  
 rang gis goms-pas skyel ma byas/ rig-pa'i sems rgyud gzhi la bskyal/  
 snang-ba bdag zhal bdag gis mthong/ me-long ngos la byad mthong  
 'dra/ rang-rig bdag dang bdag tu mjal/ rgyal bus rang ngo shes-pa 'dra/  
 ma rig 'khrul-pa rang sar sangs/ mun-pa'i gling la nyi shar 'dra/ rig-pa'i  
 rgyal-po rang sa zin/ rgyal bus rgyal-sa zin-pa 'dra/ sgra 'od zer gsum  
 sems su dag/ nyi zer ma la 'dus-pa 'dra/ snyigs-ma dang dangs-ma'i  
 klong du grol/ dar zhig mtsho la thim-pa 'dra/ zag-bcas zag-med ngang  
 du zhi/ lan tshwa chu la thim-pa 'dra/ las dang nyon-mongs gzhi la grol/  
 sprin tshogs nam-mkhar dangs-pa 'dra/ khams gsum 'khor-ba dong nas  
 sprugs/ chu rku 'gongs chad-pa 'dra/ 'khor 'das gnyis-med gzhi la dag/  
 gzha' ris nam-mkhar yal-ba 'dra/ sku-gsum dkyil-'khor shugs la shar/  
 nyi-ma'i zer dang chu zla 'dra/ goms-pa chung-ba'i gang-zag rnams/  
 rig-pa'i rgyal-po bag la zha/ gcig nas gsum gyi bar du nas/ bdun du  
 dangs-ma rim gyis 'char/ zhing-khams rdzogs-par 'char-ba med/ rkyen  
 gyis bar-dor grol-ba yod/ ma grol snyigs-ma'i snang-ba 'char/ srid-pa'i  
 bar-dor dag-snang mthong/ gnas bzang rgyud nas myur du thar/ gdams-  
 pa'i sgo med gang-zag rnams/ gnas-lugs gsal yang ngo mi shes/ snang-  
 ba gzhan-snang bden-par mthong/ 'khrul-pa'i rgyar chud 'khor-bar  
 'khyams/ de phyir skal-ldan dmar thag-bcad/ bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu  
 rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

TSHA/ kun tu bzang-po log rtog mun-pa sel la phyag 'tshal-lo/  
 mthar thug gnad kyi gdams-pa 'di/ skal-ldan las-can ma yin-pa/ snod  
 med rnams la bstan gyur na/ 'ga' zhig 'di la bdag tu 'dzin/ rtag 'dzin  
 mu-stegs gnas su gol/ 'ga' zhig snang-ba med ces smra/ stong zad chad-  
 pa'i gnas su gol/ 'ga' zhig 'di la mchog tu lta 'dzin/ tshe ring ther-zug  
 gnas-so gol/ 'ga' zhig 'di la rlom-par sems/ ngar 'dzin shes-bya'i sgrog  
 tu chud/ 'ga' zhig 'di la dngos-por 'dzin/ dngos 'dzin zhen-pas 'khor-  
 bar 'ching/ 'ga' zhig 'di la sngangs cing skrag/ blo chung theg-pa 'og-  
 mar gol/ 'ga' zhig 'di la gshe bskur 'debs/ bskal-pa mi 'phrad don dang

'gyang/ 'ga' zhig gdams-ngag 'chol-bar spyod/ dam-tshig nyams-pas  
ngan 'gror lhung/ des na 'di la g.yang sa che/ de phyir man-ngag dam-  
pa 'di/ kun-gzhi sems kyi gter du sbos/ ma spel gsang-ba'i rgya yis  
thob/ log rtog mtha' sel gyi gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//

DZA/ kun tu bzang-po sku-gsum mngon du gyur la phyag 'tshal-lo/  
mthar thug don la dmar thag-bcad-pa'i/ the-tshom med-par 'bras-bu 'di  
rnams 'byung/ kun-gzhi dmar thag-bcad-pas/ 'khor 'das phyag-mas  
'debs/ rig-pa dmar thag-bcad-pas/ 'khrul sgrib ka nas dag/ blo la dmar  
thag-bcad-pas ye-shes rtsal du shar/ 'khrul-gzhi dmar thag-bcad-pas  
rig-pa phyir mi ldog/ nyon-mongs zad sar bskyal-bas 'khor-ba'i chu  
rgyun bcad/ lam rnams zad sar bskyal-bas bde chen gnas su phyin/  
grub-mtha' zad sar bskyal-bas bdag gzhan phyogs ris med/ 'byung-ba  
zad sar bskyal-bas mkha' la nub-pa med/ mtshan-ma zad sar bskyal-bas  
dbyings la 'pho 'gyur med/ sems-can zad sar bskyal-bas sems la skye  
shi med/ sgo gsum zad sar bskyal-bas rtsal gsum lus la rdzogs/ snang  
gsum zad sar bskyal-bas dkyil-'khor nam gsum shar/ dbyings gnyis  
rang la shar-bas bon-nyid gnas na bde/ 'od gnyis rang la shar-bas nub  
mtha' med-par bde/ g.yung-drung sku la shar-bas mi bde dgra dang  
bral/ spyan drug rang la shar-bas gang gis sgrib tu med/ sku-gsum rang  
la shar-bas 'bras-bu re dogs med/ sems kyi gter sgo phyed-pas dgos dgu  
rang la rdzogs/ mngon-gyur 'bras-bu'i gzer-bu rdzogs-so/ SAMAYA//  
rgyud lung man-ngag kun gyi yang bcud/ lam rnams kun gyi mthar  
thug/ theg-pa kun gyi yang rtse/ grub-thob rnams kyi snyan-rgyud/  
skal-ldan rnams kyi dngos-grub/ nyi-shu rtsa gcig gnad kyi gzer-bu  
rdzogs-so// grub-chen gong-ma rnams la rim-par brgyud nas dar-ba'o/

SARVA MANGALAM//



## 4

# TRANSLATION OF THE COMMENTARY TO THE TWENTY- ONE LITTLE NAILS: *gZer-'grel*

Here is contained “The Commentary on the Twenty-One Little Nails,” according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings (rdzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las gzer-bu nyer gcig gi ‘grel-pa bzhugs-so).

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who abides perpetually in the state of bliss!

### **General Introduction to the Commentaries**

Herein is presented the culmination of the eighty-four thousand teachings of Bön, being the Upadeshas of the Nine Sugatas belonging to the Mind Transmission Lineage, as well as the Oral Transmission Lineage of the Twenty-Four August Persons, and the Experiential Transmission of the Yogins and the Siddhas (of Zhang-zhung and Tibet).

Now, with regard to this instruction concerning the essential points of the Great Perfection, there exist four aspects to the system of explanation, namely,

1. the explanation in terms of the General View, which represents the outer aspect (phyi lta-ba spyi-gcod du bshad-pa),
2. the explanation in terms of the intensive guidance of the Upadesha, which represents the inner aspect (nang man-ngag dmar khrid du bshad-pa),

3. the explanation in terms of intrinsic awareness seeing nakedly (gsang-ba rig-pa gcer mthong du bshad-pa), and
4. the explanation in terms of searching for the source that is the Natural State, which represents the exceeding secret aspect (yang gsang gnas-lugs phugs gcod du bshad-pa).

From among these four and belonging to the fourth aspect, there is the teaching known as “The Twenty-One Little Nails” which explains the searching for the source that is the Natural State, this being the exceedingly secret aspect of the teachings. Within the text of each of these little nails there are found three sections:

1. the introduction,
2. the text itself, and
3. the conclusion in brief.

### **The Introduction**

At the beginning, with respect to the topics of the Introduction, there are found

1. the teaching on the homage (phyag ‘tshal-ba bstan-pa),
2. the teaching on the importance of the instructions (gdams-pa’i che-ba bstan-pa), and
3. the teaching on the transmission lineage of the Upadeshas (man-ngag gi rgyud-pa bstan-pa).

#### **A. The Homage**

As for the first, the homage, it states in the text that “Kuntu Zangpo who is the great all-pervading and all-encompassing great compassion.” (With reference to the significance of this statement), there is the example, the meaning, and the sign or indication.

#### **1. The Example**

On the occasion of the example, the term *kun*, “all” means whatever originates, that is to say, all that appears and all that exists, whereas the

term *bzang*, “good,” indicates a state of total emptiness and clear luminosity much like the sky. As for its mode of being, it is of an even consistency and equally present everywhere, without regard to its being good or bad, large or small, high or low, full or diminished, near or far. And as for the term *khyab bdal*, “all-pervading and all-encompassing,” the meaning is that it pervades everywhere without regard to zenith and nadir, cardinal direction or intermediate direction, boundary or center, surface or depth, and so on, and with reference to its being *thugs-rje che*, “great compassion.” Its full measure is indeed immeasurable.

## 2. The Meaning

On the occasion of the meaning, as for *kun*, “all, everything,” the meaning is that phenomena manifest as having characteristics. And as for *bzang*, “good,” the meaning is that the Ultimate Reality is the Great Bliss. As for the mode of being in terms of “the good,” all phenomena become everywhere equal without regard to near and far. As for *khyab bdal*, “all-pervading and all-encompassing,” it abides without boundary or center, cardinal or intermediate direction, and so on. Therefore, the full measure of this great compassion is immeasurable.

## 3. The Sign

On the occasion of the sign or indication, as for *kun*, it means “all,” signifying all living beings are conditioned by the prana and the breath. As for *bzang*, “good,” the Nature of Mind is self-originated primal awareness. As for the mode of being of “the good,” all living beings are everywhere made equal without regard to near and far. As for being *khyab bdal*, “all-pervading and all-encompassing,” it arises everywhere throughout the three worlds without regard to cardinal or intermediate directions. Therefore, as for the full measure of the great compassion, it is immeasurable.

As for the homage in itself, it is done in accordance with the general practice.

## B. The Importance of the Instructions

Second, as for the explanation of the importance of the instructions, since it says in the root text, "In order to send the streams of consciousness of those fortunate individuals who are disciples back into the Base," it is by means of these instructions that those fortunate individuals will finally transcend the activities of the path and will be caused to proceed directly into the Base, which is the Natural State. Since it says in the text, "This nectar of the profound oral transmission of the unsurpassed innermost secret," there exist four types among the systems of explanation (bshad-lugs rnam-pa bzhi). Having searched for and definitively decided upon the source which is the Natural State, then there are the instructions of the Teacher which are explained as being exceedingly secret. Since it says, "These instructions uncover the very root of the Base that is the Natural State," by means of this instruction, having descended directly to the Base which is the Natural State, then there is the teaching that uncovers the root (of individual existence).

Since it says, "It is revealed as the highest peak and the ultimate vehicle among all the gateways to Bön, " among the eighty-four thousand doorways of Bön, this is the ultimate one and there exists no other doorway to Bön beyond this one. Among the nine successive vehicles, there are those which are outer, inner, and secret, but there exists no higher peak above this one.

Since it says that "It is revealed as the heart of all the Tantras and the very essence of all the Agamas," all the Tantras are said to be similar to the physical body and this instruction on Dzogchen is said to be similar to the heart of the body. Furthermore, all the Agamas are said to be similar to the milk and this instruction on Dzogchen is said to be similar to the butter which is the essence extracted from that milk. Since it says, "It is taught as an excellent Upadesha which is similar to the eyes," all the doorways of Bön, all the vehicles (or yanas) and the Tantras, are said to be similar to the other sense organs, whereas this instruction on Dzogchen may be said to be similar to the clear eyes among all the other sense organs.

## C. The Transmission of the Upadesha

Third, as for the teaching on the transmission of the upadesha, since it says in the root text, “The Mind Transmission is accomplished directly by the Mind and the Oral Transmission is accomplished by means of words,” until after the Nine Sugatas of the Mind transmission, the Dzogchen precepts were not spoken aloud in words, but it was transmitted directly Mind-to-Mind. Thereupon, until after the Twenty-Four August persons, it was not set down in letters, having heard the words, they were transmitted aurally.

Since it says, “It was set down on conch-shell white paper with turquoise blue ink,” at the behest of the Lord Tapihritsa, it was set down by Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö in letters of turquoise on white paper like conch shell. Since it says, “These little nails which represent the twenty-one essential points of the instructions,” they are shown to be enumerated in this way. Since it says, “May strike the target of the minds of those fortunate disciples,” it means that they may come to know and understand these instructions.

As for SAMAYA, it means that having sealed the precepts, one is instructed to keep them confidential.

The commentary on the introductory section is now completed.

### 1. The First Little Nail

Second, with respect to the meaning of the text, there exist what is called “the Twenty-One Little Nails,” (*gzer-bu nyi-shu rtsa gcig*) and from among them, at the beginning first there is “the Little Nail of Recognizing the Kunzhi,” (*kun-gzhi ngos 'dzin gyi gzer-bu*). Moreover, from among the three topics within this first text, there are found:

1. the homage (*phyag 'tshal-ba*),
2. the explicating of the text (*gzhung dkrol-ba*), and
3. the conclusion in brief (*mdor bsdus-pa*).

#### I. The Homage

As for the first topic, the homage, since it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is one’s own Self-Awareness manifestly revealed” (*kun tu bzang-po rang-rig du ston la phyag 'tshal-lo*), as for



*kun*, “all,” the meaning is that all the diversity of disciples without exception and as for *bzang-po*, “good,” the meaning is that compassion is applied to everyone equally without distinction or partiality.

As for the phrase, *rang-rig mngon du ston-pa*, “Self-Awareness manifestly revealed,” it signifies that by means of this instruction (contained in the text) the Natural State, which is Rigpa or intrinsic Awareness, is revealed in all its nakedness.

As for the homage itself, it is expressed in accordance with the usual practice.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the exposition of the commentary to the text, there are four sections to be considered:

1. the teaching concerning the individual suitable for the practice (*nyams su len-pa'i gang-zag*),
2. the teaching concerning the location or place for the practice (*nyams su len-pa'i gnas*),
3. the teaching concerning the meaning of what is difficult to understand (*rtogs-par dka'-ba'i don*), and
4. the teaching concerning the Upadesha for the distinguishing between mind and the Nature of Mind (*sems dang sems-nyid dbye-ba'i man-ngag*).

### A. The Individual Suitable for the Practice

As for the first consideration, when it says in the root text, “An individual who is terrified of death and rebirth from the very depths of one’s heart,” this signifies an individual who has entered upon the path of spiritual development. Having become disillusioned with Samsara, the beginningless cycle of death and rebirth, such an individual develops from the very depths of one’s heart a terror of future deaths and rebirths and consequently one strives to attain enlightenment. Moreover, one’s faith in the teachings is without defect and one carries the image of one’s Guru upon the crown of one’s head (as a guide at all times). In this present life, one abandons negative thoughts in one’s mind and in the future one strives to attain positive results. It is in this way that one should practice.

## B. The Location of Practice

Second, as for the teaching concerning the location, it says in the text, “In solitude one retires to a remote hermitage among pleasant surroundings, makes a retreat at an isolated location that is without distractions and worldly entertainments. For example, one may practice in such beautiful and pleasant surroundings as an island in a lake, or in a dense forest, or in a secluded cave, and so on.

And since it says, “Recognizing the Kunzhi and definitively deciding upon Rigpa,” the significance is that, having recognized and definitively decided upon them, one should proceed with confidence.

## C. What is Difficult to Understand

Third, as for the teaching on what is difficult to understand, it says in the root text, “As for the King of Rigpa who is spontaneously-born and co-emergent, that rare and precious awareness is exceedingly subtle and profound and difficult to understand. As for the Kunzhi that is spontaneously born, the full measure of its profundity is similar to the depths of the great ocean or to the vast expanse of the sky. As for its subtlety, it is similar to exceedingly subtle atoms. Because of that, by way of this instruction there is revealed a special recognition of mind and the Nature of Mind.

## D. Distinguishing between Mind and the Nature of Mind

Fourth, within the teaching on the upadesha that distinguishes between mind and the Nature of Mind, there are five subsections, namely,

1. the method for distinguishing between mind and the Nature of Mind (sems dang sems-nyid dbyer-ba'i thabs lam),
2. the upadesha for distinguishing between mind and the Nature of Mind (sems dang sems-nyid dbyer-ba'i man-ngag),
3. the teaching on the full measure of separating them (phyed-pa'i tshad bstan-pa),
4. recognizing mind and the nature of Mind (sems dang sems-nyid ngos bzung), and
5. clearly and definitively deciding upon that (dmar thag-bcad-pa).

### D1. The Method for Distinguishing Them

As for the first, within the procedure of the method, there are three considerations: As for binding the essential points of the body, with respect to the mudras that represent the natural disposition, (1) with the body (posture) one controls the channels, (2) with the channels one controls the psychic winds, and (3) with the winds one controls the thoughts. Therefore, it becomes clearly visible in a natural manner as the essence of the Kunzhi.

Since it says in the text, "One grasps the horse of the winds," the meaning is that the man who is the functional mind (yid), having mounted upon the horse of the vital winds, since he moves to the objects of the six consciousness aggregates, the Mother Kunzhi becomes obscured by that in a similar way. With respect to that, one should restrain the horse of the vital winds. Having controlled the horse of the winds, one will control the man who is the functional mind. Since one thus controls that functional mind, the essence of the Kunzhi who is the Mother becomes clear.

Since it says in the text, "The gateway to the lamp remains in its own original condition." Without blinking the eyes, one remains alertly fixated on the object. And since this is the door of vision for Rigpa, one comes to recognize Kunzhi without interference from discursive thoughts.

### D2. The Three Upadeshas for Distinguishing Them

Second, as for the Three Upadeshas for distinguishing mind and the nature of Mind: (1) Because one does not analyze what is external, one purifies apprehending and the apprehended in terms of the visible object. (2) Because one does not analyze what is internal, one pacifies the thoughts of the mind. (3) Because one does not pursue what is before or after, one cuts the cords connecting one to the functional mind.

### D3. The Full Measure of Distinguishing Them

Third, as for the threefold full measure of distinguishing the mind and the Nature of Mind, since one has hit on the essential points of the three procedures of the method above, as well as the three Upadeshas, those hosts of impure memories, thoughts, and notions, having been dissolved

into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, the pure self-originated primal awareness becomes clear in terms of light. For example, it is like an individual without any clothing whatsoever. Having cleared away the discursive thoughts, which are similar to clouds, that primal awareness that is without any thoughts arises without any obscurations or coverings. For example, it is like the sky when the masses of clouds have been cleared away.

#### **D4. Recognizing Mind and the Nature of Mind**

Fourth, with respect to the recognizing mind and the Nature of Mind, there exist two considerations, namely,

1. recognizing the Nature of Mind (*sems-nyid ngos bzung-ba*) and
2. recognizing mind (*sems ngos bzung-ba*).

##### **D4.1. Recognizing the Nature of Mind**

First, as for the essence of the Kunzhi which is the Nature of Mind, this is without thoughts in itself. Nevertheless, it becomes the base for the arising of all thoughts and memories (representing that which is called mind). Whenever there is a dull neutral state of mind, there will be no distinctions or partialities. But because (thoughts and memories) will originate in an unceasing (and unobstructed manner), it is possible for them to arise anywhere anytime. These four factors represent the essence of the Kunzhi and one recognizes this to be the Nature of Mind.

##### **D4.2. Recognizing Mind**

As for recognizing the mind, or thought process, its essence consists of memories and thoughts. When one thinks, memories and thoughts may arise anywhere. But if one relaxes into the original condition without thinking, the thoughts are liberated into the state of the Kunzhi. When one abides in that state without modifications, the Mother and Son become merged into inseparability.

As for these four, it is called the mental process (*blo*) and is also called the functional mind (*gid*). Thus, one comes to recognize the essence of the mind (*sems kyi ngo-bo*) (to be the thought process (*blo*)).

### D5. Definitively Deciding

Fifth, with respect to definitively deciding upon what is mind and what is the Nature of Mind, the three times three essential points of the upadesha are demonstrated to be nine:

- 1) Since it says in the text, "By means of the three kinds of vows or bindings, one renounces all activities that represent distractions," thereby the actions of the body are controlled, the voice and speech are controlled, and the mind which thinks and cognizes is controlled. By means of these three, all distractions are renounced and abandoned.
- 2) Since it says, "By way of the three kinds of relaxations, the thought process settles into its natural condition of rest," thereby one relaxes the body into non-activity, one relaxes the voice into non-speaking, and one relaxes the mind into non-thinking. By means of these three, the thought process is settled down into its natural condition of rest.
- 3) Since it says, "By way of the three methods of just letting be, one adheres to the status of Rigpa," thereby one abides newly and freshly without fabricating anything in the mind. One abides naturally and totally in one's own original disposition and one abides in a natural condition without modifying or adulterating anything. By means of these three, Rigpa remains in its own original condition.
- 4) Since it says, "By means of the three non-pursuits, the current of karmic traces is interrupted," one does not follow after the actions of the body, one does not follow after speech or the expressions of the voice, and one does not follow after the delightful sensual qualities desired by the mind. By means of these three, the flow of karmic traces which are normally pursued is interrupted.
- 5) Since it says, "By way of the three kinds of distance, one prolongs the duration of the familiar state," thereby one prolongs the duration of mindfulness that is without distractions, one prolongs the duration of the state without modifications, and one prolongs the duration of the natural condition without agitation. By means of these three, one prolongs the duration of the state without change in the vast expanse of the Kunzhi.

- 6) Since it says, "By means of the three methods of concealment, one attends to the uncorrupted meaning," thereby it is concealed in the isolated hermitage of the body, like a deer hiding in a bamboo thicket. It is concealed in a total self-secrecy and kept secret from others, without expression even in a subtle voice, like a lamp placed inside of a vase. It is in the concealed in the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, without following after thoughts and the six sense aggregates, like a tortoise lying in the great ocean. By means of these three, one attends to the uncorrupted meaning without changing and proceeds into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi.
- 7) Since it says, "By way of the three arisings, phenomena are purified into the energy of Rigpa," thereby the various different actions of the body arise as energy without action, the various different expressions of speech arise as energy without verbal expression, and the various different thoughts and memories arise as energy without thoughts. By means of these three, without looking at their defects, these various different phenomena are purified into the energy of primal awareness.
- 8) Since it says, "By way of the three liberations, one decides without duality," thereby the full measure of action is liberated into the vast expanse that is without any actions, the full measure of expression is liberated into the vast expanse that is without any expression, and the full measure of thinking is liberated into the vast expanse that is without any thinking. By means of these three, one decides without duality.
- 9) And since it says, "By way of the three non-obscurations, one apprehends the full measure of the fruit," thereby the hosts of actions of the body no longer obscure the real meaning of non-action, the hosts of expressions of speech no longer obscure the real meaning of non-expression, and the hosts of thoughts in the mind no longer obscure the real meaning that transcends thoughts. Having come into the full measure of these three, the Fruit becomes manifest.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, as for the conclusion, when it says in the text, “The Little Nail of the Recognizing of the Kunzhi is now completed,” that represents the conclusion. Thus, the commentary on the First Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 2. The Second Little Nail

Second, with respect to the Little Nail that Severs the Roots of Delusion (‘khrul-pa rtsad gcod kyi gzer-bu), there are also three topics, namely,

1. the homage (phyag ‘tshal-ba),
2. the explicating of the text (gzhung bkrol-ba), and
3. the conclusion in brief (mdor bsdus-pa).

### I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is purified of all delusions from the very beginning” (kun tu bzang-po ‘khrul-pa ka nas dag la phyag ‘tshal-lo), in this title *kun*, “all,” means all of Samsara and Nirvana without exception, and *bzang-po*, “good,” means that the King who is Self-Knowing Awareness pervades everywhere without any regard to near or far.

As for the phrase *‘khrul-pa ka nas dag*, “purified of all delusions from the very beginning,” just as there is no place for darkness in the heart of the sun, so there is no place for delusions within the King that is Knowing Awareness. Therefore, it is primordially pure. Having come to have severed the roots of delusion by way of this instruction, further delusions are demonstrated to be impossible.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the exposition of the commentary on the text, since it says in the root text, “That fortunate disciple who has abandoned all worldly activities,” this signifies an individual who is capable of the Dzogchen practice. Again, when it says, “In a supreme place that is without distractions or worldly entertainments,” this indicates the place

or site for practicing. And when it says, "One will come to recognize the secondary conditions of delusion and thereafter search for the source of these delusions," this indicates in brief the severing of the root for the basis of delusions.

Because one does not understand the Natural State of the Kunzhi, one is deluded. When this is accomplished because of any of the secondary conditions, having created the secondary conditions by way of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, one comes to be deluded. When one is deluded in whatever manner, having perceived these three as manifestations due to another and not recognizing them to be self-manifestations, one comes to be deluded. What example is similar to delusion? Delusion is like the reflected image of a powerful lion arising on the surface of the water and he does not understand that it is his own reflection, but sees it as the form of another (threatening enemy lion), so he is deluded.

But if one severs, in whatever manner, the roots of delusion because one has come to recognize the three: sounds, lights, and rays as self-manifestations, and having definitively decided upon this root of delusions, it is no longer possible for one to become deluded. For example, with regard to one's own reflected image, one knows that it is only one's own form. It is like meeting a person (in the street) with whom one has been acquainted previously.

But when one recognizes how they are (self-manifestations), one keeps the functional mind (*yid*) focused on the sounds, one fixates one's thoughts on the lights, and one forcefully purifies the rays, thereby searching for the source of these three in the vast dimension of the Kunzhi. This system (and method) of direct introduction should be known from the Upadeshas (or oral instructions).

As it says in the text, "One takes the measure of the medium count of the pulse, (that is, neither too fast or too slow) and one counts the pulse without interruption, neither too long nor too short. One counts one hundred pulses as one. By way of eighteen times ten thousand (such movements of the pulse), one will ultimately arrive at the full measure of familiarity with the visions." These above four statements represent the teaching on the full measure of the practice and (the five stages in the development of visions) are hereby elucidated in the text:



### 1. The Increasing of Visions

Since it says in the text, "As for the rays of Rigpa and the (white) threads of compassion, at first (there will occur visions) similar to water falling from the face of a steep mountain, indicating that at first, at the time of the increasing of visions, the visions will move about without remaining still for even a moment.

### 2. The Multiplying of Visions

Since it says in the text, "Second, they will be like water flowing slowly in the main current of a river," it indicates that at the time of the multiplying of visions, the visions are more leisurely and tame. The rays (that is to say, the thigleys) and threads appear in the manner of someone walking on foot, or someone riding on a horse, respectively.

### 3. The Expanding of Visions

Since it says in the text, "Third, they become like a hawk hovering on its wings," it indicates that at the time of the expanding of visions, these threads of compassion, which represent the heart-essence of Rigpa, at times some of them will abide without moving or shaking, while at other times some of them will move about.

### 4. The Completing of Visions

Since it says in the text, "Fourth, they will become similar to a tortoise placed in a large bowl," it indicates that at the time of the completing of the visions, these threads of compassion abide without moving or shaking.

### 5. The Final Visions

Since it says in the text, "Fifth, They will be similar to the space when the four elements are exhausted," that indicates that at the time when the final visions arise, one definitively decides that the sounds, the lights, and the rays are the Bodhichitta.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately elucidated in the text. The commentary on the Second Little Nail is hereby completed.

### 3. The Third Little Nail

Third, with regard to the Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality (bon-nyid dbyings kyi gzer-bu), there are three topics to be considered.

#### I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, and without any partiality or one-sidedness" (kun tu bzang-po khyab bdal phyogs ris med la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the Homage. Kuntu Zangpo is the same as explained above. As for the phrase *khyab bdal phyogs ris med*, "all-pervading, all-encompassing, and without any partiality or one-sidedness," this signifies that the Bodhichitta abides without middle or end, without cardinal or intermediate directions, without exterior or interior, and without surface or depths.

#### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the exposition of the commentary to the text, since it says in the root text, "The Kunzhi that arises universally is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing," this indicates that the Bodhichitta is the universal basis of everything, including all of Samsara and all of Nirvana, for both ordinary sentient beings and the enlightened Buddhas. With regard to that, the name Dharmadhatu, the Dimension of Reality (bon-nyid dbyings), is attached to it.

Why is it so called? Because it says in the text, "The nine essential characteristics of the dimension of space having arisen," the significance is as follows:

1. this Bodhichitta arises as without limits,
2. it arises as infinite,
3. it arises as completely without divisions,
4. it arises as without surface or depth,

5. it arises as immeasurable,
6. it arises as without congestion,
7. it arises as totally all-encompassing,
8. it arises as inexhaustible, and
9. it arises as unchanging.

For that reason it is called *dbyings*, “the dimension of space.”

As for the example which it resembles, since it says in the text, “It is undivided like the sky and it pervades everywhere as a totally even consistency,” it pervades everywhere undivided and totally even like the sky. It indicates that this dimension (*dbyings*) abides within every enlightened Buddha and within every ordinary sentient being without regard to good or bad, large or small, higher or lower, full or diminished, near or far.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately elucidated in the text. The commentary on the Third Little Nail is hereby completed.

### 4. The Fourth Little Nail

Fourth, with respect to the Little Nail of the Primal Awareness of the Nature of Mind (*sems-nyid ye-shes kyi gzer-bu*), there are again three topics to be considered.

#### I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is that inherent Self-Awareness which is without any obscurations or coverings,” (*kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sgrib g.yogs med la phyag ‘tshal-lo*), this expresses the homage. The meaning is that the Bodhichitta abides as self-arising primordial awareness.

#### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with regard to the commentary on the text, “As for the Kunzhi that arises in itself, they are spontaneously-born,” it indicates that the

primal cognitions of awareness that abide in the mind-streams of every individual Buddha and every ordinary sentient being becomes dispersed and diversified. With regard to that, a name is attached, labelling them the primal cognitions of awareness of the Nature of Mind.

Why are they so called? Since it says in the text, “There arise the five essential characteristics of primal awareness,” this indicates that, because (primal awareness) is empty and without a self (or any substance), it arises as the primal awareness of emptiness. Because it is clear and without thoughts, it arises as the mirror (-like) primal-awareness. Because it is unmixed and wholly perfected, it arises as the primal awareness which understands individually. Because it is undivided and abides (equally), it arises as the primal awareness of sameness, or equality. And because it spontaneously accomplishes everything without effort, it arises as the primal awareness that accomplishes actions. And for these reasons, it is called primordial awareness (*ye-shes*).

If one inquires what is the example which (this primal awareness, or *Yeshe*) resembles, since it says in the text, “It is like the rays of the sun, arising individually and unmixed, and yet abiding evenly and equally,” it means that they (the primal cognitions of awareness) arise individually and in an unmixed manner, like the sun’s rays abiding evenly, (being the same everywhere)—thereby the essential characteristics (of primordial awareness) arise individually in the mind-streams of beings, and yet the Natural State abides in itself evenly (self-same and self-identical everywhere) without regard to good or bad, large or small.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Fourth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 5. The Fifth Little Nail

Fifth, with respect to the Little Nail of the Miniature-sized Dharmakaya (*mtshon-gang bon-sku'i gzer-bu*), again there exist three topics.

## I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is primordially pure Self-Awareness" (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig ka nas dag la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning signified is that the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) that is the King of Knowing Awareness, is untouched by any extremes or limitations.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the commentary to the text there exist four sections:

1. the teaching on the essence of the miniature-sized primal awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi ngo-bo),
2. the teaching on the natural state of the miniature-sized primal awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi gnas-lugs),
3. the teaching on the great importance of this miniature-sized primal awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi che-ba), and
4. the teaching on the reason of the name for this miniature-sized primal awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi gtan-tshigs).

### A. The Essence of the Miniature-sized Gnosis

Within the first (the essence of the miniature-sized primal awareness), the exist two subsections, namely,

1. the teaching on the miniature-sized primal awareness in itself (ye-shes tshon-gang) and
2. the teaching on the miniature-sized light ('od tshon-gang).

#### A1. The Miniature-sized Primal Awareness Itself

As for the first (subsection, the miniature-sized primal awareness itself), since it says in the root text, "As for the King that is self-originated Awareness that represents luminous clarity," the meaning is as follows. As for the term *gsal-ba*, "luminous clarity," the meaning is that it is without any obscurations or coverings. As for the term *rang-'byung*, "self-originated," it indicates that there is no creator and that it is not created by any primary causes (rgyu) or secondary conditions (rkyen). As for the term *rig-pa*, "awareness," this means that it becomes the

basis for the arising of all memories and thoughts. As for *rgyal-po*, “king,” it indicates that there exists nothing above or before it (or more important than it), and that it abides as the ultimate among all consciousnesses and cognitions. Prior to all those (consciousnesses and cognitions) there exists this primal awareness which understands (immediately and directly). Because it was not created by the ignorance of delusion, it represents the miniature-sized primal awareness (*ye-shes tshon-gang*) (residing in the heart). It is not experienced as arising from either within Samsara or Nirvana.

Well then, one may ask, how does it abide? It says in the text, “This self-originated primordial awareness abides as the root and the base of everything.” Therefore, not being created by any primary causes or secondary conditions, it is self-originated and it abides from the very beginning.

Again, it is said in the text, “This formless primal awareness is free of colours, shapes, and forms. This inexpressible primal awareness is free of names, words, and letters. This thoughtless primal awareness is free of thoughts, analyses, and thought processes.” As for the significance of these three phrases, the natural state of the primal cognition that is one’s own Self-Awareness (*rang rig-pa’i ye-shes kyi gnas-lugs*), because it is without form, it is not comprised of shape and colour. Because it is inexpressible, it transcends the sphere of linguistic activities, such as names, words, and letters. And because this primal awareness without thoughts transcends the thought process, it transcends all objects of thought, analysis, and mental process.

Nevertheless, with regard to that, a name is attached to this miniature-sized primal awareness (residing in the heart), calling it the invisible Dharmakaya. It is also called the White Shen Deity who cannot be imputed and which is the basis of everything, and it is, furthermore, called the awareness which is the essence itself.

## A2. The Miniature-sized Light

Second, as for the teaching on the essence of the miniature-sized light (*‘od tshon-gang*), since it says in the text, “From this miniature-sized great primal awareness that is clear luminosity, there arises naturally the miniature-sized great light which is visibly manifest. From the base for the arising of the miniature-sized primal awareness of anyone, the

miniature-sized great light, which is visible, abides as primordially self-arising. For example, just as from the heart of the sun, its light arises in a self-arising manner.

As it says in the text, "This Light arises in itself, without any coming together as one or separating as many." There are two here: Yeshe Tson-gang, the miniature-sized primal awareness, and Od Tson-gang, the miniature-sized light. They abide individually and do not coalesce into one. Nevertheless, because they abide together as one, they are not separated individually. They abide from the very beginning as self-arising in themselves.

Since it says, "It (the light of awareness) is luminously clear and visible, without being material, and it lacks any inherent existence," the significance is that the miniature-sized light is clear as light and is revealed to be without any materiality whatsoever, nor is it comprised of any characteristics.

Since it says, "It is without any form or colour and it is lacking in any partiality," this indicates that this miniature-sized light is the basis for the arising of all forms, such as the divine forms (sku) of the Buddhas themselves and the bodies (lus) of ordinary sentient beings. Even though it may be like that, the essence here is that forms arise impartially everywhere. It serves as the basis for the arising of all colours, such as white, green, red, blue, and yellow lights, and so on. Again, even though, it may be like that, the essence here is that these colours arise impartially.

Since it says, "It transcends any measure of size and any measure of weight," it indicates that for this miniature-sized light the measure of its greatness cannot be apprehended and that it abides without a center or a boundary, having the nature of space. The measure of its smallness is also without measure, just as it is possible for a tiny microbe to enter the body by way of the open eye.

That miniature-sized light is called the Dharmakaya of the Great Vision (snang-ba chen-po bon kyi sku) and also the Root Deity which can be imputed, the White Shen Deity (gshen lha dkar-po gdags yod rtsa-ba'i lha) It is also called the intrinsic awareness which is higher insight.

## B. The Natural State of the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness

Second, as for the natural state of the miniature-sized primal awareness: Since it says in the root text, “When there arises the eye of self-awareness with respect to this miniature-sized Body, or divine form,” this miniature-sized light is spoken of as a Body, or divine form (*sku*), because it is unchanging. It is also said that, with respect to the miniature-sized primal awareness, the eye arises without obscurations or coverings. Again, it is said that because these two are inseparable, Body and Primordial Awareness are without duality.

Since it says, “It gazes everywhere into the ten directions, but its body has no front or back,” the implication is that this Body and this miniature-sized primal awareness are without a front side or a back side with respect to the face of primal awareness. It is clear and luminous in all the ten directions like a crystal egg.

As it says in the text, “Without even looking, it sees everything; its eye is without any obscurations or coverings.” Since there exist no obscurations with respect to this eye of Rigpa, everything becomes clear, even without looking, it is just like a mirror without any rust or dust upon it.

Since it says, “Being without any exterior or interior, it (Rigpa) arises as totally translucent and directly penetrating everywhere,” it indicates that this miniature-sized primal awareness neither abides externally nor does not abide internally, nor does it abide internally and does not abide externally. But rather, that, in general, it abides without reference to either exterior or interior.

Since it says, “Being without center or boundary, it abides in a state that is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing,” it signifies that this miniature-sized primal awareness is without any distinctions, partialities, or one-sidedness. And it abides without any distinction with regard to center or boundary, cardinal or intermediate direction.

And since it says, “It is the basis for the arising of everything, yet it is not itself tainted or corrupted by anything whatsoever,” the meaning is that this miniature-sized primal awareness serves as the basis for the arising of everything, such as Samsara and Nirvana, enlightened Buddhas and ordinary sentient beings, emotional defilements (*kleshes*) and compassion, discursive thoughts and pristine knowledge (*gnosis*), virtue and vice, happiness and sorrow, the external vessel of the universe



and the internal nectar which are its living inhabitants, body and mind, object and consciousness, cause and effect, heaven realms and the evil destinies, and so on ad infinitum. But, even though its essence is just like that, it abides without being touched by any extremes or limitations whatsoever.

### C. Its Great Importance

Third, as for the teaching on the great importance of this miniature-sized primal awareness: Since it says in the text, "Before the advent of this awareness (Rigpa) that is the king which has abided from the very beginning, there did not even originate the worlds and the cycles of time of Samsara and Nirvana," it means that this miniature-sized primal awareness which is the King that is Awareness abided in a self-arising manner from the very beginning. Before it, there was nothing whatsoever created, such as the phenomena of Samsara and the phenomena of Nirvana, the nine kalpas and the three worlds, as well as the five elements, and so on.

As it says in the text, "Yet before the very beginning of everything, this King that is Awareness itself originated." This means that before there had originated anything, this King that is Awareness had abided from the very beginning.

Since it says, "Before it, there were no Buddhas created because they could not arise without the Word (the Precepts of the Teaching)," this means that before there existed this miniature-sized primal awareness which is the King of Awareness, there was no creating of enlightened beings called Buddhas because they had not yet been produced from the Precepts of the Shenrab. As well, before it, there were no beings called ordinary sentient beings because that miniature-sized primal awareness had not yet created the actions (or karma) to produce sentient beings. Before it, there was not created even a person or individual who is the creator because there did not yet exist any creating by the efforts of an individual's karma. Before it, there was no experiencing of the creating of the primary cause for grasping (upadana) and the secondary conditions that were produced together with it because that miniature-sized primal awareness had not yet created the conditions for coordinating these primary causes and secondary conditions. Before it, there was no experiencing of the creating of the very

fine and subtle atoms, which are the causes of the external universe, because the miniature-sized primal awareness had not yet experienced the evolution of the universe which is the external vessel. Before it, there was no creating of what are called the five casual elements because that miniature-sized primal awareness had not yet experienced the creating of the physical body comprised of the elements. Before it, there was no experience of the sperm of the father and the womb of the mother because that miniature-sized primal awareness did not yet experienced the production from the causes which are the white and the red elements, (that is to say, conception). Before it, there had not been created the primal awareness of understanding and the ignorance of delusion because that miniature-sized primal awareness had not yet experienced Samsara and Nirvana.

Well then, when one inquires how it may abide in whatever manner, it is said in the text, "This self-originated primordial awareness simply abided as the root and base of everything." Not being created or made by any of the primary causes or the secondary conditions, it abided from the very beginning as self-originated and self-arisen. It abided as the root for the arising (of everything) and the base for the manifesting of everything, such as all the kalpas and all the worlds to be found within Samsara and Nirvana.

#### **D. The Reason for the the Name**

Fourth, as for the teaching on the reason for the name given to this miniature-sized primal awareness: When one inquires how one may speak of these primal cognitions of Rigpa as being miniature-sized, it says in the text, "It has been clearly visible as self-arisen light from the very beginning. It is without injury or healing, without benefit or harm, without increase or decrease, without birth or death, without spreading or shrinking, without happiness or sorrow-- it is without any antidotes whatsoever." That miniature-sized primal awareness was clearly visible as self-arisen light from the very beginning. It is miniature-sized because it has never been injured by demons. It is miniature-sized because it has never been healed or cured by the gods. It is miniature-sized because it is without any threat of death from secondary conditions. It is miniature-sized because it was not increased by youth nor was it diminished by old age. It is miniature-sized because it is without

happiness due to purifications or sorrow due to suffering. It is miniature-sized because it has never been vanquished or destroyed by antidotes or countervailing forces. Therefore, it is spoken of as the arising of the light that is without beginning or end.

### III. The Conclusion

The conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Fifth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 6. The Sixth Little Nail

Sixth, with respect to the Little Nail of the Sambhogakaya that represents the Unifications of the Pairs (zung-'brel rdzogs-sku'i gzer-bu), there are also three topics to be considered.

### I. The Homage

From among these three topics, the first is the homage. As it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the Self-Awareness that is the Sambhogakaya!" (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rdzogs-pa'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo). This signifies the homage. The meaning is that, with respect to the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind), everything within both Samsara and Nirvana are perfect just as they are.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the exposition of the commentary to the text, there are two divisions, namely,

1. the teaching in brief and
2. the extensive explanation.

#### A. The Teaching in Brief

And again, within the first there are two sections:

1. the basis of perfection (rdzogs gzhi) and
2. the system of perfection (rdzogs lugs).

## A1. The Basis of Perfection

As for the first, since it says in the root text, “Being perfect with regard to everything, from the vast expanse of the space of the Kunzhi, which is empty, clear, and lacking any substance or self,” this signifies the dimension of the Kunzhi.

And since it says in the text, “There arises the miniature-sized primal awareness that is inherently luminous and without thoughts,” this indicates the primal cognition which is awareness.

Again, since it says, ‘The Dimension and Primordial Awareness are without duality and are of an even (self-identical) consistency or sameness,’ the meaning is that Kunzhi and Rigpa are without duality. When everything is perfected and complete, it is perfected with respect to that base which represents the non-duality of Kunzhi and Rigpa.

## A2. The System of Perfection

Second, as for the system of perfection, when everything is perfected and completed, it means that everything within Samsara and Nirvana is perfected and complete. Furthermore, it says in the text, “The three kinds of manifestations arise naturally as energy.” These three, which represent the totality of manifestation, are the sounds, the lights, and the rays and they are the root of everything in Samsara and Nirvana with respect to the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind). Everyone of them is perfected and complete as spontaneous perfection in terms of being self-arising and uncreated.

Since it says, “The external object and the internal awareness are not separate and yet they are not mixed,” this indicates that with respect to the three: the sounds, lights, and rays, they are called the visible objects and with respect to the primal cognitions of Rigpa, they are called the awareness that is the subject. These two, the object and the awareness, are not separated by some divisions and they abide as united without being mixed together. Since they are not mixed together, their essential characteristics are individually visible.

Since it says in the text, “All external visions and sounds and all internal particulars of the thought process are complete and perfect in themselves,” this means that in terms of the Bodhichitta, they are complete in their own forms as the five visible lights. Since they are

thus perfected, they are complete also as the five elements which represent visible causes. Since they are perfected, all the visible manifestations of Samsara and Nirvana are also perfected and complete.. Furthermore, all the visions of Nirvana, all the celestial palaces and all the celestial realms, all the mandalas and all their ornaments, as well as all the body colours, the hand-symbols, the marks and characteristics, and also all the chief deities and their retinues and their emanations, including the Five Bodies, the Five Deities, and so on-- all of these pure visions are complete as spontaneously perfected without effort. Moreover, all of the appearances of Samsara, such as the external vessel of the universe and its internal nectar of living inhabitants, the kalpas and the worlds, the cities of the six realms and the mandalas of the three worlds, as well as the five elements, the five skandhas, the five poisons, the five internal organs and the five containers in the body, the five limbs, the five sense faculties, the five supports of these sense faculties the five sense objects, and so on—indeed, all of these impure visions are complete as spontaneously perfected without effort.

With respect to the Bodhichitta, the sounds which are the root of what is heard are perfect in their own form. Since they are perfected, the sounds of the external elements, the sounds of internal awareness, the emanations of the Speech of the Buddhas, the speech and verbal symbols of the voices of ordinary sentient beings, and so on-- all of the particulars of these sounds which are articulated, however many there may be--are complete as spontaneously perfected without effort.

And with respect to the Bodhichitta, all the rays that represent the root of the thought process are complete in their own form. The tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of primal cognitions of awareness of the perfect Buddhas, as well as the eighty-four thousand particulars of the thought process of ordinary sentient beings, and so on-- all of the particular objects which can be known by the subject, however many they may be, are complete as spontaneously perfected without effort.

## **B. The Extensive Explanation**

With respect to the extensive explanation: According to the teaching on the ten unifications (zung-'brel bcu), (each of which represent the the Treasury of Dzogchen), they are as follows:

1. Dimension and Primordial Awareness (*dbyings dang ye-shes*),
2. Space and Vastness (*mkha' dang klong*),
3. Skillful Means and Discriminating Wisdom (*thabs dang shes-rab*),
4. External Object and Internal Consciousness (*yul dang nam-shes*),
5. Cause and Effect (*rgyu dang ,bras-bu*),
6. Body and Mind (*lus dang sems*),
7. Universe and Inhabitants (*snod dang bcud*),
8. Divine Father and Divine Mother (*yab dang yum*),
9. Body and Primordial Awareness (*sku dang ye-shes*), and
10. Deity and Celestial Palace (*lha dang gzhal-yas*).

(1) When it says in the root text, „The unification of the Dimension and the Primordial Awareness represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection,“ with respect to the three manifestations, it is called *dbyings*, “dimension.” And with respect to Rigpa, it is called *ye-shes*, “primal awareness.” These two are said to be unified or linked together as a pair, because they are never separated by divisions. With respect to that unification, since everything within Samsara and Nirvana is complete, therefore, it is called *rdzogs-pa*, “perfected and completed.” Because it transcends the full measure, it is called *chen-po*, “great or total.” Because everything within Samsara and Nirvana originates from it as a source, it is called *mdzod*, “the treasury.”

(2) When it says “The unification of Space and Vastness represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection,” with respect to the three manifestations, it is called *klong*, “vastness,” and with respect to the primal cognitions of Rigpa, it is called *mkha'*, “space.” Since these two are never separated by divisions, they are called the unification of space and vastness. The meanings of Treasury and the Great Perfection are similar to above.

(3) When it says, “The unification of Skillful Means and Discriminating Wisdom represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection,” with respect to the three manifestations, it is called the dimension of the Great Wisdom and with respect to the primal cognitions of Rigpa, it is called the space of the Great Means. The meanings of unification, and so on, are similar to the above.

(4) When it says, "The unification of the external object and the internal consciousness represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection," with respect to the three manifestations, it is called the object which can be known and all appearances (and visions) of external objects arise from that. With respect to the primal cognitions of Rigpa, it is called the consciousness which is the subject (that apprehends what can be known) and all the particulars of consciousness, which are known by the internal subject arise from that. The meaning of unification, the Great Perfection, and so on, are similar to the above.

(5) When it says, "The unification of cause and effect represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection." With respect to the three manifestations, it is called cause and with respect to the primary cognitions of Rigpa, it is called effect. All of the phenomena that are conditioned by cause and effect rise from that. The meaning of unification, and so on, is similar to the above.

(6) When it says, "the unification of body and mind represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection," with respect to the three manifestations, it is called body and all the emanations of bodies, however many there may be, arise from that. With respect to the primal cognitions of awareness, it is called mind and all the emanations of mind, however many there may be, arise from that. The meaning of unification, and so on, is similar to the above.

(7) When it says, "The unification of the external vessel of the universe and the nectar which are its living inhabitants represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection," with respect to the three manifestations, it is called the external vessel of the universe and everything in the universe which is the external vessel, arises from that. With respect to the primal cognitions of Rigpa, it is called the nectar of living beings and all the sentient beings which represent this internal nectar (contained in the vessel of the universe) arise from that. The meaning of this unification, and so on, is similar to the above.

(8) When it says, "The unification of the Divine Father and Divine Mother represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection," With respect to the three manifestations, one speaks of the mother, who is the Queen of Phenomena, in the same way as rainbows together with the sun are

produced from the dimension of space. With respect to Rigpa, one speaks of the Father who is the King of Means, as being the primal cognitions of Rigpa in space. These two (the Father and the Mother) are not separated by any divisions, so they are said to be unified. The unification is similar to the above.

(9) When it says, “The unification of the Body and the Primordial Awareness represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection,” with respect to the three manifestations, it is called Body and all of the emanations that are bodies, however many there may be, arise from that. And with respect to Rigpa, it is called primal awareness and all the emanations of knowledge arise from that. The unification is like that above.

(10) When it says, “The unification of the deity and the celestial palace represents the Treasury of the Great Perfection,” with respect to the three manifestations, one speaks of the celestial palace and all of the mandalas that are outer, inner, and secret arise from that. With respect to the primal cognitions of awareness, one speaks of the root deity Shenlha Karpo, the White Shen Deity, and all the hosts of deities that are outer, inner, and secret, as well as all the hosts of deities of the four magical actions, arise from that. Because these two are not separated by any divisions, they are unified. Because all of them are complete, they represent perfection. And because they all transcend the full measure, they are great. Since everything originates from this, it is the Treasury.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Sixth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 7. The Seventh Little Nail

Seventh, also within the Little Nail of the Nirmanakayas that are without Partialities (phyogs-med sprul sku'i gzer-bu), there are three topics to be considered.



## I. The Homage

From the first among them, since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the Self-Awareness that is the Nirmanakaya," (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sprul-pa'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning is that the magical apparitions of the Bodhichitta can arise anywhere and that they are the creators of everything.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the exposition of the commentary to the meaning (of the root text), there are two divisions, namely,

1. the teaching in brief and
2. the extensive explanation.

### A. The Teaching in Brief

As for the first, it says in the root text, "These two, the external objects which are visible and the internal primal cognitions of awareness, are not separate and yet they are not mixed together. This represents the energy of their unification where they are linked together as a pair." This refers to the three objects: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, and to the primal awareness of Rigpa which is the subject. From the energy of their unification and the inseparability of these two, there arise all the magical apparitions of Samsara and Nirvana.

Whenever there arises something, whatever it may be, this is referred to in the text: "All the visions and sounds and all the particularities of the thought process may arise." It is explained above that they represent occasions of the Sambhogakaya. From the light and energy of Rigpa arise all the various different kinds of visions of Samsara and Nirvana. From the sounds and energy of Rigpa arise the Speech of the Buddhas and all the particular voices of ordinary sentient beings. From the rays and the energy of Rigpa arise all the primal cognitions of the omniscient knowledge of the Buddhas and all the particulars of the thought processes of ordinary sentient beings.

## B. The Extensive Explanation

Second, as for the extensive explanation, it says in the text, "They are the six sense faculties that connect the six consciousness aggregates, and the six sense objects." From the magical apparitions of the Nature of Mind (the Bodhichitta), internally there arise the manifestations of the six consciousness aggregates, such as eye consciousness, ear consciousness, and so on, and externally there arise the manifestations of the six objects, such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. In between them, there arise the six sense faculties that link and connect body and mind.

Since it says, "There emanate without partiality the various different (visions) of Samsara and Nirvana," it means that, at the time of not understanding, from the energies of the six consciousness aggregates, the six objects, and the six sense faculties, there will emanate without partiality the various different magical apparitions of Samsara. However, when one does understand, there emanate the various different magical apparitions of Nirvana.

Since it says, "They arise as self-originated energy without any activity (by a creator)." It means that, because they arise from the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) as the magical apparitions of Samsara and Nirvana, without deliberately doing anything, they arise as self-originated and self-arisen. These visions occurring in the dimension of space are inexhaustible and do not diminish.

As it says, "With respect to this spatial dimension of visible manifestations, it does not become exhausted and does not diminish; in the sky of Rigpa there are no shadows, but only a luminous clarity." From the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind), there arises the magical apparitions of both Samsara and Nirvana, however many these may be. These three great manifestations (of sounds, lights, and rays) are inexhaustible and do not diminish, just as the atoms do not. Furthermore, the the primal cognitions of Rigpa are clear and without shadows at every instant.

Since it says, "Being self-originated and self-liberated, everything (as visions) is complete in this Unique Sphere," this indicates that even though there arise these magical apparitions of both Samsara and Nirvana, however many they may be, they do not originate from elsewhere nor do they go to anywhere else. Even though they originate

and come forth from the vast expanse of the mind and even when they liberate, they are only liberated into the vast expanse of the mind (the Nature of Mind). Everything is perfected and complete within the Unique Sphere of the Mind, (that is, the Nature of Mind).

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Seventh Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 8. The Eighth Little Nail

Eighth, moreover, with respect to the Little Nail of the Examples that Illustrate (the real meaning) (mtshon byed dpe'i gzer-bu), there are again three topics to be considered.

### I. The Homage

From among the three topics, the first is the homage. Since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who clears away the darkness of doubts," (kun tu bzang-po the-tshom mun-pa sel la phyag 'tshal-lo), this signifies the offering of homage. When one recognizes the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind), clearly and definitively deciding upon it, and coming to possess confidence in it, the meaning is that the darkness of doubts becomes cleared away by itself

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, among the topics found in the text, there are five, namely,

1. the teaching concerning the examples of the connecting of the visible object and the primal cognitions of awareness (snang-ba'i yul dang rig-pa'i ye-shes zung du 'brel-ba'i dpe),
2. the teaching concerning the modes of clarity and shadow on the four occasions (dus bzhi la gsal dang 'grib tshul).
3. the teaching concerning the processes of liberation and delusion (grol 'khrul gyi tshul),

4. the teaching concerning the full measure of cause and time (*rgyu dang dus kyi tshad*), and
5. the teaching concerning the method for the reversing of delusions (*'khrul-pa zlog-pa'i thabs*).

### A. The Examples

First, it says in the root text, “The connecting or linking together as a pair of the external object and the internal awareness may be illustrated by examples such as the process of light reflected on the water, refracted with the crystal, emanated the sun, and issuing from the butter lamp. Consequently, awareness is similar to the water and the three manifestations, which are the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are the process of the light being reflected on the water. Or again, awareness is similar to the crystal and the three manifestations are like the light being refracted from the crystal. Or again, awareness is similar to the sun and the three manifestations are like the light rays emanating from the sun. Or again, awareness is similar to a butter lamp and the three manifestations have the manner of the light issuing from the butter lamp.

### B. Clarity and Shadow

As for the teaching concerning the two modes of clarity and shadow on the four times, it says in the root text, “In terms of the abiding (of the Base), the coming together (of body and mind), the separating (again of body and mind), and (the arising of) delusions, respectively on the four occasions.” As for the abiding, the occasion for the abiding of the Base has been that from the very beginning. As for their coming together, the present life is the occasion of the coming together of the body and the mind. As for their separating, when the body and mind separate individually, it is the occasion for the arising of the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. And as for delusion, this is the occasion for wandering in the Bardo of Existence.

It is said in the text, “Without obscuration or with obscuration, in a manner that is clear or shadowed.” Therefore, at the time when the Base abides primordially, *Rigpa* is like the sun rising in the sky without clouds. Furthermore, the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays,

abide at that time without any obscurations. But at the present, it is the time of the connecting (or linking together as a pair) of the body and the mind and so, Rigpa is like a butter lamp set inside of a vase. Having been obscured by the physical body, it abides there as something obscured. But when the body and the mind have become separated at death, this is the time for the arising of the Bardo of the Clear Light, and so, Rigpa is like the sun free of clouds. It arises clearly for one time in the Bardo. When it is the time of the delusions that arise in the Bardo of Existence, then Rigpa is like the sun covered with clouds. It becomes shadowed and obscured by the manifestations of these delusions.

### C. Liberation and Delusion

As for the teaching concerning the processes of liberation and of delusion, it says in the root text, "One sees them as they are in themselves and by this knowledge the Buddha is liberated." Consequently, because Kuntu Zangpo knew (and understood from the very beginning) that these three manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, were self-manifestations, he realized Buddhahood instantly without the need for a master to train him.

Since it says, "Having obtained power (and control) over the visions, one turns the wheel of independence, or self-power," the meaning is that, because Kuntu Zangpo knew these appearances, or visions, to be just self-manifestations, he did not seek to follow after them. Since he did not follow after them, he obtained independence with regard to these visions. Since he has obtained independence, he is able to transform these visions in whatever manner is possible. For example, he is similar to a king who can bring the entire population under his power and control.

Since it says in the text, "However, seeing them as other than oneself, sentient beings become deluded by this," the meaning is that the sentient beings of the three worlds do not know that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are self-manifestations. Because they see these appearances, or visions, as existing independently of themselves outside of their mind-streams, being without any guide, they wrongly wander in Samsara.

And again it says, "Following after these visions, one is deceived by the illusions that they are manifestations due to another." Consequently, because the sentient beings of the three worlds see these visions, or appearances, as manifestations due to another, they follow after these visions. Since they follow after these visions, Rigpa, loses its independence. Since it loses its independence, the visions become manifestations due to another. For example, this is similar to a king who wanders lost and aimless among the common people, or a child who pursues the rainbow.

#### **D. Cause and Time**

Fourth, as for the teaching concerning the full measure of cause and time: Since it says in the root text, "Without any karmic cause, they came forth from the power of their nature," the meaning is that Kuntu Zangpo came to realize Buddhahood without recourse to a master, whereas the sentient beings of the three worlds mistakenly wander in Samsara without a guide. If one asks what had occurred previously regarding the causes and consequences of virtue and sin, the answer is that nothing had occurred as the causes and consequences of these virtues and sins. They merely come forth from the energy of the inherent power of the Natural State. For example, it is like the tongues of flame going upward and the drops of water going downward of themselves, without being coerced by any outside agency.

Since it says, "They are without the full measure of time and they arise without a beginning or end," the meaning is that Kuntu Zangpo has understood (at the very beginning), whereas the sentient beings of the three worlds have become deluded. If one asks how much is the duration of this time, there is no full measure to this time. And so, it is said that the three times arise without beginning or end.

#### **E. The Method for the Reversing of Delusions**

Fifth, as for the teaching concerning the method for the reversing of delusions, it says in the root text, "Having once definitively deciding upon the heart-essence which is without delusion, it is not possible to become deluded again." This means that when one recognizes the

Natural State, which is primordially pure awareness, and definitively decides upon that, it is not possible to become deluded once more. For example, it is similar to the crown prince dwelling in the royal capital.

Since it says, "Once discovering the source of the visions, one does not become deceived again by appearances," this indicates that once having discovered the source of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, which represent the secondary causes of delusion, and recognizing them to be self-manifestations, one will not become again deceived by these three manifestations. For example, just as when one knows an illusion to be an illusion, one is not deceived by further illusions. Or again, just as when one knows that the rainbow is without any inherent existence, one does not pursue or chase after it.

### III. The Conclusion

The conclusion is adequately elucidated in the text. The commentary on the eighth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 9. The Ninth Little Nail

Ninth, also within the Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness (rang-rig khong shar gyi gzer-bu), there are three topics to be considered.

### I. The Homage

From among the three topics, when it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is neither united with nor separated from Self-Awareness," (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig 'du 'bral med la phyag 'tshal-lo), this signifies the offering of the homage. Since the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) does not come from anywhere, it does not come together, and since it does not go anywhere either, it is not separated again. The meaning here is that it is spontaneously-born and co-emergent in the three times.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the topic of the text, it says in the root text, “The primal cognitions of Self-Awareness are hidden and concealed.” Therefore, those primal cognitions of self-awareness are said to be “hidden” because they are difficult to understand and they are said to be “concealed” because they may be obscured by adventitious obscurations. When they are hidden in this way somewhere, it says in the text, “Inside the Tsita, the Base that abides is similar to the vast dimension of the sky and to the great ocean.” Here one is speaking of the Dimension of the Kunzhi. These primal cognitions of awareness, or Rigpai Yeshe, are found in the dimension of space that is similar to the sky, this being the Kunzhi, and these primal cognitions of awareness are hidden and concealed there like the stars in the sky during the daytime. Again, in the dimension of the great ocean, this being the Kunzhi, the primal cognitions of awareness are hidden like a tortoise with his limbs drawn into his shell.

Since it says in the text, “As for the Tsita of the lights that are visible, it is similar to a pavilion of five colored rainbows,” thus it is said to be similar to a pavilion made of five lights and the primal cognitions of awareness in the hollow space of the five lights are concealed and self-obscured by its own inherent light .

Since it says, “As for the Tsita of the flesh that is material, it is similar to a highly refined precious vessel,” this indicates that the heart is said to resemble a maroon-colored pavilion of cornelian. These primal cognitions of awareness, abiding in the center of this pavilion of cornelian, which is the physical heart, are concealed like the light of a butter lamp set inside a clay vase.

Since it says, “As for the miniature-sized primal awareness that is clear luminosity, it resembles a butter lamp set inside a clay vase,” the example signifies that these primal cognitions, which are one’s own awareness, arise from the interior of the heart. Since it says, “As for these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, they are similar to the energy from the rays of light of the butter lamp,” the example signifies that these three great manifestations self-arise with respect to the primal cognitions of awareness.



Since it says in the text, "The King that is Awareness arises from the interior," the meaning is that self-awareness arises from the interior of the heart. When it arises from the interior of something, it says in the text, "It arises from the vast expanse of the emptiness in the Kunzhi, the visions arise from the hollow space of light, therefore, the illusions arise from the middle of the body." And again it says, "In terms of the outer aspect, it self-arises from the center of the Tsita," this means that in its outer aspect, it arises from the center of the Tsita, in its inner aspect, it self-arises from the hollow space of the five lights, and in its secret aspect, it self-arises from the vast expanse of the Kunzhi.

Since it says in the text, "This source of everything, which is completely pure in itself, represents the Treasury of Space," this signifies that it reveals all the virtuous qualities of Rigpa and Kunzhi. As for this source of everything, all the phenomena of Samsara and Nirvana without exception originate from it. As for being completely pure, it is immaculate and without taint and as for being the Treasury of Space, whatever quantities come forth from it are inexhaustible

Since it says, "But gradually by various stages, (its projections) become polluted and obscured," this means that the defects and faults, which are not recognized in terms of Kunzhi and Rigpa, are revealed. Why? When not recognized, in terms of the outer aspect, having become obscured by the body, it is not recognized and the situation is similar to a butter lamp placed inside a clay vase. In terms of the inner aspect, having been obscured by the manifestations of the six sense objects, it is not recognized and this is similar to the stars being invisible in the sky at daytime. In terms of the secret aspect, having been obscured by the karmic traces of the mind, which is the thought process, it cannot be located anywhere and it is similar to the sun obscured by the clouds.

Since it says, "When there exists no doorway for them, one will not come to see them." In that way, the Kunzhi and the Rigpa become stained and obscured by those stages which represent adventitious obscurations. In terms of the outer aspect, if there does not exist the doorway of the instructions, one will not come to see the source which is the Dharmata, the Ultimate Reality. In terms of the inner aspect, if there does not exist the doorway of the lamp (of the eyes and the other sense organs), one will not come to see the source of the three: the sounds, lights, and rays. And in terms of the secret aspect, if there does

not exist the doorway of Rigpa, one will not come to see the source, which is the Kunzhi itself.

Since it says, “But when the doorway to the treasury is opened, indeed, the interior of the treasury is revealed,” the meaning is that Kunzhi and Rigpa become recognized: In terms of the outer aspect, when one opens the door to the Treasury of the Instructions, the interior of the Treasure of Reality is revealed. In terms of the inner aspect, when one opens the door to the Treasury of the Lamp, the interior of the Treasure of the Sounds, the Lights, and the Rays is revealed. And in terms of the secret aspect, when one opens the door to the Treasury of the Primal Cognitions of Rigpa, the interior of the Treasure of the Dimension of the Kunzhi is revealed.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Ninth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 10. The Tenth Little Nail

Tenth, also within the Little Nail of the Pathways that are without Deviations (*gol med lam gyi gzer-bu*), there are three topics to be considered.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is Self-Awareness without distortions,” (*kun tu bzang-po rang-rig yo-gal med la phyag 'tshal-lo*), this expresses the homage. The meaning is that, if one understands the real meaning of the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) without any fabrications or adulterations to its nature, there will be no deviations from the path.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the principal text, there exist three divisions, namely,

1. the teaching on the process whereby the body and the mind are produced by the five lights and the five elements ('od lnga dang 'byung-ba lnga yis lus sems bskyed tshul),
2. the teaching on the process whereby Rigpa arises on the pathways of the channels (rig-pa rtsa'i lam la shar tshul), and
3. the teaching on the process whereby one transfers along the pathway of the central channel (dbu-ma'i lam la 'pho tshul).

### A. Producing the Body and the Mind

As for the first, as it says in the root text, "From the miniature-sized primal cognitions of self-awareness, the visible lights arise as five kinds of radiance. From that there arise as the five kinds of pure elements (the subtle aspect) and from that, in turn, there arise as the five kinds of impure elements (the gross aspect). It is by means of these twenty-five elements that the body and the mind are produced."

It is expounded that from this miniature-sized primal awareness, there arise the five lights, and from these five lights, there arise the five elements that are pure in their nature. In turn, from these five pure ones, there arise the five elements that are impure in their nature. By means of these twenty-five elements which are both pure and impure, the body (and the mind) are produced.

Furthermore, by way of these five: space-light, air-light, fire-light, water-light, and earth-light, the body and the mind are differentiated. By means of the five: space-atoms, air-atoms, fire-atoms, water-atoms, and earth-atoms, the supports for the body and the mind are created and they are entirely produced. By means of the five aspects which are the moisture of space, the moisture of air, the moisture of fire, the moisture of water, and the moisture of earth, having gathered body and mind into one, they are nourished. By means of the five aspects of heat, the heat of space, the heat of air, the heat of fire, the heat of water, and the heat of earth, body and mind are cause to ripen entirely. By means of the five aspects (of the air element), the wind of space, the wind of air, the wind of fire, the wind of water, and the wind of earth, the pure and the impure elements in body and mind are separated and the hollow channels are caused to be cleansed.

In terms of that, as for the process by which the body and the mind arise from the five aspects of the elements, this should be known from the text of the *Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug*.

## **B The Arising of Rigpa in the Channels**

Second, moreover, within the teaching on the process by which Rigpa arises along the pathways of the channels (*rig-pa rtsa'i lam la shar tshul*), there exist two sections:

1. the teaching on the pathways of the faults and defects and those of the virtues (*skyon dang yon-tan gyi lam*), and
2. the teaching on the pathways where the faults and the virtues are without duality (*skyon yon gnyis-med kyi lam*).

### **B1. The Pathways of Faults and Virtues**

As for the first, it says in the text, “Rigpa arises along the pathways of the channels.” This means that the central channel is the proper pathway for Rigpa and it Rigpa manifests at the doors of the eyes.

Since it says, “When it arises moving upward, this is the path of Nirvana,” and this indicates that since it separates from the middle of the physical heart and proceeds through the hollow tube of the central pathway because of the wind that moves upward (the vital wind of *Udana*), it will arrive at the door of the pathway of Nirvana. When the Rigpa transfers along that channel, one obtains the fruit that is Nirvana.

But since it says, “Arising and proceeding downward, this is the pathway leading to Samsara,” it indicates that since it separates and moves downward in the hollow tube of the central channel by the action of the vital wind of *Apana*, there will arise the pathway to Samsara. When Rigpa transfers along that path, once again it comes to wander about in the places of Samsara.

Again, since it says, “Arising on the right, this is the pathway of the faults and defects,” it means that there exists the white channel on the right (side of the body). From that, in all the channels on the right which turn upward, because Rigpa has become attired in the energies of these faults, it moves along and transfers from any one of the channels on the right. For the greater part, it produces faults and defects.

On the other hand, since it says, "Arising on the left, it moves along the pathway of the virtuous qualities," it means that there exists the red channel on the left. From that, in all of the channels on the left that turn upward. Having become attired in the energies of the virtuous qualities, Rigpa moves and transfers through any door of the channels on the left. Therefore, for the greater part, the virtuous qualities are produced (in terms of rebirth).

It says, "The three doors (of body, speech, and mind) are the pathways for the Samsara of the three worlds." These three doors are the body, speech, and mind. When one transfers by way of any of them, one will be reborn somewhere among the three worlds.

Again, since it says, "Arising at the four doors, there exist the pathways of the four kinds of birth," the meaning is that there are the four kinds of limbs and transferring from any of these four, one will circulate among the four kinds of birth (whether apparitional birth, birth from heat and moisture, birth from the egg, or birth from womb).

Since it says, "Arising at the five doors, there are the pathways of the five streams," this indicates that there are the five doors of the sense faculties. When Rigpa transfers from any of these five, it is reborn into the five stream-pathways (which are the destinies of rebirth).

And since it says, "Arising at the nine doors, it is the pathways of the nine stages," this means that the orifices represent the nine doors. When Rigpa transfers from any of these nine, one will be reborn among the nine stages (arranged in the universe).

## **B2. The Non-duality of Virtue and Vice**

As for the teaching concerning the path of the non-duality of vicious faults and virtuous qualities: Since it says in the root text, "The central channel is the pathway for the non-duality of Samsara and Nirvana," this indicates that since there does not even exist any of the taints of vicious faults or virtuous qualities within the central pathway itself, Rigpa arises here in a total primordial purity.

Since it says, "The King that is Rigpa arises from these pathways," the meaning signified here is that self-awareness is without distortions.

If someone asks whether or not it arises along any pathway, it says in the text, "It (Rigpa) arises from the empty dimension of the Kunzhi;

it arises from the hollow tube of visible light; it arises from the continuum of enlightenment.” Consequently, the outer aspect is its arising from the pathway of the central channel, the inner aspect is its arising from the hollow tube of the five lights, and the secret aspect is its arising without distortions in the Dimension of the Kunzhi.

If someone asks whether Rigpa arises in whatever manner along these paths, it says in the text, “Rigpa arises in an unadulterated manner on all the pathways naturally.” From any of these three pathways (on the right, on the left, or in the center), Rigpa arises in its own condition without any modifications

Since it says, “Total Primal Awareness (ye-shes chen-po) is the path that illuminates,” it signifies that Rigpa arises everywhere without any obscurations or coverings whatsoever.

And since it says, “Being without any distortions, it is the path of the thighs,” this indicates that Rigpa arises without any deviations.

### **C. The Method of Transfer**

Third, also within the teaching concerning the method of transferring along this pathway of the central channel (dbu-ma'i lam la 'pho tshul), there are two sections:

1. the actual teaching on the method of transference ('pho tshul dngos) and
2. the teaching on the virtuous qualities of the transference ('pho-ba'i yon-tan).

#### **C1. The Actual Method**

First, since it says in the root text, “There exists nothing at this doorway leading to the path of Samsara,” it means that since there exists nothing systematic at this doorway to Samsara in the central channel, when Rigpa transfers from this pathway, it is not possible to be reborn in Samsara. Consequently, the awareness of the Yogin should transfer into this.

If someone asks in what way does it transfer, it says in the text, “It is said that the little man of the mind, who is Rigpa, mounts and rides upon the horse of the functional mind (yid) which is memory. Without

any impediments, he moves by means of the vital winds like having wings, and he goes along the pathway to enlightenment which is the central channel and thereby arrives at the secret door of bliss which is at the crown of the head." Here Rigpa is the little man and the functional mind is the horse. The vital winds (or psychic energies) are the wings or the whip (for driving the horse). The central channel is the pathway, and the crown of the head is the gateway. Therefore, that little man of the mind rides on the horse of the functional mind and is driven forward by the whip of the winds (of psychic energy). Traversing upward along the pathway of the central channel, one comes to transfer at the aperture of Brahma (at the crown of the head).

## C2. The Qualities of the Transference

As for the virtuous qualities deriving from such a transference, it says in the text, "The King that is Awareness arises in his nakedness." This means that there is no opportunity for the emotional defilements and the discursive thoughts to move along the pathway of the central channel. Consequently, when one transfers (the Rigpa) from that gateway (at the crown of the head), Rigpa arises nakedly and denuded, being without any obscurations or coverings whatsoever.

Since it says, "One escapes from the abundant proliferations of the mental process and the discursive thoughts," it means that one is self-purified without even renouncing the emotional defilements and the discursive thoughts. For example, it is similar to a person not wearing any clothes.

Since it says in the text, "One sees one's own face which is self-originated primal awareness," it indicates that it is not necessary to be taught first by any teacher or master. Rather, Rigpa recognizes its own face by itself.

Since it says, "The darkness of delusion and ignorance is cleared away," it indicates that because Rigpa is self-arising, the darkness is self-purified and cleared away.

Since it says, "The three worlds and the nine levels are stirred up from the depths," this means that because the three doors of the body, speech, and mind are obstructed, the three worlds are stirred at the

depths. Because the nine doors, which are the orifices of the human body, become obstructed, the nine levels are stirred up at the depths.

Since it says, “The pathways of the five poisons which are the *kleshesh*, or emotional defilements, are interrupted,” this indicates that because the five doors of the sense faculties are obstructed and the flow of the five poisons is interrupted.

Since it says, “the great ocean of Samsara, consisting of the six realms of rebirth, becomes dried up,” this means that because the five poisons, which are their causes, are interrupted, the great ocean of the six realms of rebirth, which are their consequence, is dried up.

Since it says, “The doorways to Samsara, represented by the four kinds of birth, are now emptied,” this indicates that because the doorways of the four limbs are obstructed, one closes the doors to the four kinds of birth processes.

Since it says, “The *Trikaya* self-arises continuously,” it means that the *Trikaya*, having arisen in a self-arisen manner, comes to accomplish the benefit of beings.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary of the Tenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 11. The Eleventh Little Nail

Eleventh, within the Little Nail of the Lamp that Removes the Darkness (*mun sel sgron-ma'i gzer-bu*), there are also three topics:

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who removes the darkness of ignorance” (*kun tu bzang-po ma rig mun sel la phyag 'tshal-lo*), that signifies the homage. The meaning is that, with respect to the *Bodhichitta* (the Nature of Mind), there exist no obscurations or coverings due darkness.



## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the principal topic of the text, there exist three divisions:

1. the teaching concerning the pathway of seeing for Rigpa in terms of the five doors of the sense faculties (dbang-po sgo lnga rig-pa'i mthong lam),
2. the teaching concerning the pathway of seeing for Rigpa in terms of the eyes in detail (bye-brag tu mig rig-pa'i mthong lam), and
3. the teaching concerning the arising in complete perfection of the primal cognitions of Rigpa at the doors of the eyes (mig gi sgo la rig-pa'i ye-shes yongs rdzogs su shar-ba).

### A. Awareness at the Five Doors of the Senses

As for the first, when it says in the root text, "The primal cognitions of self-awareness arise at the five doors of the senses," with respect to the King that is one's own knowing Awareness, which constitutes the Essence and the Unique Sphere, it means that from the energies of the five elements and the five lights, it Rigpa arises at the five doors of the sense faculties.

When it says, "The five objects are clearly illuminated, however, there exist no thoughts (arising as yet)," with respect to the five doors of the sense faculties, it means that the King that is Awareness arises without discursive thoughts, like a mirror cleansed of all rust and dust. Beyond that, the five objects arise like reflected images arising in a mirror. Even though they arise, the King that is Awareness is without even a dust speck of a thought that grasps at an object.

Well then, if someone asks what attaches thoughts to objects, it says in the text, "It is mental consciousness (yid-shes) and the thought processes (blo) that attach discursive thoughts to the sense objects," that is to say, these magical apparitions of the mind are conjured up by the mental consciousness.

### B. The Path of Seeing

Second, as for the teaching in detail concerning the pathway of seeing for Rigpa in terms of the eyes: When it says in the text, "The pathway of seeing for Rigpa is the doorways of the Lamps," it means that the

doorway of the eye is the support for the door of the self-arising of Rigpa. Because the Four Lamps arise from just that doorway, it brings about the clearing away of the four-fold darkness.

As it says, "The lamp of the water (globe-like eyes) that lassos everything at a distance removes the darkness of gloom from the world." If there did not exist the lamp of the water of the eye, this world would be perpetually covered in darkness (as with blindness). But since the lamp of the water of the eye does arise, so this world is free from darkness.

Again, when it says, "The lamp of the visions of higher insight removes the darkness of the thought process that is emptied and exhausted," this indicates that, if higher insight did not see the manifestations of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, the mind would become covered in the darkness of nihilism. But because the manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays, do arise to higher insight, everything is freed from the darkness of the erroneous views of nihilism (or total annihilation).

When it says, "The lamp of the primal cognitions of self-awareness removes the darkness of ignorance and the thought process," it means that if there did not exist the lamp of the spontaneously-born, co-emergent awareness, everything would be covered in the darkness of ignorance and by the thought process. But if one recognizes this spontaneously-born and co-emergent awareness, then the darkness of ignorance is self-awakened (and cleansed).

When it says, "The lamp of the Dimension of the Kunzhi removes the darkness of the thought process that grasps at partialities," it means that if one does not understand the continuous and uninterrupted Dimension of the Kunzhi, one's philosophical tenets will be covered (and obscured) by the darkness that grasps at partialities. But if one understands the real meaning, one will not fall into any partialities or discontinuities anywhere with regard to the Kunzhi. Thereby all the darkness of the philosophical tenets that grasp at partialities will self-liberate.

In that way, these Four Lamps arise in a self-arising manner at the door of the sense organ of the eyes. If one understands the real meaning of that, not even the name of that darkness that causes obscurations will exist for the individual.

### C. The Arising of Primal Awareness at the Doorway of the Eyes

Third, as for the teaching concerning the arising in a completely perfect manner of the primal cognitions of Rigpa at the door of the eyes: When it says in the text, “The King that is Awareness arises and sees,” the meaning is the self-arising of these primal cognitions of awareness.

If someone asks where there arises whatever it sees, it says in the text, “It arises in the empty space of the Kunzhi. The visions arise in the hollow tube of light (the kati channel) and total clarity arises at the doorway of the lamp (the eyes).” In terms of the outer aspect, it arises at the doorway of the lamp of the eyes. In terms of the inner aspect, it arises at the seeing of the five lights. And in terms of the secret aspect, it arises to see the Kunzhi.

If someone asks, how does awareness arise in whatever manner, it says in the text, “Just as the lotus blossom arises out of the muck of the swamp, so the King that is Awareness is projected out from the hollow tube.” For example, the lotus blossom is produced from inside the muck of the swamp, yet it will abide nakedly in the sunlight above, immaculate and unsoiled by the muck below. Similarly, with respect to the King that is Awareness, at the doorway of the eyes the illusions are projected out from the hollow tube in the body. The visions are projected from the hollow tube of objects, and the discursive thoughts are projected from the hollow tube of the thought process. Each of them arise nakedly and denuded without being soiled or tainted by anything else.

Again, when it says, “Just as the heart of the sun is free of all darkness, so the King that is Awareness is free of all darkness and obscurations,” With respect to the sun that is free of darkness, just as it is free of any obscuration, so the King that is Awareness, at the doorway of the eyes, arises nakedly and is free of all obscuration and opaqueness of the body. It is free of all obscuration and opaqueness of the objects. Moreover, it is free of all obscuration and opaqueness due to the thought process. It arises clearly and lucidly without any obscurations or coverings.

When it says, “The six eyes of the higher insight arise at the forehead,” this indicates that at the doorway of the eyes, the six eyes emanate in a self-arising manner. Furthermore, these may be listed as follows:

1. there is the eye of primal awareness, which is the arising of Rigpa without obscuration (rig-pa ma sgrib-par shar-ba'i ye-shes kyi spyan),
2. there is the eye of Rigpa because it arises without confusion (ma rmongs-par shar-bas rig-pa'i spyan)
3. there is the eye of compassion because it arises unceasingly (and unobstructedly) (ma 'gags-par shar-bas thugs-rje'i spyan),
4. there is the eye of discriminating wisdom because it arises without conceptions or imaginings (mi dmigs-par shar-bas shes-rab kyi spyan),
5. there is the eye of emanation because it arises without admixtures (ma 'dres-par shar-bas sprul-pa'i spyan), and
6. there is the eye of the Nature of Mind because it arises without modifications or fabrications (ma bcos-par shar-bas sems-nyid kyi spyan).

As it says in the text, "It sees everything in its nakedness and thus the Primordial State is realized in its complete perfection." In that way, at the doorway of the eyes, there arise the six eyes of higher insight in a self-arising manner. If one understands that they are seen nakedly and denuded (of conceptions), the real meaning of the Natural State, as well as of the Primordial State of Buddhahood, will become perfectly realized without remainder.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The Eleventh Little Nail is hereby completed.

### 12. The Twelfth Little Nail

Twelfth, within the Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points (gnad gsum ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu), there are also three topics.

## I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the unconditioned Trikaya” (kun tu bzang-po sku-gsum ‘du bral med la phyag ‘tshal-lo), this signifies the homage. The meaning is that the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) arises to itself as the Trikaya (the Three Bodies of the Buddha).

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, the topics within the text are five, namely,

1. the direct introduction to the Trikaya which abides in itself (sku-gsum rang la gnas-par ngo-sprad-pa),
2. the direct introduction to the three: the Base, the Path, and the Fruit, which abide in themselves (gzhi lam ‘bras gsum rang la gnas-par ngo-sprad-pa),
3. the direct introduction to the self-arising of the Trikaya with respect to the three Bases (gzhi gsum la sku-gsum rang shar du ngo-sprad-pa),
4. the direct introduction to Buddhahood in terms of the three Bases (gzhi gsum sangs-rgyas ngo-sprad-pa), and
5. the teaching on the great importance of these instructions (gdams-ngag gi che-ba bstan-pa).

### A. The Direct Introduction to the Trikaya

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “The primal cognitions of self-awareness are the primordially pure Dharmakaya,” it indicates that these primal cognitions of Rigpa are not touched by any extremes or limitations. Since the Dharmakaya is self-arising, the Dharmakaya abides in itself alone.

As it says, “The connecting and linking of the body and the mind is the enjoyment of the Sambhogakaya.” This means that, with respect to the unification, or linking together as a pair, of the body and the mind, the phenomena of Samsara, such as the five elements, the five poisons, the five skandhas, and so on, and the phenomena of Nirvana, such as the five Bodies, the five Families, the five Primal Cognitions, and so on, whether

they are properly understood or not understood, since they are completely perfected without remainder, the Sambhogakaya abides in itself.

When it says, “The various different activities represent the Nirmanakaya,” it means that from the energy of the unification of the body and the mind, the actions of the three doors arise as diversity, whether are properly understood or not understood. Because the magical apparitions of the mind are self-arising, the Nirmanakaya abides in itself.

## **B. The Direct Introduction to the Base, the Path, and the Fruit**

Second, as for the teaching concerning the three; the Base, the Path, and the Fruit, as abiding within themselves: It says in the text, “Because Rigpa arises from the interior of the Base, its heart-essence is unconditioned (never going into separation or coming together),” it signifies that the basis of Rigpa is this heart-essence. If one understands the meaning of that, one will never be separated from the real meaning of the Natural State.

Again, when it says, “Because the pathway of Rigpa is forcefully purified, there exist no deviations on the path,” this indicates that the actual pathway of Rigpa is the channel. Where one purifies the pathway of the central channel, it is demonstrated to be the path to Buddhahood without deviation.

When it says, “Because the Fruit arises at the doorway, the Trikaya is revealed as unobscured and without coverings,” this signifies that the Fruit, which is the Trikaya, self-arises at the doorway of the eyes. When one understands the meaning of that, the Trikaya, which is without obscurations and without coverings, will truly become manifest.

## **C. The Self-Arising of the Three Bases**

Third, as for the direct introduction to the self-arising of the Trikaya with respect to the three Bases: As it says in the text, “The self-awareness arising from the vast expanse within the physical heart is the Dharmakaya.” Because the Self-Awareness that arises from the interior abides in the heart, it is demonstrated that the Dharmakaya is self-arising.

When it says, "On the pathway of the channel, its nature is the Sambhogakaya," it means that because the energy of Rigpa is entirely perfected on the pathway of the channel, this signifies that the Sambhogakaya is self-arising.

Again, as it says, "The Nirmanakaya is self-arising at the doorway of the lamp." Because all of the magical apparitions of the mind arise at the doorway of the eyes, this signifies that the Nirmanakaya is also self-arising.

#### **D. The Direct Introduction to Buddhahood**

Fourth, as for the direct introduction to Buddhahood in terms of the three bases: When it says in the text, "The self-originated primal awareness from the interior abides as Buddhahood, this signifies that it abides as the Primordial Buddhahood within the vast expanse of the Tsita .

When it says, "It abides as the Buddhahood spontaneously perfected from the hollow tube (of the kati channel)," this signifies that the Mind (that is, the Nature of Mind) is the Buddhahood coming into completion within the hollow tube of the kati channel.

Since it says, "With respect to seeing, it sees the Fully Manifest Buddhahood without obscurations," this signifies that Mind (the Nature of Mind) arises as the Fully Manifest Buddhahood at the doorway of the eyes.

#### **E. The Great Importance of the Instruction**

Fifth, as for the teaching on the great importance of this instruction: When it says in the text, "Because one recognizes the face of the Kunzhi, one meets with the Mother who is the Natural State," this means that because there exists no other Natural State beyond the Kunzhi, and because it comes to be recognized by means of just that instruction, the Son comes to meet his Mother which is the Nature of Mind.

When it says, "The darkness of the obscurations and the coverings, are cleared away by the emerging of the concealed primal awareness," this means that, by means of this instruction, this concealed primal awareness emerges at the doorway of the eyes. Because everything is

revealed and becomes visible without obscurations or coverings, the mind is no longer obscured by any darkness.

When it says, "Because the Rigpa overflows in its nakedness, the Trikaya arises into manifestation," it means that because one is directly introduced to Rigpa seeing nakedly at the doorway of the eyes, the Trikaya becomes manifest and visible.

When it says, "Because one recognizes these secondary causes of delusion, one comes to clearly and definitively decide upon the source of delusions," it means that because one recognizes the three: the sounds, lights, and rays, to be the secondary causes of delusion, and since one has clearly and definitively decided upon the source of delusions, it is no longer possible to be deluded.

When it says, "Because one points out the Natural State directly, one comes to exhaust all doubts and two-mindedness," it means that having directly set out the Natural State by means of this instruction, because one indicates it by pointing it out, it signifies that there will be no more doubts in the mind with regard to it.

When it says, "Because one opens the door to the Treasury of Rigpa, one comes to discover in the interior the Treasure of the Kunzhi," it means that in terms of the outer aspect, because one opens the door of the Treasury of the Instructions, one comes to discover in the interior the Treasure which is the Ultimate Reality (*bon-nyid*). In terms of the inner aspect, because one has opened the door of the Treasury of the Eyes, one comes to discover in the interior the Treasure of the Sounds, Lights, and Rays. And in terms of the secret aspect, because one has opened the door to the Treasury of Rigpa, one comes to discover in the interior the Treasure of the Kunzhi.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Twelfth Little Nail is hereby completed.

### 13. The Thirteenth Little Nail

Thirteenth, within the Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Mandalas (*dkyil-'khor ngo-sprad kyi gzer-bu*) there are three topics.



## I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the root deity who is Self-Awareness," (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rtsa-ba'i lha la phyag 'tshal-lo), that expresses the homage. The meaning is that this is the basis for the arising of the Bodhichitta is by way of the outer, the inner, and the secret Mandalas and the hosts of deities who are pacifying, enriching, enchanting, and fierce.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the topics, when it says in the root text, "As for the revealing on the mandalas of the spontaneously perfected mudras (or divine forms)," the indication here is that with respect to the Bodhichitta, it is not necessary to create (with visualization) the Mandalas of the Deities who represent the Mahamudra, they are revealed or displayed in their perfection and completeness in their own forms.

If someone asks how they are perfected and completed, it says in the text, "The space and the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, which is empty and luminously clear, is the Dharmadhatu (the Dimension of Reality)," this means that within the Dimension of the Kunzhi, the places and the realms of the Dharmakaya are revealed and displayed visibly.

When it says, "Primal awareness (ye-shes) is the miniature-sized self-originated Dharmakaya," it means that the primal cognitions of Rigpa are revealed to be the essence of the Dharmakaya.

When it says, "The three: sounds, lights, and rays, represent the Sambhogakaya," it means that these three great manifestations are revealed to be the Sambhogakaya.

When it says, "The threefold magical apparitions that emanate everywhere (in front of the eyes) represent the Nirmanakaya," it means that from the energy of the linking together of the three total manifestations with intrinsic awareness (Rigpa), there arise the magical apparitions of the (profane) body, speech, and mind, as well as those of the (spiritual or enlightened) Body, Speech, and Mind and they display the essence of the Nirmanakaya.

When it says, "The five visible lights are the basis for the realms and the mandalas," this means that the five kinds of lights are revealed

and shown to be the basis for the arising of the various realms of the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya.

When it says, "The pavilions of thigleys form the celestial palaces of the Five Families," it means that the thigleys of the pavilions of the five lights and the thigleys of Rigpa, which have the color of crystal, are revealed to be the basis for the arising of the celestial palaces of the Five Buddha Families.

When it says, "From the Body of Higher Insight arises the various different Rupakayas," it means that these reflected images of the Body of Higher Insight are revealed to be the basis for the arising of the various different Sambhogakayas and Nirmanakayas (in terms of visions).

When it says, "The three-fold unification is the basis for the emanations of the Trikaya," it means that the linking together of the lights with Rigpa is the basis for the emanations of the Body. The linking together of the sounds with Rigpa is the basis for the emanations of Speech. And the linking together of the rays with Rigpa is the basis for the emanations of Mind.

When it says, "They are occurring five and five: these Five Bodies, Five Families, Five Wisdoms, the Lords and Ladies, the chiefs and retinues, and so on, are inconceivable emanations," this indicates that the linking together of the three manifestations with Rigpa is the basis for the arising of inconceivable numbers of emanations and further emanations.

When it says, "This great mandala is natural and not created by any effort," it means that the perfect Mandala of the Deities, which represent the Mahamudra, arises to the mind, but that it is not created by any effort of mind as is the case in the lower vehicles. (On the contrary, it arises) spontaneously perfected as the natural great and total Mandala.

When it says, "With regard to the Bodhichitta, the Mandalas of the Trikaya are perfect and complete," this indicates that they have been clearly visible in a self-arising manner from the very beginning.

When it says, "Because these Mandalas arise of themselves, they are unsought for and uncreated," that means, because the Mandalas of the Trikaya arise to one's own Mind (the Nature of Mind) at the very beginning, it is not necessary to search for them or to create them (with the mind and visualization) as is done in the lower vehicles.

When it says, "Because these visions are without any inherent existence, one is without any attachment to them or desire for them," it means that the Mandalas of the Trikaya become manifest to the mind in a spontaneously perfected manner. Because they are lacking in any inherent existence, being similar to the eight examples of illusions, it is beyond conception that anyone would have a desire for them .

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Thirteenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 14. The Fourteenth Little Nail

Fourteenth, also within the Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to its Uniqueness (nyag-gcig ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu), there exist three topics.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the self-originated Unique Body," (kun tu bzang-po rang-'byung nyag-gcig sku la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning signifies that the Bodhichitta is inseparable from the Unique Sphere.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with the topic of the text, there are two sections:

1. the Nature of Mind signifying the real meaning of the Unique Sphere (sems-nyid thig-le nyag-gcig gi don) and
2. all the visions that are without exterior or interior are shown to be the energies and the creative manifestations of that (Nature of Mind) (phyi nang med-par snang-ba thams-cad de'i rtsal dang rol-pa).

### A. The Nature of Mind and the Unique Sphere

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “The Nature of Mind represents the essence of the mind; space represents the inherent radiance of mind; and the Dharmata (bon-nyid) is the ultimate culmination of mind,” it means that self-awareness, which is the essence of the Bodhichitta, arises as inherent clearly luminosity and so, the name attached to it is “the Nature of Mind” (sems-nyid). The inherent radiance of the Bodhichitta arises to pervade and encompass entirely all of phenomena existence, and so, the name “Space” (nam-mkha’) is attached to it. The Natural State, which represents the ultimate culmination of the mind, arises without thought or expression, and so, “Reality” (bon-nyid) is the name attached to it.

When it says, “It pervades and encompasses everywhere without any exterior or interior,” this indicates that at the time when the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) pervades the elements externally, it is called “space.” At the time when it pervades the sense faculties internally, it is called “the Nature of Mind.” And at the time when it pervades and encompasses everything without either exterior or interior, it is called “Reality.” In the same way, there are attached to that Unique Sphere the example, the meaning, and the sign or indication. With respect to the real meaning, these three are inseparable.

### B. Energy and Creative Manifestation

Second, as for the teaching that all the visions represent the energy and the creative manifestation of that: It says in the text, “The full measure of the visions represents the creative manifestation of the Body. The full measure of the sounds represents the creative manifestation of the Speech. The full measure of memories represents the creative manifestation of the Mind. The full measure of origination represents the creative manifestation of Quality. And the full measure of activities represents the manifestation of Action.” In this way, even though all of them-- the full measure of the visions, the full measure of the sounds, the full measure of the memories, the full measure of elements, and the full measure of activities-- originate, they only come forth from the Bodhichitta. Even though they abide, they abide there (within the Bodhichitta). And even though they liberate, they are liberated (into the

Bodhichitta, or the Natural State). One should know that this is not the mind, nor even is it just atoms. Rather, one should know that they represent self-arising creative manifestations of Mind, (that is, the Nature of Mind).

When it says, “They are all perfected within the Single Sphere,” it means that within this Unique Sphere which is the Nature of Mind, since all the phenomena of Samsara and Nirvana are without imperfections, everything is perfect and complete (just as it is) having an even taste for the mind.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Fourteenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 15. The Fifteenth Little Nail

Fifteenth, also within the Little Nail of the Definitive Decision regarding the Mother and the Son (ma bu dmar thag-bcad-pa'i gzer-bu), there are three topics.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is without any obscurations or karmic traces,” (kun tu bzang-po bag-chags sgrib-pa med la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning signified here is that the Bodhichitta is completely pure and without any desires.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, within the topic of the text, there exist two sections, namely,

1. the teaching in brief (mdor bstan-pa) and
2. the extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

#### A. The Teaching in Brief

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Because one clearly decides definitively upon the karmic traces in relation to the Kunzhi,”

it means that when the mind-stream of an individual departs (and goes out from the body), the seeds of the karmic traces and the emotional defilements (the *kleshes*) become manifest as two factors, subtle and coarse. But because of practicing the path, one can be liberated from these emotional defilements becoming manifest. If one does not clearly and definitively decide, the seeds of the karmic traces that represent causes, still more the emotional defilements will be produced from these causes which are karmic traces. Therefore, it is said that it is necessary to clearly and definitively decide with regard to the seeds of the karmic traces.

If someone asks how they can be annihilated, it says in the text, “By way of liberating the knots of attachment, one cuts through the cords of grasping.” Making an accumulation of karmic traces in the *Kunzhi* constitutes grasping and not abandoning them means being attached. Having been held tight by the cords of grasping and being tied up by the knots of attachment, one does not abandon the karmic traces. For example, it is like the hoarding of wealth by one who is attached to it. But with respect to that, the individual who is on the spiritual path, because one practices without grasping at anything or being attached to anything, one’s karmic traces are purified through self-purification. For example, it is similar to a deposit of wealth without an owner.

As it says in the text, “Because one cuts off the roots of the karmic seeds, it is said that one will not revert again to Samsara.” For example, if one puts out the fire in the pit of the hearth, which is the cause, the effect is like the smoke on the walls of the pit. Because one clearly and definitively decides with regard to the karmic traces which represent causes, afterwards the effect is that it is not possible for the emotional defilements to be produced again. So, it is said that one will not revert again into the places of Samsara.

## **B. The Extensive Explanation**

Second, in terms of the extensive explanation, the methods of the practice of the path are taught as six, and within each of them there exist eight topics, namely,

1. the six bases (*gzhi drug*),
2. the six energies (*rtsal drug*),

3. the six delusion systems ('khrul lugs drug),
4. the six deviations (gol-sa drug),
5. the six methods (thabs drug),
6. the six paths (lam drug),
7. the six understandings (rtogs-pa drug), and
8. the six fruits or results ('bras-bu drug).

### **B1. The Six Bases**

With regard to that, first, as for the six bases: (1) The Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) abides as all-pervading and all-encompassing, empty and clear, and yet it is the base for the arising of the elements and all phenomenal existence. (2) It (the Bodhichitta) abides without action (or motion), and yet it is the base for the arising of all actions (and movements). (3) It abides without expression, and yet it is the base for the arising of the various different expressions. (4) It abides without thoughts, and yet it is the base for the arising of various different memories and thoughts. (5) It abides as self-originated primal awareness, and yet it is the base for the arising of the five poisons and the emotional defilements. (6) It abides as the primal cognitions of self-awareness, and yet they are the base for the arising of the three: the sounds, lights, and rays. Moreover, even though these six bases are explained in that way, they represent an unfolding of the Bodhichitta.

### **B2. The Six Energies**

Second, as for the six energies: (1) the elements and all phenomenal existence represent the energy of space. (2) The various different kind of actions (and movements) represent the energy that is without action. (3) The various different kinds of expressions represent the energy that is without expression. (4) The various different memories and thoughts represent the energy that is without thought. (5) The five poisons and the emotional defilements represent the energy of self-originated primal awareness. (6) The sounds, lights, and rays represent the energy of Rigpa. Even though these six energies are explained in that way, they represent the inherent energy of the Bodhichitta.

### 3. The Six Delusion Systems

Third, as for the six delusion systems: Because they follow in accordance with these six energies, one continues to wander in Samsara.

### 4. The Six Deviations

Fourth, as for the six deviations: Having looked at the defects with regard to these six energies, one renounces them. But having looked upon them as supreme, one apprehends them as excellent, and thus one falls into deviation.

### 5. The Six Methods

Fifth, as for the six methods: Looking at the defects with regard to these six energies, one does not apprehend them as supreme. Without following after them, since one relaxes them into their own original conditions, one is liberated from Samsara in a self-liberating manner.

### 6. The Six Paths

Sixth, as for the six paths: Having relaxed the six energies into their own original conditions in that way, because one practices, one liberates them into the vast expanses of the six bases. For example, this is like the clouds dissipating in the sky or the sediment in the water settling to the bottom.

### 7. the Six Understandings

Seventh, as for the six understandings: Having self-purified the six energies into the vast expanses of the six bases, one comes to understand that the mind as Mother and Son are inseparable.

### 8. The Six Fruits

Eighth, as for the six fruits: Having self-purified the karmic traces of the six energies into their own original conditions, the Natural State of the six bases arises into manifestation, whereupon the even contemplation (*mnyam-bzhag*) and the subsequent attainment (*rjes thob*) become manifest without duality. If one cuts the roots in that way, and having



once severed the roots of the karmic traces, it is no longer possible that one will be reborn again in the places of Samsara.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Fifteenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 16. The Sixteenth Little Nail

Sixteenth, within the Little Nail of the State of Sameness or Equality that is beyond Conception (la zla mnyam-nyid kyi gzer-bu), there are also three topics.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who goes beyond and is nowhere established,” (kun tu bzang-po mi gnas pha-rol phyin la phyag ‘tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning signified here is that, because the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) nowhere abides in any limitations, such as either Samsara or Nirvana, it goes beyond and transcends everything and it is said that it goes beyond all sorrows, (that is to say, it represents Nirvana).

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, regarding the topic of the text, when it says in the root text, “The Dimension of the Kunzhi is without distinctions and does not fall into partialities,” it means that as for the Natural State of the Kunzhi, being beyond concepts, it is not divided by distinctions anywhere, nor does it anywhere fall into partialities.

When it says in the text, “The primal cognitions of Rigpa are without action and without expression,” it means that as for the natural state of the Rigpa, being beyond conception, it is devoid of any activities by the thought process and without expression in words.

When it says, "The mental process of memories is without a base and is unceasing," it means that the natural state of the thought process (*blo'i gnas-lugs*), because it is without a foundation or source, it is impermanent. Nevertheless, since it is unceasing (in its production of thoughts), it is not annihilated either. Without either birth or cessation, it transcends conception.

When it says, "One is without desire or aversion with respect to the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays," this indicates that because these three great manifestations are the self-manifestations of the mind, one is without any desire, or attraction for them, or any aversion toward them. Being beyond conception, one is without attachment or desire for them.

When it says, "Not apprehending them as either polluted or unpolluted, inferior or supreme," it indicates that even though this ordinary aggregate (the physical body) is polluted and the divine forms and the celestial palaces, as well as the thigleys and the lights, are unpolluted, because they are of the same taste for the *Bodhichitta* (the Nature of Mind), they are not apprehended as either inferior or polluted, nor are they apprehended as superior or unpolluted. Being beyond conception, they are without duality.

When it says, "One sees neither purity nor impurity, virtuous qualities nor faults," it means that the five lights that represent the pure elements and those which represent the impure elements, such as fire, water, earth, air, flesh, blood, heat, and breath, all have an even taste from the standpoint of the *Bodhichitta*. Therefore, they are not seen either as virtuous qualities or pure elements, nor are they seen as faults or impure elements. Being beyond conception, they are in a state of sameness or equality.

When it says, "Samsara and Nirvana are inseparable and are not to be set apart," it means that even though the phenomena of Samsara and the phenomena of Nirvana are two (and quite distinct), because there is nothing real in this process of grasping at them by the mind (which makes distinctions), they are not separate. Since there is actually the same taste for all of these magical apparitions for the mind (the Nature of Mind), they (Samsara and Nirvana) are not really separated into two (distinct orders of reality). Being beyond conception, they are not individually distinguished (and judged by the Nature of Mind).

When it says, “Enlightened Buddhas and ordinary sentient beings are not two and distinct,” this indicates that even though the Buddhas and the sentient beings are special with regard to whether they understand or do not understand, in their essence they are neither good nor bad, and so on. Being beyond conception, they are without distinction in terms of the actual state of the mind (the Nature of Mind).

When it says, “There is no entering on to the path of Rigpa, nor any travelling upon it,” it means that the path of the Bodhichitta is without any travelling and one has already arrived from the very beginning into the Dimension of Reality (the Dharmadhatu). Consequently, there is no entering into it by way of the thought process or travelling (along the path) with effort. Being beyond conception, one arrives at one’s place without actually travelling there.

As it says in the text, “The Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind in itself) is without any philosophical tenets or vehicles to enlightenment.” Because all philosophical tenets and all vehicles to enlightenment apprehend partialities of the thought process of the individual, the Bodhichitta, from the very beginning, is without such details and partialities pertaining to philosophical tenets and the vehicles to enlightenment. Being beyond conception, it is without any partiality or one-sidedness.

When it says, “There is no good or bad, high or low in this place of equality (and sameness),” it means that even though there exists good and bad, high and low, with respect to the illusory places of the world, in terms of abiding in the Dimension of Reality (the Dharmadhatu), there exists neither good nor bad, high nor low. Being beyond conception, the nine realms are actually the Dharmadhatu.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary to the Sixteenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

#### 17. The Seventeenth Little Nail

Seventeenth, within the Little Nail of the Final Extinction (zad-pa mthar-thug gi gzer-bu), there are also three topics.

## I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Body of the Ultimate King,” (kun tu bzang-po mthar-thug rgyal-po'i sku la phyag 'tshal-lo), this signifies the homage. The meaning here is that, because the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind) is the ultimate culmination of everything, there exists nothing else that is prior to it (or subsequent to it).

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with regard to the topic of the text, when it says in the root text, “The elements are exhausted into the the dimension of space and all phenomenal existence is exhausted into the Base,” it means that all of the elements and everything within phenomenal existence, as much as there may be, culminates in the total emptiness and clarity of space.

When it says, “The Tantras, the vehicles, and the doorways to Bön are all exhausted into the Dimension of Reality (the Dharmadhatu),” it means that all of the Tantras, the vehicles, and the doorways to Bön, as many as there may be, culminate in the Dimension of the Ultimate Reality.

When it says, “Mind and the contents of mind are exhausted into the dimension of the Nature of Mind,” it means that all that is mind and the contents of mind, as much as that may be, culminates in the self-originated primal awareness that is the Nature of Mind.

When it says, “All of the different actions and agents are exhausted into the dimension that is without action,” it signifies that all of the various different actions of the physical body, as many as there may be, culminate in the dimension of mind that is totally without activity.

When it says, “All the various different verbal expressions are exhausted into the dimension that is without expression,” it means that all of the various different expressions of speech, as many as there may be, culminate in the dimension of the mind that is totally without verbal expression.

When it says, “The masses of thoughts, memories, and notions are exhausted into the dimension that is without thought,” it means that all of these masses of memories and thoughts, as many as there may be, culminate in the dimension of mind that is totally without thoughts.

When it says, "The different paths that are created by the thought process are exhausted into the dimension which transcends the thought process," this means that all of the paths that are created by the thought process, such as all views and meditations, and so on, culminate in the state of the mind that totally transcends the thought process.

When it says, "The philosophical tenets that grasp at partialities are exhausted into the dimension that is without partialities," it means that all of the philosophical tenets, as many as there may be, culminate in the dimension of mind that is without partiality or onesidedness.

When it says, "The three: sounds; lights, and rays, are exhausted into the dimension of Rigpa," this indicates that all the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays culminate in the primal cognitions that are one's own self-awareness.

When it says, "Everything of Samsara and Nirvana is exhausted into the Bodhichitta," it means that all the phenomena belonging to both Samsara and Nirvana culminate in the Bodhichitta (the Nature of Mind).

When it says, "But the visions are not really exhausted, annihilated, or stopped," this means that everything without exception in both Samsara and Nirvana is exhausted into the Bodhichitta. Once having been exhausted, they do not come forth again. Having been annihilated, they do not exist. Having been stopped, they do not come again uninterrupted.

Well then, if someone asks how can that be? When it says, "They arrive at this source of their origination and this is the final goal of liberation," it would seem to mean that all of the phenomena of both Samsara and Nirvana, since they arrive at the Bodhichitta which, in the beginning, was the source of their origination and now at the end, the goal of their liberation, they are said to be exhausted and extinguished.

Nevertheless, when it says, "Not really becoming exhausted, and yet not ceasing, they again become uninterrupted in the three times," it means that the magical apparitions of the Bodhichitta, since they can never really be exhausted, they come forth again everywhere, (because they represent the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind). Since they do not cease to arise, they may arise anywhere and anytime, therefore, they are said to be uninterrupted in the three times.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is sufficiently expressed in the text. The commentary to the Seventeenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 18 The Eighteenth Little Nail

Eighteenth, within the Little Nail of Generating Thoughts when Dying ('chi-kha sems bskyed kyi gzer-bu), there are also three topics.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who protects all beings with his compassion," (kun tu bzang-po thugs-rjes 'gro-ba skyob la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The meaning here is that he protects living beings from the terrors of Samsara.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, when it says in the root text, "At the final time when the body and the mind separate," this indicates impermanence and the time of dying.

When it says, "At the boundary between the two: happiness and sorrow," this refers to the Boundary (so-mtshams) where going upward one obtains the happy place of rebirth and going downward one falls into rebirth among the evil destinies. On that occasion, because there is a very special ejection (of consciousness out of the physical body) by the power of positive or negative thinking, it is very important to expound the instructions (to the individual while in the process of dying).

When it says, "To the person of superior capacity, one should teach the upadesha of the self-arising of primal awareness," this means that to the person of superior capacity, the King that is Rigpa should be directly introduced as a self-arising primal awareness without obscurations or coverings.

When it says, "One expounds the instruction that diversity is actually sameness, the state of equality" this means that the full measure of the visions and the full measure of arising are revealed to be of a

single taste for the mind (the Nature of Mind). By way of this instruction, there is no doubt that one will come to see one's own face which, in reality, is the King that is Rigpa.

When it says, "With respect to an individual of intermediate capacity, one should teach the upadesha that these self-manifestations are, in fact, illusions," this means that to the individual of intermediate capacity, one should teach that the full measure of visions and that the full measure of their arising is nothing other than mind. One should directly introduce them to the fact that all of these visions are just illusions.

When it says, "Without desire and without attachments, one expounds the instructions," this indicates that one should teach them by saying, do not desire or be attached to any of these visions.

When it says, "The doors to rebirth will be shut-- there is no doubt of this!" this declares that by way of this instruction, there is no doubt that the doors to rebirth in Samsara will be closed.

When it says, "To the person of inferior capacity, one should teach the instruction concerning the Guru and Yidam," it states that with reference to the individual of inferior capacity, one should establish him in devotion to the Guru and in meditation on the Yidam, or meditation deity (yi-dam gyi lha).

When it says, "One should expound the instruction with intense yearning and devotion," this instructs that one becomes established in praying with devotion to the Guru and to the Yidam. By way of this instruction, there is no doubt that one will come to obtain the places of a happy destiny of rebirth

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary to the Eighteenth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 19. The Nineteenth Little Nail

Nineteenth, within the Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu), there are three topics.

## I. The Homage

As for the first, when it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the perfect Buddha who is self-liberation itself,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-grol rdzogs sangs-rgyas la phyag ‘tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. The significance here is that, if one understands the Bodhichitta, one can attain Buddhahood without recourse to the Bardo experience.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, among the topics in the principal text, there are two parts, namely,

1. the teachings in brief concerning liberation and delusion (grol ‘khrul mdor bstan-pa) and
2. the extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

### A. The Teachings on Liberation and Delusion in Brief

As for the first, when it says in the text, “It is revealed at the time of liberation and of delusion,” this signifies that, if one understands at that time, one becomes liberated, whereas if one does not understand, it becomes the occasion for continued delusion.

If someone asks, when is the time for that? As it says in the text, “It is when the external elements disintegrate into their original condition and when the internal elements become concealed in the folds (of the Kunzhi).” As for the process of the disintegration of the elements and the process of their re-absorption, this has been elucidated in the text of the *Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug*.

When it says in the root text, “The subject, the objects, and the discursive thoughts are all dissolved into the vast expanse (of the Nature of Mind),” indicates that at the time of the separating of the body and the mind, the subject, the objects, and all the discursive thoughts are dissolved into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi.

When it says, “At that time, the Rigpa abides in its nakedness and the self-originated primal cognitions are without any obscurations or coverings,” it means that at the time of the separating of the body and the mind, it is possible that one’s karma may be pure, or that it may be



impure. Nevertheless, for a brief moment, when the illusion body (the physical body) having been separated from the mental process of the discursive thoughts and from all of the obscurations and coverings represented by visible objects, the *Kunzhi* and the *Rigpa* become like the sky free of clouds and like the sun free of darkness. For a brief moment, they abide without any obscurations or coverings.

## **B. The Extensive Explanation**

Second, with respect to the extensive explanation, there are two parts:

1. the teaching on the process of liberation (*grol tshul bstan-pa*) and
2. the teaching on the process of delusion (*'khrul tshul bstan-pa*).

### **B1. The Process of Liberation**

Within the first, there are three considerations, that is to say, the process of liberation for the individual of superior capacity, that for the individual of intermediate capacity, and that for the individual of inferior capacity.

#### **B1a. Liberation for the Superior Individual**

As for the first, when it says in the text, "Certain fortunate individuals who have come to a clear and definitive decision, having torn asunder the three nets, the three energies are perfected," it means that those persons possessing confidence, who have just now forsaken the physical body, having torn open the three entrapping nets of the body, speech, and mind, thereupon the energies of the Body, Speech, and Mind become perfected and continuously one may secure the welfare of living beings.

#### **B1b. Liberation for the Intermediate Individual**

As for the process of liberation for the individual of intermediate capacity, when it says in the text, "If one is not liberated from that, then the First Bardo will arise," it means that just at the moment when the body and the mind separate, if one does not liberate at the precise moment when one abides in the condition of the Natural State, then secondly there will arise the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality.

But if someone asks, how does that arise? At that time, (all of the activities of the elements) fire, water, earth, and air, as well as all manifestations of the outer vessel and the inner contents (the world and its inhabitants) having ceased for the individual, then the manifestations of the three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, will invariably arise.

With regard to this process, there exist two considerations:

1. the process of their arising ('char tshul ) and
2. the process of their liberating (grol tshul).

### **B1a.1. The Process of Arising**

As for the first, the process of their arising, it says in the text, "As for the lights, the realms are without either centers or boundaries." Therefore, the manifestations of the five lights arise without any above or below; they are without any cardinal or intermediate directions, and they are without any center or extremity.

What example is similar to this? As it says in the text, "It is similar to the arising of the rainbow in the sky." Therefore, they arise like the rainbows arising in the sky.

When it says, "The sounds are immaterial and resound in the vast expanse of space," means that the inherent sounds of the emptiness, which is the Ultimate Reality (bon-nyid), vibrate and resound in a self-originated manner in the vast expanse of the mind.

What example is similar to this? As it says in the text, "The process of thunder is self-originated and is not interrupted," it means that thunder resounds (in the sky) in a continuous manner.

When it says, "The rays represent magical apparitions and display themselves in an uncertain manner," it means that these manifestations of rays, which represent the magical apparitions of Rigpa, come to arise, but they arise without any activity on the part of Rigpa.

What example is similar to this? As it says, "It is similar to the opening up of a glossy silk cloth, or of a woollen blanket." It means that it is similar to opening up a woollen blanket or a glossy silk cloth (in the bright sunlight where the reflections of sunlight may arise anywhere on them).

With regard to a person to whom they are familiar and well known, when it says, "The divine forms and the mandalas arise as perfect and

complete,” this means that those who are well acquainted with these instructions (concerning vision practice within Dzogchen) and find it familiar at that time, from the miniature-sized King that is Rigpa there manifests its own body as a fathom-long Body of Light.

Furthermore, the illusion body of the present time (one’s current physical body) is not like this. This Body of Light manifests without any front or back and it is without any cardinal or intermediate directions, and within the spaces of the ten directions of that (body), there arise incalculable numbers of thigleys and pavilions. Moreover, within each of these thigleys, there arise five by five pavilions. In the centers of these fivefold pavilions, there arise five by five divine forms. These appear in the manner of rows and clusters. Moreover, these divine bodies and pavilions do not arise from elsewhere. They arise from the intrinsic awareness that is one’s own being.

Furthermore, from the base for the arising of this miniature-sized Body of Light, which is at the center of one’s own physical heart, it arises like that with respect to the spaces of the ten directions. Furthermore, this fleshly heart is material, but the visible lights arise from the physical heart are immaterial.

### **B1a.2. The Process of Liberating**

As for the process of liberating (grol tshul), since it says in the text, “At that time, by way of the clairvoyant knowledges and the recollections,” indicates that the six clairvoyant knowledges and the six recollections having arisen (in the stream of consciousness of the individual), one becomes liberated. As for these clairvoyant powers and these recollections, they are elucidated in the *Byang-chub sems kyi gnad drug*.

When it says in the text, “The three kinds of manifestations arise in a fresh and novel manner,” this means that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, arise as an informal and familiar situation for Rigpa. For example, it is like meeting with someone with whom one has met many times before.

When it says, “One does not carry on in a familiar manner with them,” it means that, as in the case where one has used something previously, because of the force of one’s familiarity with it, Rigpa acts to carry on with respect to the real meaning of the Natural State.

When it says, "In these visions one sees one's own face," it signifies that at that time, these manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, as well as the visions of the divine forms and the thigleys, arise of themselves as the inherent face of one's own intrinsic Awareness and thereby one's own being sees itself. What example is similar to this? It is similar to seeing the outlines of one's own face on the surface of the mirror.

When it says, "Self-Awareness is oneself meeting oneself," this means that at that time, from the activities of the secondary conditions represented by the three manifestations, one's own being which the King that is Awareness comes to meet itself. For example, it is similar to the occasion when the crown prince wanders among the common people and he is recognized as being their prince.

When it says, "Ignorance and delusion are awakened and purified into their own original condition," it indicates that because the King that is Awareness is duly recognized as oneself, one awakens in a self-awakening manner from the darkness of ignorance. For example, it is similar to the sun rising over an island lying in the darkness.

When it says, "The King that is Awareness remains in its own original condition," this means that at this time, because Rigpa remains in its own condition, it does not pursue and follow after the visions. For example, it is similar to the crown prince who remains in his own capital.

When it says, "The sounds, the lights, and the rays are purified in the mind," it means that at that time, these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, having been perfected and having been gathered together into the vast expanse of the Kunzhi, they pass away. For example, it is similar to gathering up the rays of the sun into their mother.

When it says, "The impure becomes liberated into the vast expanse of the pure," it signifies that these impure manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air, having been self-liberated into the vast expanses of the five pure lights, pass away. For example, it is similar to ice dissolving into the lake.

When it says, "The polluted is pacified into the state of the unpolluted," this means that this illusory aggregate, or skandha, that is polluted (one's gross physical body), having been self-pacified into the unpolluted state of Primordial Awareness and Body, passes away. For example, it is similar to salt dissolving into water.

When it says, “Karma and the kleshas are liberated into the Base,” it indicates that having self-liberated all the karma and the kleshas, or emotional defilements, that represent the causes of Samsara, directly in the Base that is the Natural State, they pass away. For example, it is similar to the sky being cleared of the masses of clouds.

When it says, “It stirs up the depths of the Samsara of the three realms,” it indicates that because the karma and the kleshas that represent the causes of Samsara are self-liberated, having thus stirred up the depths of the sufferings of Samsara, which is the result, they pass away. For example, it is like (the situation where) the source of the river dries up and there is no cause for the descent of the water at its end.

When it says, “Samsara and Nirvana are without duality and are purified into the Base,” this means that all the distinguishing characteristics that are grasped at with the duality of Samsara and Nirvana, having been self-purified into the Base which is the Natural State, they pass away. For example, it is similar to the fading away of the image of the rainbow when it is dissolving into the sky.

When it says, “It arises from the power of the Mandalas of the Trikaya,” this indicates that at that time the Sambhogakaya arises from the energy of the Dharmakaya and the Nirmanakaya, having arisen from the energy of the Sambhogakaya, the latter comes to accomplish the benefit of beings. For example, (these Nirmanakayas) come forth like the rays of the sun, or they arise like the images of the moon reflected on the waters.

### **B1c. Liberation for the Inferior Individual**

Third, as for the process for the liberation of the individual of inferior capacity: When it says in the root text, “For those persons who have little familiarity with it (the experiences of these phenomena), the King that is Rigpa remains in concealment in the folds (of the Kunzhi),” it indicates that even though they may be taught the instructions (for Dzogchen), those individuals who have small minds and little familiarity (with the practice and the experience of Dzogchen), the King that is Rigpa remains concealed in the folds of the Kunzhi. They do not even know (or are aware) that they abide in the real meaning of the Natural State, and, therefore, they do not abide in the manner of a Jina, or Victorious One, that is to say, a Buddha.

When it says, "Having abided there from one to three (days)," means that Rigpa abides in the narrow places of the Kunzhi. It may abide for one day or for two days or for three days after death, or it may even abide for only an instant or for a short duration.

When it says, "Within seven days, the purity will gradually arise," it indicates that from one day until seven days after death, on each of these days there will arise successively the white light, the green light, the red light, the blue light, and the yellow light, and so on.

When it says, "But the realms will not yet arise as perfect and complete," this signifies that, due to the power of having little familiarity with the practice, the divine forms and the mandalas do not arise in a complete and perfect manner. Rather, just these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, arise.

When it says, "Due to the presence of certain secondary conditions, there may come about liberation in the Bardo for that individual," it means that in some future time to come, having performed virtuous deeds, having been taught the instructions (for Dzogchen) by the Gurus, and having received prophecies from the Yidam, one will come to find liberation in the Bardo of the Clear Light.

When it says, "But if one does not find liberation at that time, there will arise various impure visions," this indicates that when one does not liberate from that (experience of the Bardo), the five pure lights having gone into concealment (and occultation), there arise the manifestations of fire, water, earth, and air that represent the impure elements.

When it says, "One may see pure visions in the Bardo of Existence," it means that the Bardo of Existence having arisen from that previous Bardo, due to the power of white karma, one may come to see some pure visions from these sounds, lights, and rays.

When it says, "One will come to liberate quickly from this continuum of transmigration into the good places," this means that with respect to that, one will transmigrate from one pure place to another and, having prolonged one's ripened karma (of rebirth), one comes (ultimately) to liberation.

## **B2. The Process of Delusion**

Second, as for the the teaching concerning the process of delusion: When it says in the text, "Those individuals who lack access to the

gateway of the instructions (for Dzogchen) will not even recognize the clarity of the Natural State,” this indicates that for one who has not yet systematically entered into the doorway of the instructions (for Dzogchen), the body and the mind having separated at death, at the time when one abides in the state of the Clear Light, one does not even recognize the clear luminosity of the Natural State when it is without any obscurations or coverings.

When it says, “These visions will be perceived as real and as manifestations due to another,” this means that in the Bardo of the Clear Light, one does not even know that these three: the sounds, the lights, and the rays, are self-manifestations. One perceives these visions as existing outside oneself and beyond one’s own mind-stream.

When it says, “One affixes the seal of delusion and continues to wander in Samsara,” it means that in the Bardo of Existence, some visions that are delusions having arisen in terms of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, one comes to create the causes for Samsara because of that, and so one continues to wander lost in Samsara.

And when it says in the text, “Because of that, the fortunate individual should come to a clear and definitive decision,” it indicates that because liberation and delusion are indeed very special (and particular), the fortunate individual (possessing good karma), will come to a clear and definitive decision during the present time while one is yet alive.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary to the Nineteenth Little Nail is completed.

### 20. The Twentieth Little Nail

TSHA. Twentieth, also within the Little Nail that Removes the Extremes of Wrong Thoughts (log rtog mtha’ sel gyi gzer-bu), there are three topics.

## I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the root text, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who removes all the darkness of wrong thoughts," (kun tu bzang-po log rtog mun-pa sel la phyag 'tshal-lo), this expresses the homage. Since it is systematically set down by way of this instruction, having come to understand the real meaning of the Bodhichitta, one is self-awakened from the darkness of wrong thoughts-- that is the significance of the homage.

## II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the principal topic of the text, when it says in the root text, "If one should teach this instruction concerning the ultimate essential points to those unsuitable vessels who do not possess the appropriate karma and the good fortune," this means that if one teaches this instruction which sets down systematically the essential points concerning Rigpa to those who are not suitable vessels and who do not possess the requisite karma and good fortune for this, they may afterwards deviate on to the wrong path. Seeing that they do not understanding the real significance of the Natural State, this is most extraordinary!

If someone should ask why this is extraordinary, it says in the text, "Some individuals will grasp at a substantial self, and thus they will deviate into the places of rebirth among the Tirthikas who grasp at eternalism." If one teaches this instruction regarding the sounds, the lights, and the rays being self-manifestations to some individuals who are small minded, they will grasp in their mind-stream at the eternal nature of the self. Because of that error, they will deviate into grasping at the eternalist doctrines of the Tirthikas.

As it says in the text, "Some may say that the visions do not exist at all and thereby they will deviate into the position of the nihilists who postulate that they are empty and therefore totally exhausted into nothingness." There exist some individuals having small minds who assert that, although the mind is not material, that is to say, not a material entity, what are called the sounds, the lights, and the rays are therefore not real. Because of this error, they deviate into the extreme of nothingness and extinction.



As it says, "For some this (view of eternalism) is held to be the supreme view and thus they deviate into places of rebirth which are long lived and enduring." Some individuals with small minds become attached to these three manifestations and grasp at them as being real and permanent. Because of this error, they will deviate into rebirth in the realms of the long lived gods.

As it says, "For some who have proud thoughts, they will become fettered with what they know and with selfishness." Some individuals having small minds, although they see the three manifestations, they become burdened with the pride of their conceited thoughts and because of that error, they will become bound by the obscurations of what they know.

As it says, "Some will grasp at the materiality of phenomena and because they become attached and grasp at this materiality, they will become bound up with Samsara." Some individuals having small minds grasp at distinctive characteristics and materiality with respect to the three manifestations, and because of this error, they will return again and again to the places of rebirth in Samsara.

As it says, "Some individuals will become angry and terrified and so they will deviate into the lower vehicles that are meant for lesser intellects." This instruction is not comprehended by the intellect of some small minded individuals and so they become frightened. Because of that error, they deviate into status of a Shravaka (or Hinayana practitioner) belonging to the lower vehicles.

As it says, "There exist some individuals who will revile and belittle the Dzogchen teachings, thereby they postpone and delay the matter and will not meet again with (the teachings) for another kalpa." Some individuals, having said that this instruction is untrue, revile it. Because of this error, they do not meet with its real meaning of the Natural State for even a kalpa.

As it says, "Some individuals behave in a crazy manner with regard to this instruction and because they transgress their samaya vows, they will fall into the evil destinies of rebirth." Some individual teach this instruction in a crazy and inconsistent manner to those who are unsuitable vessels for it. Because of this error and because they transgress the samaya vows of the Secret Mantras, they will fall into the evil destinies of rebirth.

Therefore, because of the risk of finding oneself at a great precipice with regard to this (instruction), it says in the text that “This excellent upadesha should be kept concealed as a treasure of the Mind in the Kunzhi. Without being widely disseminated, it is kept under the seal of secrecy.” When one teaches it to someone who may be an unsuitable vessel, because of the many possible deviations, one should affix the seals of secrecy upon the precepts.

### III. The Conclusion

The conclusion is adequately expressed in the text. The commentary on the Twentieth Little Nail is hereby completed.

## 21. The Twenty-First Little Nail

DZA. Twenty-first, also within the Little Nail of the Fruit which has become Fully Manifest (mngon-gyur ‘bras-bu’i gzer-bu), there are three topics.

### I. The Homage

As for the first, since it says in the text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the trikaya become fully manifest,” (kun tu bzang-po sku-gsum mngon du gyur la phyag ‘tshal-lo), indicates the homage. The meaning is that the Bodhichitta becomes fully manifest as the Fruit.

### II. The Explicating of the Text

Second, with respect to the topics of the text, these are two, namely,

1. the Fruit as taught in brief and (‘bras-bu mdor bstan-pa) and
2. the extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

#### A. The Teaching on the Fruit in Brief

As for the first topic, the teaching on the Fruit in brief, it says in the text, “Clearly and definitively deciding upon the ultimate meaning (of the Natural State), then these fruits will surely come forth without any doubt whatsoever.” Having practiced this instruction, when one clearly

and definitively decides upon the real meaning (of the Natural State), thereupon these results or fruits, which are described below, will surely be obtained without any expectations or worries.

### **B. The Extensive Explanation**

As for the extensive explanation, it says in the text, "By means of clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the Kunzhi, (all hopes and fears) of Samsara and Nirvana are swept aside." Because this instruction (on Dzogchen) is the innermost source of everything, one comes to a definitive decision regarding the Natural State of the Kunzhi and one proceeds by way of becoming self-liberated from all the distinctive characteristics that grasp at these two, Samsara and Nirvana, as being separate.

Since it says, "By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is Rigpa, all delusions and obscurations become purified from the very beginning," it means that since one comes to a clear and definitive decision regarding the natural state of Rigpa, and having self-awakened from the darkness of delusions and obscurations thereby without renouncing them, one proceeds onward.

Since it says, "By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the thought process, primal cognitions arise as energy," this indicates that since one comes to a definitive decision regarding the natural state of the mind or thought process (blo), all memories and thoughts simply arise as the energy of self-originated primal awareness.

It says in the text, "By clearly and definitively deciding upon what is the basis of delusions, thereafter Rigpa does not change or reverse itself." Because one comes to a clear and definitive decision regarding the natural state of the three manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays, which represent the basis for delusion, it is no longer possible that Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness, will fall under delusion in the places of Samsara.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the emotional defilements (the kleshes), one cuts off the currents of Samsara," this indicates that because the causes that are the kleshas are exhausted directly into the Base, which is the Natural State, the result is that all the currents of Samsara dry up of themselves.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the paths, one comes into the place of great bliss," this means that since one merges directly into the base which is the Natural State, it being the source of all paths, one comes into the place of the Ultimate Reality without going anywhere else.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the philosophical tenets of oneself and others, one becomes without any partiality or one-sidedness," it means that because one merges directly into the Base (the Natural State), which is the source of all philosophical tenets, one becomes self-liberated from all distinguishing characteristics that grasp at partialities in terms of these philosophical tenets.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the elements, one does not diminish into space," it means that because one merges directly into the Base which is the Natural State, it being the source of these five elements, even though there is a diminishing (or dissolution) with respect to the five elements, the Nature of Mind does not diminish or dissolve into the space of primordial awareness.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the distinctive characteristics of things, one does not come to transfer elsewhere with regard to the Dimension," it means that because one merges directly into the Base (which is the Natural State), it being the source of all appearances having the distinguishing characteristics that belong to phenomena, even though (consciousness) may transfer elsewhere with regard to these distinguishing characteristics, nevertheless, there is no transfer with respect to the Nature of Mind.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the sentient being, there will be no birth or death regarding the mind," it means that because one merges directly into the Base (which is the Natural State), this being the source of sentient being, even though there may be a birth and a death of the physical body, there will be no birth or death with regard to the primal cognitions of Rigpa.

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the three doors, the three energies are perfected with respect to the body," it means that because one merges directly into the Base (which is the Natural State), it being the source of the body, speech, and mind, the three energies of the Body, Speech, and Mind will reappear as self-arisen (in terms of enlightenment).

Since it says, "By exhausting and overthrowing the three manifestations, there arises the threefold mandala," this means that because one merges directly into the Base (which is the Natural State), it being the source of these three, the sounds, the lights, and the rays, with regard to the lights, the visions will arise as the Body Mandala. With regard to the sounds, the sounds will arise as the Speech Mandala. And with regard to the rays, knowledge will arise as the Mind Mandala.

Since it says, "Because the two dimensions arise to oneself, one is blissful in the place (or condition) of the Ultimate Reality," it means that because there arise to one's own mind the two dimensions, the Dimension of the Kunzhi and the dimension of the visions, it is not necessary to search for any other dimensions, and one remains blissful in one's own original place.

Since it says, "Because the two lights arise to oneself, one is blissful without limitation or diminishment," this means that because the two lights have arisen to one's own mind, these being the light of primal awareness and the light of the visions, with regard to the light of one's own mind, there will exist no fear of any diminishing within the three times.

Since it says, "Because it arises in the Swastika Body, one is free of the enemy of unhappiness," it means that because the Swastika, which is unchanging and indestructible, arises in one's own mind, one is unmoved by any ill conditions.

Since it says, "Because the six eyes arise in oneself, there is no obscuration due to anything whatsoever," this indicates that because the six eyes arise to one's own mind, there no longer any fear of obscurations due to darkness, whether external or internal.

Since it says, "Because the Trikaya arise to oneself, there exists no hope nor fear regarding the Fruit (which is the Trikaya)," this indicates that because the Fruitional Trikaya arises in one's mind, there is no hope or expectation to obtain them from elsewhere, nor is there any fear of not obtaining it.

And since it says, "By opening the doorway of the treasure of the mind, all needs with respect to oneself are perfected," it indicates that by opening the doorway to the Treasury of Rigpa, one penetrates to the source which is the Treasure of the Kunzhi, and thereby all the virtuous qualities of a multitude of needs come forth to one's own mind.

### III. The Conclusion

Third, the conclusion is expressed in the text. The commentary to the Twenty-First Little Nail is now completed.

### PART THREE

Third, with respect to the conclusion of the entire commentary text, the foregoing explanation represents “the utmost nectar of all the Tantras, Agamas, and Upadeshas, the culmination of all the paths, the highest peak of all the vehicles to enlightenment, the oral transmission of the previous Siddhas, and the ultimate attainment of those fortunate individuals (who belong to future generations); wherefore the Little Nails, which are the twenty-one essential points, are hereby completed.” So saying expresses the Conclusion.

This commentary to the Twenty-One Little Nails, which represents an explanation for rediscovering the source that is the exceedingly secret Natural State, was composed by Gyerpung Nangzher Lodpo and it is now completed.

### SARVA MANGALAM!



## FURTHER ANNOTATIONS TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE COMMENTARY: THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION

### **How to Practice Dzogchen: Preliminaries and Principal Practices**

#### **I. Introduction to Preliminary Practices:**

##### **Four Preliminary Meditations inducing a Change of Attitude**

We well may ask why study and practice Dzogchen? Just as we need a solid and firm foundation in order to build a house, so we need a foundation for the spiritual path. This foundation for the practice of Dzogchen is known as the preliminary practices, or Ngöndro (sngon-'gro), literally "that which goes ('gro-ba) before (sngon du)." Just a little reflection will show us that life is impermanent and it will come to an end. We do not know when death will come, but it surely will eventually. Death is inevitable and follows us like the shadow follows the body. What then? Is death the end of consciousness and then nothing? That is what modern science often tells us. Or is our consciousness propelled into new embodiments and new experiences by the energy of our past karma, the consequences of what we have done in the past, both in this present life and in previous lifetimes? Perhaps death is not the end of the story. What can we do about that? The Buddha himself had been reborn previously for countless times in all the six Lokas, or destinies of rebirth, just as we have, but he became



disgusted with Samsara. Eventually, he discovered the path that led beyond the futility and suffering of Samsara.

Before we can enter into a retreat to engage in the principal practices of either Tantra or Dzogchen, there are certain preliminary practices that need to be observed which serve to purify the mind and prepare us as practitioners to receive the blessings of the masters in the lineage of transmission. Thus, at the inception of this initial period, we receive the empowerments from the Lama and thereafter, by way of practice, we prepare ourselves in terms of the purification of our obscurations (sgrib sbyong) and the accumulation of meritorious karma (tshogs bsags). These represent the two principal functions of the preliminaries, or Ngöndro.

However, there exist a number of necessary prerequisite conditions for this practice. Among them, we must find a qualified Lama, a master or teacher, who has received the transmission of the lineage, in this case, that of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd. This lineage has come down to him or her in an unbroken line. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that the disciple possess a pure faith in the teacher and in the transmission, unmixed with doubts and reservations, particularly at the time when the transmission is occurring. Otherwise, the transmission may be blocked or dissipated. So, it is very necessary to take the time and opportunity to check out the qualities of the teacher beforehand and before making any commitments. Finally, we must exercise diligence and perseverance with regard to engaging in the practices in which we have been instructed. [1]

Generally speaking, the Ngöndro, or preliminary practices, are divided into the ordinary preliminaries and the extraordinary preliminaries. So, in the beginning we need to consider and meditate on four topics that change our whole way of looking at the worldly life and its distractions. These are known as the Lodok Namzhi (blo ldog nam-bzhi), the four kinds of changes in attitude. [2] The ordinary preliminaries chiefly consist of these four meditations that bring about a total change in our attitude toward the worldly life as indicated briefly below:

1. The unique opportunity (dal-'byor) of having obtained a precious human rebirth (mi lus rin-po-che),
2. Life is impermanent and death is inevitable (tshe mi rtag-pa),

3. The causes and consequences of karma (las rgyu 'bras), and
4. Developing a total disillusionment or disgust with Samsara (nyes-dmigs).

First, there is the difficulty of accumulating sufficient meritorious karma over countless lifetimes in order to attain a precious human rebirth. In such a rebirth, the opportunities to practice the spiritual path and thus attain liberation from suffering are at a maximum. Second, there is the impermanence and fragility of human life and the inevitability of death from which none may escape. Thirdly, there are the causes of karma due to our actions in past lives and in this present life and their inevitable consequences in future lives. And fourthly, nowhere within the destinies of rebirth in Samsara is there a safe and permanent refuge from suffering. Meditating thus, we develop a total disillusionment with the worldly life and cultivate the motivation to practice the spiritual path in order to be liberated from future suffering and unfortunate rebirths. This provides sufficient motivation concerning our own benefit alone. In general, the Ngöndro, or the preliminary practices, are the antidotes to the negative emotions leading to a bad rebirth in the future. These four meditations represent the ordinary preliminaries.

### **The Bodhichitta: Our Motivation to Practice**

But considering that throughout an infinite and beginningless series of rebirths in Samsara that all sentient beings were, at one time or another, our very own loving parents, who cared for us and nurtured us as their offspring, we develop the motivation to help liberate all of them from their suffering in Samsara. This represents the motivation to practice the path for the benefit of others. This intention is known as the Bodhichitta, or “thought of enlightenment.” It represents the foundation for the practicing the path of the Mahayana, the greater vehicle to enlightenment. Although our capacity at the present time may be exceedingly limited, when we attain enlightenment, we will be able to engage in powerful enlightened activities in order to help liberate others.

## **The Refuge in the Three Jewels**

Like the Buddhist, the Bönpo takes refuge in the Triratna, or the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, that is to say, the teacher, his teachings, and the community of practitioners of the teachings who are the Great Bodhisattvas. Nevertheless, the Dharma and the Sangha, the teachings and the community, do not represent the ultimate refuge. Both of them are dependent upon the Buddha for their existence. Thus, the Buddha is the ultimate and supreme refuge. We do not go for refuge to the worldly gods because like us, even though they may be very powerful, wise, and long lived, they are samsaric beings like ourselves. Just as we will eventually die and be reborn elsewhere, so they also will die. They are still inside Samsara and so they do not know the way that leads beyond Samsara to liberation and enlightenment. Nevertheless, we can still have good relations with these worldly gods, praying to them and making offerings to them, when they can be of practical help to us in our everyday life.

## **Accumulating Merit and Purifying Obscurations**

Then, in terms of the preliminaries, we enter into actual practice, engaging in practices in order to purify our obscurations, as represented by our negative emotions and wrong ideas about reality. We also engage in activities to accumulate merit or positive karma. The best way to accomplish the latter is through acts of generosity. To support and develop our practice, we make offerings to four classes of beings, known as the four guests. First, there are enlightened beings such as the Buddhas and the Great Bodhisattvas. Although, as enlightened beings, they are already liberated and have it all, thus there is nothing they need from us as practitioners. Nevertheless, we create good karma for ourselves by making offerings to them. Second, there are the Guardian Spirits and Protectors of Bön, its teachings, and its practitioners. These beings possess the third eye of wisdom. We also benefit from making offerings to them. Third, there are the eight classes of worldly spirits, to many of whom we owe karmic debts because we have injured or killed them in some past lifetime. Making offerings to them now, we apologize and eliminate the karmic debts we owe to them, averting karmic retributions that might come from them. And finally, there are the

suffering sentient beings in the six destinies of rebirth in Samsara, who are ignorant and thereby are constantly creating more bad karma for themselves by way of acting out their negative emotions. The teaching and practice of Bön represents the antidote to this ignorance and these negative emotions.

However, if our virtuous actions are not sealed with the three excellent things, the Dampa Sum (dam-pa gsum), that is to say, the thought of enlightenment, awareness, and the dedication of merit to others at the conclusion, then we can easily lose that positive karma to a thief like anger. Merit is stored in the Kunzhi Namshe (kun-gzhi ranm-she), the unconscious psyche, remaining there like seeds in our mind-stream until the right secondary conditions manifest for them to germinate, ripen, and bear their fruit. Anger and wrong views are the strongest factors for destroying this store of our meritorious karma. Desire is much more subtle in its effect. Confession before the Buddha has the power to purify such negative effects of actions committed in anger. However, generosity, moral discipline, patience, and diligence cannot purify negative emotions alone. Both compassion and discriminating wisdom are necessary here.

### The Nine Preliminary Practices

In terms of entering into the practice of this tradition of Dzogchen, there are nine preliminary practices. For the tradition of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, we possess a Ngöndro text composed by the great master Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung (Bru-chen rgyal-ba g.yungdrung, 1242-1290) and included in his *Phyag-khrid* collection of texts that represents a type of practice manual and instruction book for the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd. This text is entitled *rDzogs-pa chen-po zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud las bon spyod dgu rim*, "The Nine Stages of the (Preliminary) Practices of Bön, according to the Oral Transmission from Zhang-zhung for the Great Perfection Teachings." The translation of this text, together with some brief notes and commentary based on the Yongdzin Rinpoche's oral instructions, will be found elsewhere. [3] In this text, the preliminary practices are listed as nine, rather than as five, but they cover the same general material found in the Ngöndro texts of the other traditions, in the case of Dzogchen among the

Nyingmapas and for Mahamudra among the Kagyüdpas. And so, there is nothing lacking here. These preliminary practices, both ordinary and extraordinary, are as follows:

1. The Receiving of the Empowerments and Blessings of the Guru (dbang-bskur byin-rlabs),
2. The Meditations on the Impermanence of Life (tshe mi rtag-pa),
3. The Confession of Sins (sdig-pa bshags-pa),
4. The Generating of the Bodhichitta (sems-bskyed),
5. The Going to Refuge in the Three Jewels (skyabs su 'gro-ba),
6. The Offering of the Mandala (man-dal 'bul-ba),
7. The Ritual Service of the Mantra Recitations (bzlas lung bsnyen-pa),
8. The Offering of one's own Body (gcod), and
9. Praying with Fervent Devotion to Receive the Blessings of the Guru (mos-gus gsol-'debs).

Thus, there are in total nine preliminary practices, divided into three groups of three each.

### The Importance of Guru Yoga

The preliminaries culminate in the practice of the Guru Yoga (bla-ma'i rnal-'byor), that is to say, the linking up of our own individual stream of consciousness with those of the enlightened masters of the lineage, so that we receive their blessings of body, speech, and mind. [4] As indicated many times before, the Guru Yoga is considered by the Tibetan Lamas, both Buddhist and Bönpo, to be the most important daily practices within the Dzogchen tradition. Although the Dzogchen teachings, which present the possibility of liberation and enlightenment within a single lifetime, originated with the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo, it is from our own master in this present life that we receive both the transmission of the precepts (bka' brgyud) and the transmission of the experiences (nyams brgyud) of the accomplished masters of the past with regard to their understanding of the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. Through the repeated practice of the Guru Yoga, at least once a day, we maintain the vital link and connection with all of the transmissions we have received previously. The Guru Yoga is, therefore, the indispensable preliminary practice for the realization of Dzogchen.

## II. Clarifying the View of Dzogchen

### Buddhahood of Base, Path, Fruit

In the Dzogchen view, we must distinguish three meanings to the term "Buddha." First, there is Primordial Buddhahood (*ye snags-rgyas*), or the Trikaya of the Base (*gzhi'i sku gsum*), which is inherent and innate in every single sentient being. But at present, it is latent and potential because it goes unrecognized, like the face of the sun concealed behind a thick layer of clouds. This has been the case since beginningless lifetimes in Samsara. This state of the unrecognized Primordial Buddhahood is to be distinguished from the Buddhahood being completed or perfected in terms of practice (*rdzogs sangs-rgyas*), or the Trikaya of the Path (*lam gyi sku gsum*). Here it is coming into view by way of the process of purification, such as when the clouds part in the sky and we get a glimpse of the sun beyond them. Finally, there is Buddhahood that becomes visibly manifest (*mngon sangs-rgyas*), or the Trikaya of the Fruit (*'bras-bu'i sku gsum*), where it is fully realized and revealed. Whereas Buddhahood is innate in every single sentient being as the Bodhichitta, or Nature of the Mind, still it is necessary to practice the spiritual path in order to reveal it and bring it into full manifestation. The golden image of the Buddha has been inside the temple of the body all along, but we must open the doors to the temple in order to reveal the golden image inside.

### Two Truths and the Ten Paramitas

As expounded in the Sutra system and the Tantra system, there are the Two Truths, the relative and the absolute. When the practitioner attains Buddhahood, it is said that we realize the Dharmakaya because of the Absolute Truth and we attain the Rupakaya, or form body, by way of the practice of the Relative Truth. Therefore, the cause of Buddhahood is two-fold. The path is then delineated in terms of the Ten Perfections, or Paramitas, which represent both skilful means and discriminating wisdom, or *upaya* and *prajna*. Two Paramitas pertain to realizing the Dharmakaya, and the rest represent the cause of the Rupakaya, or form body. But actually they are not separate because, in the Dzogchen view, they spontaneously exist in the total union of the Thigley Nyagchik (*thig-*

le nyag-gcig), the single point or sphere that is the Ultimate Reality. So, in terms of Dzogchen, it is sufficient just to practice being in the Natural State, for everything is already contained within it. It is like drinking milk and getting all the vitamins contained therein, where they already spontaneously exist. They go together without needing to recognize or practice them separately. Once we realize the Dzogchen view, and assimilate it into ourselves, then we will have the proper motivation. Therefore, this view is called *ye nas rdzogs-pa*--spontaneously perfected and complete from the very beginning, without our needing to recognize and practice these truths and perfections separately. [5]

In Dzogchen, there is only one truth and that truth is the Natural State. It is the same with the two accumulations of wisdom and merit. There is only one perfection, one truth, and one accumulation because everything is already contained in the single realization of the Natural State, the Thigle Nyagchik. Therefore, Dzogchen does not need to recognize the Two Truths. Moreover, all the Ten Perfections, or Paramitas, as taught in the eight lower vehicles of the Sutras and Tantras, are already fully contained and developed in this Natural State. Therefore, it is not necessary to practice them separately and sequentially as is the case with Sutra and Tantra. This is because the Natural State of the Nature of Mind is the essence of Buddhahood, and therein all virtuous qualities and enlightened activities are fully realized and perfected from the very beginning. Nothing is left out.

However, this does not mean that we as Dzogchenpas, the practitioners of Dzogchen, do not need to practice. On the contrary, it is necessary for us to practice purification. On Dzogchen side, which is the Natural State, everything is primordially pure and completely perfect (ka-dag) just as it was from the very beginning. But on the practitioner's side, there is ignorance, obscuration, defilement, and negative emotions (the kleshas). Therefore, we need practice. We need generosity, moral discipline, patience, diligence, and so on, but do not need to practice them separately. All negative emotions in our stream of consciousness are purified by Dzogchen practice. Dzogchen practice is a single panacea because it already contains all the Ten Paramitas, spontaneously existing in the Natural State. Rather, we just practice Rigpa and find ourselves in the Natural State, which is contemplation, and that is sufficient. The Natural State and Rigpa have been inseparable

from the very beginning. Where there is Rigpa, there is the Natural State. By practicing continuously over time, we gain experience and confidence in this, and thereby cut off all our doubts regarding that.

### **Shunyata and the Three Spaces**

The essence of the mind, which is Shunyata, or emptiness, is a vast inner space where all possible thoughts and emotions may occur, like clouds arising in the limitless sky. They arise in this inner dimension (nang-dbyings). Yet when we break the shell of the material body at death, which is like throwing a clay pot on to the ground so that it shatters, then the inner and outer spaces become one and indistinguishable. Therefore, internal and external space have the same essence, so there is only a singularity, a unique point or sphere, the Thigley Nyagchik. This unique sphere is, for example (dpe), like the sky (nam-mkha'), but the meaning (don) is the space of all phenomenal existence, the Nature of Reality (bon-nyid), and the sign of what it indicates (rtags) is the mental space of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid). [6]

Thus, in the text, it speaks of the three spaces, or dimensions (dbyings gsum), these being external space (the space outside), internal space (the space within the mind located in the heart), and secret space (the space inside the kati channel that connects the heart and the eyes). All thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise and occur in this space of the mind.

### **Tantra and Mahamudra**

Kunzhi is the spacial aspect of the Nature of Mind and is the same as the state of Shunyata, or emptiness (stong-pa nyid). However, in this context, "emptiness" does not mean a mere nothingness or just a negation. Tantra and Mahamudra generally explain emptiness, or Shunyata, in terms of the view of Nagarjuna, but the Zhang-zhung oral tradition gives a different explanation of Shunyata. In the New Tantra schools, Mahamudra is explained in two ways, as emptiness, this being the same as Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka view, and as total bliss (bde-ba chen-po). This is the ultimate realization in the Tantra system; it is known as Detong Yeshe (bde-stong ye-shes), the primal awareness of



bliss and emptiness which are inseparable. But there is no known historical connection between the Bönpo Dzogchen of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd tradition and the Mahamudra of the Sarmapas, or New Tantra schools. [7]

### **Kunzhi: The Universal Base**

The universal base for the manifestation of both thoughts and phenomena is called the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi), “the basis of everything.” But the use of this term in Dzogchen should not be confused with the Kunzhi Namshe (kun-gzhi nam-shes), or “store consciousness” of the Chittamatra philosophy. The latter term, Kunzhi Namzhi, would appear to correspond to what is called the unconscious psyche, both individual and collective, in modern psychology. [8]

In this unique singularity, the Thegley Nyagchik, the three spaces, referred to above, namely, outer, inner, and secret, are integrated in the practice of Thödgal and are not separate. Kunzhi is the space or matrix in which everything external and internal arises and appears. It is the source of enlightened Buddhas and Buddhahood is not found outside of it. Nevertheless, the Kunzhi is not the cause of the Buddhas. In itself, it is empty; it is the state of Shunyata. However, although void and empty, Shunyata is at the same time the pure potentiality for all possible manifestations, light and dark, positive and negative, good and evil, indeed, for both Samsara and Nirvana, as well as Buddhahood itself.

## **III. The Principal Practices**

### **The Principal Practices: Trekchöd and Thödgal**

In the *rGyal-ba phyag-khrid*, the practice manual for the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd by Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung, the most important chapter is entitled *Zab-mo gnad kyi gdams-pa dngos-gzhi*, “the instructions concerning the profound essential points for the principal practices.” [9] These principal practices consist both of Trekchöd and Thödgal, with the emphasis on the latter, which is the vision practice. This text of the principal practices is followed by four branches, or supplementary texts (yan-lag), further expanding on the view, the meditation, the conduct, and the fruit.

Here in the text the practice of Dzogchen is expounded in terms of four main practices, namely,

1. There is the fixating of the mind (sems 'dzin) on the white Tibetan letter A which represents one method for providing a direct introduction to intrinsic awareness (rig-pa ngo-sprod). This meditation practice serves to discover and develop the state of contemplation, or Trekchöd. Initially, the practice consists of shamatha meditation with a visible object (dmigs-bcas).
2. The dark retreat (mun-mtshams) links the practice of contemplation with that of Clear Light vision practice. It consists of shamatha meditation without an object (dmigs-med) because we find ourselves in a total darkness, completely devoid of light. When visions arise in the total darkness, it provides us with evidence that our normal everyday vision is equally illusory and arises from inside us. The traditional dark retreat, although it may be done for a shorter period, is traditionally for forty-nine days in the total darkness of the dark retreat house (mun khang). This is reminiscent of the forty-nine days of the Bardo experience spoken of in the Tibetan Books of the Dead. This period is divided into seven weeks, with a different preliminary purification exercise for each week. The principal practice throughout, however, is Trekchöd. [10]
3. Clear Light ('od-gsal), or vision practice, is here of two types, according to the support for the visions. First, there is sky meditation (nam-mkha' ar-gtad), where we gaze into the clear, open, empty sky with our back to the sun, while being in the state of contemplation. The visions therefore arise in this empty space of the sky in front of us.
4. Then there is vision practice with the rays of sunlight, or Thödgal as such. This means gazing into the rays of the sun, either below or to the side, but never at the orb of the sun itself. This is done either early morning just after sun rise or in the late afternoon just before sunset. The visions then arise in these rays of sunlight.

### **Fixation of Mind on the White Tibetan Letter A**

In terms of practicing fixation of mind (sems 'dzin), we assume the proper meditation position and gaze with unblinking, open eyes at the

object in the space in front of ourselves, conventionally this is the white Tibetan letter A, painted on a card with a dark blue background and mounted on a stick. At first we focus intently and acutely on this object, but then we always relax our attention, while remaining alert and present. We are simply like a mirror, clearly reflecting without judgment an object that has been set before us. Attention is a mental function, so it is necessary to reduce and even eliminate it in order to discover the Natural State. But since that relaxing allows the space of the mind to expand, this gives the opportunity for distracting thoughts to arise again. When distracting thoughts do arise, we again focus with acute intensity on the white A, much like we are aiming an arrow at a target. In the beginning, it is better to engage in shorter periods of fixation practice, but progressively we can lengthen the sessions. When a discursive thought arises, we look back and search for where the thought arises, where it stays, and where it goes when it dissolves. During the break, we ask ourselves, what do we find? This is the beginner's practice, that is to say, looking back to the source of thoughts. When we become proficient in this meditation practice, looking back at the source of thoughts is no longer necessary. Eventually, the signs of success in fixation will arise, including the three experiences of pleasurable sensations, clarity, and non-discursiveness (*bde gsal mi rtog-pa nyams gsum*).

### **Trekchöd: The Practice of Contemplation**

In the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd tradition, the principal practices of Dzogchen are Trekchöd (*khregs-chod*) and Thödgal (*thod-rgal*). However, these two terms, which are found in Dzogchen texts elsewhere belonging to other traditions, are not found in these texts from Zhang-zhung. Nevertheless, although these two terms do not occur here, the meaning is clearly found therein. In the context here, generally, the practice of contemplation, or Trekchöd, is called the Natural State (*gnas-lugs*) and the practice of vision, or Thödgal, is known as the practice of the Clear Light (*'od-gsal*). Literally, the Tibetan word *khregs-chod*, means to cut through (*chod*) a bundle of rigidities (*khregs*), a *khregs-pa* being a bundle of sticks tied with a cord. The word *thod-rgal* means to leap over the top, or meaning an instantaneous transition with no interval of time in between.

This practice of contemplation, or resting in the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, called Trekchöd, constitutes the central, essential principal practice of Dzogchen (dngos-gzhi). When we speak of “contemplation” (mnyam-bzhag, ting-nge ‘dzin) in the context of Dzogchen, this does not mean meditation. So, in practice we must clearly distinguish between the terms meditation and contemplation. Meditation (sgom-pa) still involves the operations of mind (yid), or the mental process (blo), no matter how subtle these may be. We can feel the mental energy we put into meditation, feeling our attention. Rather, contemplation entails simply the relaxing of all mental activities and processes, what is usually known as the activities of discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog), and a coming to rest in the Natural State of the Nature of Mind that lies beyond all operations of mind. It is a process where we actually go beyond the mind and its functions. Even ascending to the highest among the four dhyanas (bsam-gtan bzhi), or levels of concentration, still requires the presence of a one-pointed concentration (rtse-gcig) and that represents a function or an operation of mind. But contemplation is a state beyond the mind and beyond the sequences of cause and effect we know as time and causality, even though the Natural State remains the source, ground, and matrix of these various mental phenomena. [11]

However, the aim here is not just a mere suspension of thoughts. Contemplation in the context of Dzogchen does not mean a state of non-discursiveness, a state of having no thoughts whatsoever (mi rtog-pa). This question has been a crucial misunderstanding on the part of many critics of Dzogchen in Tibet. A cow in the pasture, chewing on her cud, experiences a state of “no thought,” but this cow is not an enlightened Buddha. This condition is not contemplation, but simply a dull, neutral state of mind (lung ma bstan). Rather, the state of contemplation in Dzogchen is characterized by aliveness and alertness (lhug-pa) and a total openness to all manner of sense experience. We practice contemplation with the senses open and in full operation. This is why we practice Dzogchen meditation with the eyes open and in contact with external appearances, in contrast to the usual practice of visualization in Tantra, where we keep our eyes closed. Then it is easier to visualize something, such as seed syllables, deities, mandalas, and so on.

## The Natural State

This Natural State, which we encounter in contemplation practice, is characterized by an intrinsic awareness or Rigpa, whereas the condition of “no thoughts” is just an experience (mi rtog-pa’i nyams). It is not just emptiness that characterizes Dzogchen, but equally this luminous clarity, or awareness called Rigpa. Clarity (gsal-ba) also means that the senses are open and operating. In the state of contemplation, emptiness and awareness are inseparable (rig stong dbyer-med). It is just this thoroughly relaxed condition of the Nature of Mind, pregnant with all possibilities for manifestation, which is characterized by Rigpa. This is what is pointed out or indicated by the master when he or she gives a direct introduction to intrinsic awareness (rig-pa ngo-sprod). Once having been directly introduced to the Natural State, we will recognize it again and again when we encounter it in its nakedness (rig-pa gcer mthong). Basically, contemplation is an alertly relaxing into the Natural State, and this can in no way be coerced, nor created by thoughts and mental exercises. Contemplation is a condition that is beyond the mind. For this reason, contemplation is also called non-meditation (sgom-med). It is neither dull nor drowsy, but fully alert and aware, without being influenced or carried away by the arising of discursive thoughts. Entering into the Natural State and remaining in it once we have entered, that is the real aim of Dzogchen.

In Dzogchen, it is the Natural State that is the whole point, the beginning and the end, and it is this state that we must realize for ourselves in our own personal experience. In it, there is nothing to change, or modify, or create, or correct. We let it remain just as it is. Thoughts may arise in the Natural State and yet it remains just as it is. Reflections appearing in the mirror in no way change or modify the nature of the mirror. It is the same here. There is no employment of an antidote as in the Sutra system, nor transformation into pure vision as in the Tantra system. If we realize this Natural State, which is the real nature of Dzogchen practice known as Thekchöd, then we are proceeding in the proper way.

We discover this Natural State through a direct introduction (ngo-sprod), and not by way of reason or by reading a book. The Lama points it out to us in our direct personal experience. The initial method is to

observe how our thoughts arise, how they remain, and how they dissolve again. We look back at our mind and observe it. But we do not interfere or modify anything; that is not the method. We just let things be as they are and watch what happens. We will observe that when we do not interfere with them, or try to change them, then our thoughts will dissolve of themselves and leave nothing behind. This is known as self-liberation (*rang grol*).

What do we find? We find that there is nothing there. This Natural State is inexpressible and inconceivable. It is empty, but this emptiness is not just nothing, nor is it unconsciousness, because there exists a clear, sharp awareness present there. But this awareness, or *Rigpa*, is not the same as our ordinary consciousness (*rnam-shes*). That consciousness is dualistic-- there is the sense of a subject that apprehends and an object that is apprehended. But here there is an awareness (*rigpa*) where the seer and the seen are united and inseparable, like fire and warmth, or water and wetness.

However, when we advance in the practice of the Natural State, it is no longer necessary to make examinations and check what is the subject and what is the object. In the Natural State, we do not examine anything because such examinations are operations of the discursive mind. We are simply self-aware (*rang-rig*), just as a lamp flame illuminates itself, as well as illuminating the dark room.

## Thekchöd and Thödgal

Most of the extant Bönpo texts dealing with Dzogchen are upadeshas (*man-ngag gi sde*), where the emphasis is put on Thekchöd and Thödgal as the principal practices. Thekchöd means entering into and remaining in the condition of the contemplation of Natural State. Trekchöd is mainly concerned with the state of primordial purity (*ka-dag*), but Thödgal represents the other aspect of Upadesha practice and refers to spontaneous, self-perfected manifestation (*lhun-grub*). The Nature of Mind is not just inert, but has its own inherent energy (*rang rtsal*) and this is allowed in practice to come into manifestation spontaneously. Here, as practitioners, we use postures, breathing, and gazes as supports in Thödgal practice. But nevertheless, as the base and foundation for

this practice, we first need to establish our Thekchöd, which means being able to continue with some stability in the Natural State.

Thekchöd means not only that we enter into the Natural State, but also continue in it. We begin practice by turning our gaze inward and observing the mind. But here there is no visualization practice to be done. All we have to do is to be aware without distraction and observe the arising of thoughts. We observe that they dissolve again without leaving a trace behind, like birds flying through the sky leave no trace behind. As long as we remain in the Natural State, no visualizations are needed. When we are actually in the Natural State, we do not make an examination whether our practice is good or bad. Moreover, if we focus our attention, we lose the Natural State, because any focusing or fixating of attention is the work of the discursive mind, and then we are no longer in the Natural State. So, we do not judge in any way the thoughts that arise. If we relax our fixation on an object like the white Tibetan letter A, then it seems like more thoughts arise, because we allow the space of the mind to expand. At first, thoughts come like rough water in a mountain stream. But when we continue the practice, then the mind becomes like a slow moving river, and eventually like the calm sea. This is how to practice Thekchöd.

### **Thödgal: The Practice of Vision**

It is through the practice of Trekchöd that we as practitioners come to realize the Dharmakaya, but in Dzogchen it is through the practice of vision, or Thödgal, that we come to realize the Rupakaya, or form body, that is to say, the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya. In itself, the Dharmakaya has no form and is without boundaries or limits. It is like the sky. But we cannot communicate very effectively with the sky or empty space. Therefore, Buddha enlightenment, which has its two sides of wisdom and compassion, spontaneously manifests in visible form as the Rupakaya in order to communicate with us sentient beings, who could not otherwise perceive it. In the Sutra system, we attain the Rupakaya through the practice of the Paramitas over three immeasurable kalpas of time. In the Tantra system, we attain the Rupakaya in a shorter period through Deva Yoga practice, that is to say, transforming ourselves into the Yidam meditation deity, which is a manifestation of

enlightened awareness. In Tantra we take the fruit or the goal, the Rupakaya, and make that into the path of practice. In that way, we accelerate our spiritual evolution. Then we cultivate this divine form as a Gyulü, or illusion body (sgyu-lus) and at death, we transfer our consciousness into this illusion body, which has the form of our Yidam meditation deity. Nevertheless, in itself this is not yet final enlightenment because very subtle intellectual obscurations remain and these must be purified first before enlightenment can be realized. [12]

But with Dzogchen Upadesha, we realize the Rupakaya through the practice of Thödgal. This Rupakaya is not some image visualized or gradually constructed by our mind and imagination, rather it emerges spontaneously out of the Natural State where it has abided from the very beginning. It is there as potential, but not in visible manifestation. It is like a golden image of the Buddha in the temple, but here the doors to the temple are closed and sealed. After realizing the Rainbow Body, the precise aspect or form of this Rupakaya depends on the needs and dispositions of sentient beings who have devotion and a karmic connection with it. Thereupon this body becomes visible to them. For example, Tapihrita appeared to the great yogi Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö as a small boy, the archetype of the wise child who confounds his elders.

The ultimate purpose of practicing Thödgal is to realize this Rainbow Body of Light ('ja' lus). Thödgal visions arise spontaneously from our Natural State, but how they develop depends on our individual capacity, level of purification, and so on. At the final stage, the Thödgal visions become exhausted and dissolve back into the Clear Light out of which they initially arose. The gross elements of our material body that we are leaving behind revert to their pure form of coloured lights, visible like rainbows, and then they dissolve into space like the rainbow fading into the sky.

Thödgal possesses methods using various sources of light, such as sunlight, moonlight, lamplight, crystals, the empty sky, and so on, and even total darkness. In all of these cases, the Thödgal visions that arise are not perceived by the eye consciousness, but by our Rigpa. Although sunlight, and so on, represent secondary causes for the arising of the visions, and act as supports for visions, the visions themselves do not



arise from some external source, but arise from within us, from our Natural State.

Furthermore, another reason why we do Thödgal practice is to realize that the vision of our ordinary, everyday normal life is equally illusory and insubstantial. We must compare our Thödgal visions with the vision of everyday life in order to discover that they come from the same source. This practice gives us evidence. The Thödgal visions are insubstantial and we can easily see that they are illusions. We see them come and we see them go. But our normal life vision appears to be very stable and seemingly solid. We think that they are real, but this is only our ignorance. We think that our impure karmic vision, that is, the world as we see it as human beings, is solid and real and concrete. Because we all have the cause for human karmic vision, we humans see the world in more or less the same way. But we must understand the illusory nature of our karmic vision. They are like a dream. Through making this comparison of the Thödgal visions with normal vision, we gradually come to sense that the external world is equally unreal. Our ordinary life seems to have the same quality as the Thödgal visions, that is to say, they are unreal and insubstantial. The practice of Thödgal may also serve as a preparation for the after-death experience, where visions arise in the Bardo. They are equally illusions. This realization comes with the third or fourth stage in the development of vision.

### Development of Visions

In terms of its gradual realization, we speak of the four or five stages in the development of vision. With the practice of Thödgal, our visions develop and gradually become more and more stable. At first we may see normal things like trees, mountains, and so on. These are still impure karmic visions. Later, with further purification practice by remaining in the Natural State, we will most likely see letters, deities, mandalas, and so on. At first these visions will not be stable and they may move about quite a bit. Moreover, we may only see parts of the deities, such as a face, or a torso, and so on. But with the third stage in the development of vision, we will see deities in yab-yum and entire mandalas with their retinues-- and all of this will be complete and perfect and bright. At the fifth stage which is known as consummation

or exhaustion (*zad-pa*), all the visions dissolve back again into the Clear Light and all that remains is the Natural State itself. Since there are no more obscurations, there is nothing more to appear.

Without *Thekchod*, we cannot actually practice *Thödgal*. Without being in the state of contemplation, or *Trekchöd*, it will be no different than watching television or a cinema show for entertainment. Yes, visions may come in retreat, but they will not be *Thödgal* visions. First we must practice *Thekchöd* and make our remaining in the Natural State relatively stable, then we can go on to practice *Thödgal*. In this way our visions will become stable. With *Thödgal* practice, there can come both pure and impure visions, but gradually the visions will become more and more clear, and then more and more integrated with our normal vision. In the end, this integrated vision will dissolve into the Natural State, both *Thödgal* visions and normal vision.

These two practices of *Trekchöd* and *Thödgal* are not really treated separately in the texts we have here, but occur together, and are naturally joined together in practice. It is felt that they reinforce each other in practice, rather than asserting that *Trekchöd* must be totally perfected and stabilized first before approaching and entering into *Thödgal* practice, as is sometimes the case with the later *Terma* tradition. After we have first been directly introduced to *Rigpa* by a Lama, then we practice fixation on the white A in order to develop *Trekchöd* or contemplation. Once a certain degree of stability has been developed in contemplation, then we proceed to the practice of vision in terms of the dark retreat. Thereafter we proceed to sky practice and sunlight practice, which represents *Thödgal* as such. This procedure is outlined in the *dngos-gzhi*, or principal practices text, in the *rGyal-ba phyag-khrid* of *Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung*. [13]

#### IV. Introductory Section of the Commentary Text

##### Three Topics in the Introductory Section

There are three topics in this introductory section (*klad don*), namely,

1. the teaching on the homage (*phyag 'tshal-ba bstan-pa*),
2. the teaching on the great importance of these instructions (*gdams-pa'i che-ba bstan-pa*), and

3. the teaching on the transmission lineage of the upadeshas, or secret oral instructions of the teaching (man-ngag gi rgyud-pa bstan-pa).

## The Homage

As for the first, the homages found in the text are always made to the original source of the transmission of Dzogchen, that is, to the Dharmakaya, the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo himself, who embodies the totally all-pervading and all-encompassing great compassion, (kun tu bzang-po khyab bdal thugs-rje che). The Dharmakaya, or ultimate aspect of the Buddha enlightenment, bares the same name in the Nyingmapa system (Tib. kun tu bzang-po, Skt. samantabhadra). In both old traditions of Tibet, the Nyingmapa and the Bönpo, Dzogchen is regarded as the highest and ultimate teaching the Buddhas. The meaning of the homage and its significance is explained in the commentary and elucidated in terms of the example (dpe), the meaning (don), and the sign or indication (rtags). This scholastic methodology is employed throughout. As for how the homage is accomplished as an actual practice, it is performed in accordance with the general practice of making a salutation, joining the palms of our hands, followed by a full prostration three times.

## The Importance of the Instructions

Second, as for the explanation of the great importance of these instructions, the text says that these instructions directly reveal the path that leads back to the source and origin, the Primordial Base (ye gzhi). They are meant to lead the mind-streams of fortunate individuals who are disciples (skal-ldan) back to this source, so that those individuals will finally transcend the activities of the path and will proceed directly into the Primordial Base, which is the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. Thus, they represent the highest peak and the ultimate vehicle among all the eighty-four thousand doorways of Bön and there exists no other doorway to Bön beyond this one. The text explains how the Natural State is the ultimate and final goal of the spiritual path, how it perpetually abides, and how it can be realized.

As indicated, both the Nyingmapas and the Bönpos classify their scriptures and practices into nine successive vehicles to enlightenment (theg-pa rim dgu), among which Dzogchen is the ninth and ultimate vehicle. Among these nine successive vehicles to enlightenment, there are those which are outer, inner, and secret, but there exists no higher peak above these teachings of Dzogchen. In the introductory section here, these precepts are praised accordingly, as expressing the very heart-essence of all the Tantras, the general esoteric scriptures, the quintessence of all the Agamas, the specialized esoteric scriptures, and the most excellent of all the Upadeshas, the secret oral instructions. Specifically, an upadesha (Tib. man-ngag) represents a secret oral instruction communicated from a master to a disciple in private outside the hearing of others, even when these instructions were subsequently written down. The Tantras (rgyud) explain the practices extensively and at length, whereas the Agamas (lung) focus on a few key points, and the Upadeshas (man-ngag) represent in brief the secret oral instructions, often drawn from the personal meditation experiences of the masters in the lineage of transmission. These precepts represent the culmination of all the teachings of Bön, being the Upadeshas of the Nine Sugatas belonging to the Mind Transmission Lineage, as well as the Oral Transmission Lineage of the Twenty-Four Masters, and the Experiential Transmission of the Yogins and Siddhas of both Zhangzhung and Tibet.

### **Purity of Transmission**

In terms of the four-fold system of explanation (bshad lugs nam bzhi) with regard to the text, there are four points which ensure the purity of the transmission, namely,

1. Quotations from other sources and texts are not employed here. The teaching is complete in itself and does not need references from elsewhere. There are no interpretations according to Tantra, nor any mixing with other systems of theory and practice.
2. The transmission is not tainted by reliance on the notes of individuals. Nothing else is required from outside except the primary teaching and the direct experiences of the realized masters.

But we will not understand the texts unless we do the practices described.

3. The integrity of the transmission is not altered by extraneous words coming from humans or spirits, even those of the masters. We follow the text closely and do not interpret very much. We stay close to the meaning of the text, literally, without extraneous interpretations by individual minds.
4. It is not affected by the slanders and the jealousies of individuals, or the criticism by other systems of philosophical tenets, or schools and traditions

This explains how Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd teachings were transmitted accurately and kept pure.

### The Transmission of the Upadeshas

Thirdly, the ultimate source of the transmission of the precepts of the Dzogchen teachings was the Primordial Buddha himself, Kuntu Zangpo, as explained previously. From him it was transmitted through a lineage of eight more enlightened beings called Sugatas (bde-bar gshegs-pa), “those who are well gone to enlightenment.” This term is another epithet for a Buddha. This was accomplished in a direct mind-to-mind fashion with few or no words spoken aloud. Thus this is known as the Mind Transmission of the Nine Sugatas (bder gshegs dgongs brgyud dgu). From the last of these nine, Sangwa Düpa, it was then transmitted through the lineage of the Oral Transmission of the Twenty-Four Masters, also known as August Persons (gang-zag nyi-shu rtsa bzhi'i snyan-rgyud), all of who attained the Rainbow Body of Light. The last of whom was Tsepung Dawa Gyaltsän of Zhang-zhung, who bestowed the precepts upon his disciple Tapihritsa. This was paralleled by the Experiential Transmission of the Yogis and Siddhas (rnal-'byor grub-thob kyi nyams-rgyud), containing further instructions drawn from the personal experiences of these lineage masters in their meditation practice.

Until after the Twenty-Four Masters, the precepts were not set down in letters; having only heard the words, the precepts were transmitted orally. According to the text, these precepts were set down

in writing for the first time on conch-shell white paper with turquoise blue ink in the Zhang-zhung language at the behest of the Lord Tapihritsa himself by his disciple by Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpo. Nevertheless, these precepts and instructions were meant only for those fortunate disciples (skal-ldan), who are proper vessels and prepared for them. Thus this oral transmission (snyan-brgyud) has come down to our own day in a continuous and unbroken lineage.

As for the Sanskrit word SAMAYA in this context, literally meaning “I promise” or “it is promised,” it indicates that having put these precepts under seal, we are instructed to keep them confidential. Once the modes of transmission have been explained, thereupon the commentary to the introductory section is completed. After this introductory section, there follow the commentaries and explanations of the root texts for each of the Twenty-One Little Nails in succession.

### List of 21 Little Nails and their Principal Topics

Each of these sections called “Little Nails” deals with a principal topic:

1. The Little Nail of Recognizing the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi ngo ‘dzin gi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Kunzhi, “the basis of everything.”
2. The Little Nail that Severs the Roots of Delusion (‘khrul-pa rtsad gcod kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Cutting off the roots of delusion.
3. The Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality (bon-nyid dbyings kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Dharmadhatu (bon-nyid dbyings).
4. The Little Nail of the Primal Cognitions of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid ye-shes kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Yeshe, primal awareness (or gnosis).
5. The Little Nail of the Miniature-sized Dharmakaya (mtshon-gang bon-sku’i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Dharmakaya.
6. The Little Nail of of the Sambhogakaya that embodies the Unifications (zung-’brel rdzogs-sku’i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Sambhogakaya.

7. The Little Nail of the Nirmanakaya that Manifests Impartially (phyogs-med sprul-sku'i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Nirmanakaya.
8. The Little Nail of the Examples that Illustrate (the Meaning) (mtshon-byed dpe'i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Examples that illustrate the meaning.
9. The Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness (rang-rig khong shar gyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Interior arising of self-awareness.
10. The Little Nail of the Pathways without Deviations (gol-med lam gyi gzer-bu),  
Topic: The psychic channels, or the pathways where Rigpa arises.
11. The Little Nail of the Lamp that Removes the Darkness (mun sel sgron-ma'i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The lamp of the eyes.
12. The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points (gnad gsum ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Direct introduction to the Trikaya.
13. The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Mandalas of the Trikaya (dkyil-'khor ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Mandalas of the Trikaya.
14. The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to Its Uniqueness (nyag-gcig ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Thigley Nyag-chik, the Unique Sphere, the single point.
15. The Little Nail of the Clear and Definitive Decision regarding the Mother and the Son (ma bu dmar thag bcad-pa'i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Meeting of the Mother Clear Light and the Son Clear Light.
16. The Little Nail of the State of Sameness (or Equality) beyond Conception (la zla mnyam-nyid kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The state of equality or sameness.
17. The Little Nail of the Final Extinction (zad-pa mthar-thug gi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The exhaustion and extinction of the final visions.

18. The Little Nail of Generating Thoughts when Dying ('chi-kha sems bskyed kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Thoughts at the time of death.
19. The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The Bardo experience after death.
20. The Little Nail of the Removing of the Extremes of Wrong Views (log rtog mtha' sel gyi gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: Refuting the wrong views of eternalism and nihilism.
21. The Little Nail of the Fruit which has become Visibly Manifest (mngon 'gyur 'bras-bu'i gzer-bu),  
Principal topic: The visible manifestations of the Trikaya.



## Notes to Chapter Five: Further Annotations to the Introductory Section

1. On the preliminary practices from the practice manual for the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, pp. 253-343.
2. Here we have repeated the instructions given orally by Lopon Tenzin Namdak on many occasions. These four meditations are generally known as the *blo-ldog rnam bzhi*, where *blo* means “mind or attitude,” *ldog-pa* means “change or reversal,” and *rnam bzhi* means “the four kinds.”
3. For a full translation of this practice manual, the *rGyal-ba phyag-khrid*, see Reynolds, *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-zhung Tradition of Tibet*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2011.
4. On the practice of Guru Yoga and its importance, see Reynolds, *The Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.* pp. 217-251. In this section, Tapihritsa serves for the visualization of the Guru in the Guru Yoga (*bla-ma'i rnal-'byor*) practice, whereas according to the text translated from Gyalwa Yungdrung, Shenlha Ödkar is visualized as the Guru, together with a Field of the Assembly (*tshogs zhing*) including all the Lineage Gurus from Kuntu Zangpo, depicted at the summit of heaven, down to our own Root Guru in this present life, pp. 265-279, 320-323.
5. On Dzogchen, Madhyamaka, and the Two Truths, see Reynolds, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, *ibid.*, pp. 66-73.
6. Again, on Dzogchen, Madhyamaka, and Shunyata, see Reynolds, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, *ibid.*, pp. 57-66.
7. On Dzogchen, Tantra, and Mahamudra, see Reynolds, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, *ibid.*, pp. 89-106.
8. On the distinction between *kun-gzhi* and *kun-gzhi rnam-shes* in the Dzogchen context and the relationship in general of Dzogchen to the Chittamatra philosophy, see Reynolds, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, *ibid.*, pp. 73-87.
9. For a translation of the principal practice text for the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, see Reynolds, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, *ibid.*, pp. 65-100.
10. For the traditional forty-nine day dark retreat associated with the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, see Reynolds, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, *ibid.*, pp. 247-313.
11. This distinction indicated by the English words “meditation” (*sgom-pa*) and “contemplation” (*ting-nge 'dzin*, or *mnyam-bhag*) was brought to our attention in the West by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche on numerous occasions.

12. On the Generation Process (bskyed-rim) and, in particular, the Deva Yoga, see Vajranatha, *The Sadhana Practice of Wrathful Deities in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra*, Bodhiszattva Publisher, Budapest 2009.

13. This schema of somewhat rigidly separating Trekchod and Thödgal appears to be a later scholastic elaboration found in the Terma traditions. However, in the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd tradition, Trekchöd and Thödgal are blended together as practices that reinforce each other. After one has first been directly introduced to Rigpa by a Lama, then one practices fixation in order to develop one's Trekchöd or contemplation. Once a certain degree of stability has been developed in contemplation, then one may proceed to the practice of vision in terms of the dark retreat. Thereafter one proceeds to sky or space practice and finally sunlight practice, which represents Thödgal as such. This procedure is outlined in the *dngos-gzhi*, or principal practices text in the Gyalwa Chaktri (rgyal-ba phyag-khrid) of Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung. See Reynolds, *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-Zhung Tradition of Tibet*, *ibid*. Trekchod and Thödgal are also treated together in the Last Testament of Garab Dorje. See the translation of this text in Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996.

However, in the later Terma system of the Nyingmapas, the practices of Rushäns, Trekchöd, and Thödgal came to be rigidly separated and sequential, as for example, in Jigmed Lingpa's *Khrid-yig ye-shes bla-ma*. See Lama Chönam and Sangye Khando, *Yeshe Lama: Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 2008. Some Nyingmapa Lamas have asserted in oral communications that a premature practice of Thödgal before Trekchöd is sufficiently developed may actually impair one's success in practice.



## 6

# FURTHER ANNOTATIONS TO THE TRANSLATION OF THE COMMENTARY: THE INDIVIDUAL LITTLE NAILS

### 1. The Little Nail of Recognizing the Basis of Everything

**Principal Topic:** What is Kunzhi?

This is the first among the Twenty-One Little Nails which explains the essential points regarding the practice of Thödgal in Dzogchen. It is entitled “the Little Nail of Recognizing the Basis of Everything,” (kun-gzhi ngo ‘dzin gyi gzer-bu). As explained previously, a little nail (gzer-bu) means an essential point (gnad) in a discussion and originally it served as an aid to memory. Here the principal topic to be discussed is the Base (gzhi), known as the Kunzhi, “the basis of everything,” equivalent to Shunyata, or the state of emptiness and pure potentiality (stong-pa nyid). This understanding of Kunzhi in terms of Dzogchen is quite different from the concept of Kunzhi Namshe (kun-gzhi namshe), the store consciousness, or the consciousness that is the basis of everything. In the Chittamatra philosophy, the latter is the container for karmic traces and memories, something similar to the Western notion of the unconscious psyche. Moreover, the understanding here of Shunyata is not exactly the same as that in the Prasangika Madhyamika school in vogue in Tibetan monasteries since the 11th century. [1]

### Three Divisions

This section and those that follow for each of the Twenty-One Little Nails, consist of three principal topics:

1. The homage to Kuntu Zangpo (phyag 'tshal-ba),
2. The explicating of the text (gzhung dkrol-ba), and
3. The conclusion in brief (mdor bsdus-pa).

#### I. The Homage to Kuntu Zangpo

The text opens with the homage to the Dharmakaya, Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, who is one's own self-awareness visibly revealed," (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig mngon du ston la phyag 'tshal-lo). Here Kuntu Zangpo is identified with our own self-awareness in manifestation (rang-rig mngon du ston).

In the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, the homage at the beginning of any section of text is always made to the Dharmakaya because the Dharmakaya is the ultimate transcendent source of the Dzogchen teachings. In contrast, the Tantra system is more connected with the revelations of the Sambhogakaya and the Sutra system with the advent of the Nirmanakaya in time and history. The Dharmakaya represents the state of primordial purity (ka-dag). Dharmakaya has two meanings: it is inherently pure in itself and it is purified of all adventitious taints and defilements, meaning both emotional and intellectual obscurations. Thus, it has a two-fold purity. It is omniscient and all-knowing, not in the sense of having accululated a vast amount of facts about everything, but in the sense that it has the capacity to know and be aware of everything that might arise to consciousness. It is like the mirror which has the capacity to reflect the image of whatever may be set before it. We do not see it, even though it is not in hiding, just as we may not recognize the presence of the mirror while being distracted and glamorized by the reflections that appear in it. Although unrecognized, it reveals our self-awareness directly. It is always with us; it is in all sentient beings equally from enlightened Buddhas to the lowest worms and insects.

In the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, the Dharmakaya is defined in terms of the example (dpe), the meaning (don), and the indication or

sign (rtags). The example for the Dharmakaya is that it is like the sky (nam-mkha'), the meaning is that this is the vast expanse of space (klong) that contains all phenomenal reality (bon-nyid), and what is indicated is the interior dimension (dbyings) of our Nature of Mind (sems-nyid). Traditionally we understand the sky to be unlimited and all-encompassing, even though this is not the modern view. It provides a vast expanse of space in which all possible phenomena may appear. Space also indicates the inner dimension of our mind. Our thoughts and emotions and sensations all occupy space; they arise and occur within the dimension of the space of the mind. Thus, there are three terms and meanings for "space" given here: *nam-mkha'*, *klong*, and *dbyings*. Nevertheless, these three spaces comprise a single point or unique sphere (thig-le nyag-gcig). Inner and outer space are not separate or different; they have the same essence, just as when we smash a clay pot, the inner and outer spaces merge and are without difference.

In terms of the epithet Kuntu Zangpo in this context, *kun*, literally "all," means all sentient beings, none excepted, and *bzang*, literally "good," means they all possess the Natural State and, therefore, have the potential to attain liberation and enlightenment. So, the Dharmakaya equally encompasses all sentient beings. It is the source of both the enlightened Buddhas and deluded ordinary beings, but it is not their cause, as we shall see. The phrase *rang-rig mngon du ston* refers to the instructions contained herein. These introduce us directly as practitioners to the Natural State, where our *rang-rig*, "self-awareness," is revealed in all its nakedness, that is, free of conceptions and discursive thoughts. In physical terms, *phyag 'tshal*, literally "bestowing the hand," means to make prostrations, the sense being "to do homage."

### The Primordial Buddha

Kuntu Zangpo is the epithet for the Primordial Buddha, who is so called because he immediately understood the Natural State and thereby remaining in it, he never fell into generation and the delusions of Samsara. Therefore, he is the transcendent, being beyond Samsara. He is the ultimate source of all the transmissions of the Dzogchen precepts, which delineate the path to liberation from Samsara and the attaining of Buddha enlightenment. But simultaneously, Kuntu Zangpo is equally

the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind, at the core of every single sentient being without exception, being totally imminent in the heart of living beings as a spark of light. It is precisely by virtue of this Bodhichitta (byang-chub sems), that every sentient being has the potential to realize liberation and enlightenment. Thus, the Primordial Buddha is simultaneously transcendent and imminent.

In the Sutra system, the Bodhichitta is the initial motivating thought on the part of the practitioner, that is to say, our intention to attain the enlightenment of a Buddha, not only for the sake of liberating ourselves from suffering in Samsara, but for the sake of aiding all other beings to liberation. But in the context of Dzogchen, the meaning is rather different. In contrast to the above Relative Bodhichitta, which as an intention is a thought in our mind, the Absolute Bodhichitta designates our inherent and innate Buddha Nature, also known as the Buddhahood of the Base (gzhi'i sangs-rgyas). This is the potentiality for Buddhahood in the mind-stream of every single sentient being, but as yet not recognized or actualized. It is like the bright shining face of the sun obscured by the thick layers of dark clouds. Although this Buddhahood is innate at the core of our being, nevertheless, at this time it is latent and potential and so we must practice the methods of purification in order to reveal this Buddhahood and make it manifest. This may be contrasted with the Buddhahood of the Path (lam gyi sangs-rgyas), which is emerging because of these practices of purification and thereby it is coming into manifestation. It is like occasional partings in the cloud cover, admitting the bright rays of sunlight and giving glimpses of the clear blue sky beyond. Only when all obscurations have been purified and eliminated does Buddhahood become completely and perfectly revealed as the final result, the Buddhahood of the Fruit ('bras-bu'i sangs-rgyas), where enlightenment is fully realized and irreversibly manifest, like the sun shining in the heavens in clear sky free of clouds. Thus, the Dharmakaya is distinguished as the Base Dharmakaya, the Path Dharmakaya, and the Fruit or Resultant Dharmakaya. Here we are paying homage to all three simultaneously.

Kuntu Zangpo is the Dharmakaya, or the ultimate aspect of Buddha enlightenment, which is beyond conception by the finite mind and is inexpressible in words. As the Ultimate Reality and having no form or image, it is compared to the clear, open, empty sky free of clouds. The

Dharmakaya is beyond form, nevertheless, in order to make the Dharmakaya comprehensible to our limited human understanding, it is given a symbolic form, or iconographic representation, that of a nude male figure, serenely sitting in meditation in the middle of the sky. This is a only symbol standing for an incomprehensible and inexpressible reality. This male figure is nude because the Nature of Mind is devoid of discursive thoughts.

He is dark azure in color because he is like the depths of the sky. His hands are held in samadhi-mudra, the gesture of equipoise, because he is always in the state of contemplation beyond the discursive intellect. He is depicted as a sixteen year old youth because sixteen, four times four, is the symbol of perfection and completion, where nothing is lacking. Sometimes he is shown embracing his consort in union, the Primordial Wisdom Kuntu Zangmo, who is also nude, but white in color. These taken together represent the male and female sides of Buddha enlightenment, namely, compassion and wisdom. [2]

## II. Explicating the Text: Four Topics

Then in terms of explicating the text, where there is an explanation of the importance of these Dzogchen instructions, there are found four principal topics here:

1. What individuals are suitable for the practice of Dzogchen,
2. The suitable places for the practice of Dzogchen,
3. The meaning of what is difficult to understand, and
4. Distinguishing between mind and the Nature of Mind.

### A. Qualifications of Disciple

These teachings of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd are given only to very special, qualified disciples who can realize the Nature of Mind when it was pointed out to them. This teaching was very special from the very beginning and was normally kept secret because it could be easily misunderstood by ignorant and immature minds. The precepts of Dzogchen were originally taught through a long tube extending from mouth of master to ear of disciple, in order to prevent spirits in the vicinity from overhearing the precepts. It was meant to be received only



by those fortunate individuals (skal-ldan) who were mature and possessed ripened karma. They were sincere individuals who were disillusioned with the worldly life in Samsara, who were terrified of death and the prospects of rebirth and renewed suffering, and who had fully entered upon the spiritual path in order to seek liberation from the beginningless cycle of death and rebirth, who had faith in the Guru and the teachings of the Buddha--such individuals were suitable recipients. It was never a popular teaching. Students had to be checked carefully beforehand. Otherwise, they should not be told or taught anything about it. This is stated in the commentary at the beginning of the work. Only after the thirty-second master did this tradition of Dzogchen come to the Tibetans. As an oral transmission, what we have with the text of the precepts is no more or less than the words of the master Tapihritsa. That is what is asserted here. As practitioners, we must make ourselves ready to receive these teachings. We need to practice in order to realize the final goal, which is the Dharmakaya, and we continue practicing until we attain enlightenment.

### **B. Places for Practice**

Places that are remote from civilization, providing solitude, and are without distractions and worldly entertainments, are suitable. A high place is best with a clear, open view of the sky. For the practice of vision, Thödgal, it is necessary to employ a support (rten), whether that is the total darkness of the dark retreat, the clear, open, empty sky during the daytime, or the rays of the sun just after sunrise or before sunset. [3] The dark retreat should be done in a specially prepared house or hut with proper ventilation and which provides uninterrupted total darkness. With sky practice, in the morning we face west and in the afternoon we face east. At midday, the sun is too bright and so no practice is done at that time. The practice of vision with sunlight can only be done very early in the morning<sup>3</sup> and very late in the afternoon when the light of the sun is not so strong. We have to be very careful never to look directly at the orb of the sun, but only into its rays below or to the side with half closed eyes.

### C. What is Difficult to Understand

What is difficult to understand is the Nature of Mind (*sems-nyid*) and its capacity for awareness, or *Rigpa*. It may be difficult to understand because it is very subtle like empty space, even finer than a very minute atom. It cannot be seen or perceived, so it is difficult to comprehend. Even though it may be difficult to know and understand, it is never far away from us and it never departs from us. *Kunzhi* and *Rigpa* never go separately; they are like water and wet, fire and heat. Each of the eight other vehicles to enlightenment have their own understanding of the ultimate reality. Nevertheless, although they may approach it, they do not reach the final goal. Although there is nothing closer to us, yet it has gone unrecognized lifetime after lifetime in *Samsara*, like the face of the sun perpetually concealed by thick layers of clouds. *Rigpa* is intrinsic to the Nature of Mind and is never separate from its spatial or emptiness aspect. These two factors, emptiness (*stong-cha*) and awareness (*rig-cha*), always go together. *Rigpa* is spontaneously-born and co-emergent (*lhan-cig skyes-pa*) because it arises simultaneously and is present together with the object, whether that be an external sensation or an internal thought. It occurs whenever the object presents itself to our sense consciousness or to our mental consciousness. This initial awareness is called “the King that is Awareness” (*rig-pa'i rgyal-po*) because it necessarily precedes the activities of the perception process (*'du-shes*) and is more important and fundamental than any mental function or operation of mind.

### D. Distinguishing Mind and the Nature of Mind

In terms of distinguishing mind (*sems*) from the Nature of Mind (*sems-nyid*), there are five topics:

1. The methods for distinguishing mind from the Nature of Mind,
2. The secret oral instructions, or *upadeshas*, which teach that,
3. The full measure of distinguishing them,
4. Recognizing what is mind and what is the Nature of Mind, and
5. Definitively deciding upon what is mind and what is the Nature of Mind.

### D1. The Essential Points of the Body

With regard to the methods (thabs), initially there are three considerations regarding the essential points of the body (lus gnad), that is to say, the body posture controls the psychic channels, the psychic channels control the movements of the vital winds, or psychic energies, and the vital winds control the movements of thoughts. In the proper position, our two legs are crossed and our hands are held on the lap, the left hand is placed over the right hand with the palms upward. Moreover, our two thumbs press against the bases of the ring fingers in order to close the channel opening there, so that no negative energies or disruptive spirits can enter our body during meditation. Our spine is held straight, our head and neck are slightly bent forward, and our shoulders are held back. The tip of our tongue is raised to touch the palette in our mouth. Our eyes are open, but a little closed and they look downward slightly.

When we do this, our body is held in the correct position and our psychic channels are correctly aligned, so that our vital winds, or psychic energies (rlung, Skt. vayu), circulate properly in our body. The mind follows the vital winds. It is sometimes said that the discursive functional mind (yid, Skt. manas) is like a lame man riding upon the blind horse of the vital winds. So, our mind will be controlled because mind and vital wind always go together. Irresistibly they move out together to embrace the six sense doors, thereby obscuring the Natural State. When our mental operations become active, they become like clouds covering the sky, so that we cannot see the Kunzhi, the clear blue sky itself. Here, the functional mind (yid) is also treated as a sixth sense organ; its objects are discursive thoughts.

To counteract this habitual process of reaching out to objects through the sense doors, we must sit immobile in meditation position, but relaxed, and gaze with open eyes into space. When we restrain the vital winds, the mind settles down and becomes calm and clear, so that we can see the Kunzhi, the clear blue sky beyond the clouds. We should not analyze or think about external objects, equally not analyze or enter into interior discursive thoughts, and not pursue these thoughts, neither anticipating them beforehand nor regretting them afterward. We regard them in a neutral and non-judgmental fashion like reflections in a mirror. We do not seek to judge, modify, or transform appearances, but

just let them be as they are. We do not try to stop them or cut them off. We simply remain present and aware in a condition like the mirror. When we do nothing about them, neither pursuing them nor trying to block them, discursive thoughts will exhaust their energy; they will self-liberate and dissolve into the vast space of the Nature of Mind, out of which they initially arose. This method of self-liberation (*rang grol*) is the proper method of Dzogchen practice, in contrast to the method of transformation in Tantra and the method of applying antidotes in Sutra.

### **Meditating with the Eyes Open**

How can we recognize the nature of the Kunzhi? What method can we use? We leave our eyes open in a normal way so that our vision functions naturally. If we do this, this is a doorway for Rigpa seeing nakedly and we may come to recognize our Basic Nature that is beyond the thought process. In terms of Dzogchen, we meditate with open eyes because all appearances are spontaneously perfected and complete (*lhun-grub*) just as they are and they do not need to be changed, improved, or modified in any way. Whereas in Tantra we usually meditate with closed eyes because we are visualizing something and transforming impure karmic vision into pure vision. But we do not do that here.

The Basic Nature, that is to say, Kunzhi and Rigpa in union, manifest through the doorway of the eyes. Thödgal is the practice of vision; it is not visualization where something is created deliberately by the mind and imagination. Nevertheless, all kinds of visions may arise in retreat, both pure and impure. But we will have Thödgal visions only when we find ourselves in the Natural State, that is to say, the state of contemplation or the practice of Trekchöd. Otherwise, our vision practice would be no better than watching television or the cinema. Thus, entering first into contemplation, or Trekchöd, is a necessary prerequisite for the practice of Thödgal. Otherwise, we are just fooling ourselves.

But these Thödgal visions are not seen by ordinary eye consciousness and the optic nerves, but by Rigpa itself. It is said that the visions move from the hollow space in the heart, along the translucent kati channel, exit through the eyeballs, and thereupon become visibly manifest in the space in front of the practitioner. The Basic Nature manifests through

the eyes and is seen only by Rigpa. The Natural State is not seen by the material eyes or by eye consciousness, which sees only colors and forms. Although the Nature of Mind is not limited by directions and boundaries, because of the kati channel is connected with the eyeballs, these Thödgal visions, whether in the dark retreat, in the empty sky, or in the rays of sunlight, appear only in front of the practitioner. We simply sit and gaze into total darkness, or the empty sky, or the rays of sunlight, so that the inner space (nang dbyings) inside the heart becomes inseparable with the empty nature of external space (phyi dbyings). In this way, we integrate the three spaces that are inner, secret, and outer, found in the heart, the kati channel, and before the eyes, respectively. When we break a clay pot on the ground, the outer and inner spaces integrate and become inseparable. The same happens when the clay pot of the material body and the mind is broken at death and consciousness (rnam-shes) is liberated into space.

## D2. Oral Instructions on How to Practice

The essence of the Nature of Mind is the Kunzhi, or the state of Shunyata. It is without thoughts and yet it is the basis for the arising of all movements of thoughts. However, this state is not unconsciousness, for we are awake and alert, and it is not a dull, unclear, quiescent condition devoid of thoughts. Initially, when thoughts arise in meditation practice, we look back to their source, looking inward rather than outward. We allow the thought to arise without trying to block or stop it. We do nothing about it and just let it be as it is. When this discursive thought dissolves, there remains an inexpressible state, which is sharp, clear, and aware, but devoid of content. Thus, in this way by our own immediate experience, we are directly introduced to the Natural State of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid gnas-lugs). This is the way we practice in the beginning, but when the Natural State becomes somewhat stable, we do not need to look back each time. That is a beginner's practice.

When practicing, we do not check or grasp at external objects. Internally, we do not check or judge thoughts and emotions. We do not check thoughts when they arise and we do not follow after them. We just let them be, so that they soon exhaust their energies and self-liberate. We do not associate or keep company with thoughts of the past

or the future, but just remain in the experience of the present moment. This represents the proper method for distinguishing mind from the Nature of Mind. It does not matter whether these thoughts are good or bad, positive or negative, because white clouds and black clouds equally cover the face of the sun. However, if we deliberately try to stop thoughts, we feed them energy, and only more of them will come.

### **D3. The Full Measure**

What is the full measure of distinguishing mind from the Nature of Mind? It is the practice described above. We do not check our external sensations nor our internal experiences; we simply practice remaining in the Natural State without following after discursive thoughts and gradually these thoughts will become less, eventually dissolving into the Natural State. Fewer thoughts will arise during practice. This is like allowing the sediment that has clouded the water to settle to bottom of the container. If we do not check discursive thoughts or follow after them, then it is like we are stripping off our clothes and thus our self-awareness becomes naked. All discursive thoughts, whether good or bad, are allowed to disappear into the Natural State and Yeshe, or primal awareness, will appear clear and naked like the sky free of clouds. This represents the full measure of the practice.

### **D4. Recognizing the Nature of Mind**

There are four points regarding the recognizing of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid):

1. The Nature of Mind is devoid of discursive thoughts,
2. Nevertheless, the Nature of Mind is the base and source of all thoughts and visions,
3. The Nature of Mind is impartial, unbiased, and neutral with regard to virtue and vice; it leans neither toward Samsara nor toward Nirvana, and
4. Everything appears spontaneously as energy (rtsal); everything is allowed to appear uncensored and without prejudice or premeditation, whether good or bad, light or dark.

## Recognizing Mind

There are also four points with regard to recognizing mind (sems):

1. In terms of mind, there are all kinds of memories and discursive thoughts; the essence of mind is defined as that which remembers and that which knows (sems kyi ngo-bo dran zhing rig-pa).
2. It can conceive of all kinds of natures, both good and bad; so, any kind of discursive thought may manifest.
3. But if we do not try to think, but just leave everything as its is, thereupon all movements of thoughts will disappear and be liberated into the Kunzhi.
4. Again, if we do not try to think or develop anything, it will naturally disappear. Where does the mind go? It returns to the Natural State. This is said to be similar of a child returning to its mother and climbing upon her lap.

## D5. Definitively Deciding on Mind and the Nature of Mind

For deciding clearly and definitively (dmar thag-bcad-pa) on distinguishing mind and the Nature of Mind, there are nine methods listed in the text. The word *dmar*, literally “red,” serves as an intensifier and *thag-bcad* literally means “to cut the rope” or “to cut the cord.” To definitively decide means to come to a final and ultimate decision out of personal experience where there remains no possibility for doubt, as opposed to just hearing about something second hand, or reading about it in a book. [4] These nine points are as follows:

1. The three vows or bindings (bsdam-pa gsum),
2. The three relaxations (glod-pa gsum),
3. The three methods for just letting things be as they are (bzhag thabs gsum),
4. The three non-pursuits (mi 'breg-ba gsum),
5. The three cords (thag-pa gsum),
6. The three methods of concealment (sba thabs gsum),
7. The three arisings (shar-ba gsum),
8. The three liberations (sgrol-ba gsum), and
9. The three non-obscurations (mi sgrib-pa gsum).

## Nine Groups of Practices

**First Group:** The three vows, or bindings restrain all activities of body, speech in mind, rendering them immobile. We cease all activities of body and sit still in meditation position. We stop talking and maintain silence. We stop all thinking relating to anticipating the future and regretting the past. Doing this represents the beginning of removing delusions.

**Second Group:** The three relaxations release the body into stillness and immobility, release speech into silence, and release the mind into no thought, or non-discursiveness. This will lead the mind into the Natural State.

**Third Group:** The three just letting things be as they are means that we are without mental fabrications and conceptions. We do not create anything with mind, but just keep everything as it is. We leave things without trying to change or modify them. We keep the mind just as it is. We let things be totally in their own nature. The above represent the methods for allowing Rigpa to remain in its own original condition, and thus we will come into the Natural State. Therefore, there is no subject and object, nothing to grasp at or apprehend. We are released from this incessant preoccupation with subject and object. Just relaxing and letting things be as they are sounds very easy, but actually it is quite difficult, since it is precisely the opposite of our usual habit lifetime after lifetime in Samsara.

**Fourth Group:** Then there are the three non-pursuing: We do not follow after the activities of body, speech, and mind. We do not follow after visions, whether beautiful and inspiring, or ugly and terrifying. We do not follow after negative emotions like anger and desire. We do not follow after discursive thoughts. If we do not follow them, they will disappear without a trace. In this way, we cut off the current of karmic traces. If we remain in the Natural State, everything dissolves, But if we get drawn in by negative emotions, our practice will remain weak.

**Fifth Group:** Then there are three cords: We practice extensively and become familiar with the Dzogchen view. Familiarity with the Natural State is extended through the three continuities of practice. Firstly, we do not become distracted or deluded by visions or thoughts, but remain



in the Natural State continuously. When a discursive thought may arise sometime, we do not follow it, but remain anchored in the Natural State. Secondly, we do not create anything with our thoughts and desires. We do not change anything that arises to consciousness. We extend and make the Natural State stable without fabricating anything. Thirdly, we practice energetically with joy and delight. In this way, we do not become distracted or deluded. The Natural State becomes very stable and familiar. Thereby we purify all our obscurations and defilements. Our negative emotions become weaker and do not disturb us so much. We continue without getting tired and our practice becomes stable.

**Sixth Group:** In terms of the three methods of concealment, we practice from the beginning until attaining stability. Concealing the mind in the Base means not following the six sense consciousnesses. Firstly, in terms of our body, we practice in solitude like a wounded wild animal. Secondly, we do not speak and we maintain silence like covering a lamp flame to shield it from the wind. Talking disturbs and distracts the mind, so we conceal our speech in silence. Thirdly, not only is our body and speech concealed, but our mind is concealed and kept isolated like a great tortoise hidden at the bottom of the ocean. When we do not follow after the six sense objects, then all the sense consciousnesses disappear and remain in the Kunzhi. We employ these methods until our Natural State is very stable and we are without distractions. In this way, our body, speech, and mind are concealed and remain hidden.

**Seventh Group:** As for the three arisings, these represent three methods for developing our practice. When our meditation becomes stable and when our integration with the Natural State is not disturbed by small actions of body, speech, and mind, we may begin to exercise simple movements, murmuring mantras softly, and even engage in some mental activities. If these movements disturb the Natural State, we stop them immediately and continue in contemplation. When we are ready, this represents taking Rigpa into the actions of body, speech, and mind, and we come to see that all activities are illusions.

**Eighth Group:** As for the three liberations, whatever we do, we remain in the Natural State and are not disturbed or distracted by these actions. We release all our activities of body into the Natural State. Our speaking

is also liberated into the Natural State. So, we do not need to do anything preplanned or deliberate in terms of body and speech. If we remain stable in the Natural State, whenever discursive thoughts arise, they dissolve again into the Natural State and they do not disturb us. They are just illusions and so we keep everything as it is.

**Ninth Group:** In terms of the three non-obscurations, at this level of integration with Rigpa, or awareness, no activities of body, speech, and mind come to obscure or cover the Natural State, it is then like the sun shining in the clear, open sky devoid of clouds. Then there is no longer any need to distinguish mind from the Nature of Mind. There are no obscurations or coverings remaining. Remaining in the Natural State, we do not follow any activities of body, speech, and mind and our actions do not create any obscurations and coverings for the Nature of Mind. When are stable in the Nature of Mind, whatever discursive thoughts may arise, whether good or bad, they simply dissolve again into the Nature of Mind and do not obscure it. These are the groups of the methods that we use in practice.

This concludes the First Little Nail dealing with the Kunzhi, or the basis of everything.

## 2. The Little Nail of Severing the Roots of Delusion

### Principal Topic: Eliminating Delusion

The principal topic discussed in this section is cutting off the roots of delusion, so it is entitled “the Little Nail of Severing the Roots of Delusion,” (’khrul-pa rtsad gcod kyi gzer-bu). Here again there are three principal topics: the homage, the explicating of the text, and the conclusion in brief.

### I. The Homage

The text opens with the homage: “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is purified of all delusions from the very beginning,” (kun tu bzang-po ka nas dag la phyag ‘tshal-lo). This purification of delusions was accomplished by way of Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness. This teaching

cuts off delusion at the root, so we will not become deluded again because no root remains.

We do homage to the Dharmakaya, the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo, who is primordially free from all delusions. He has never been deluded. This is because, from the very beginning, he recognized and understood the Natural State of the Nature of Mind and remained in it, never departing from it. Therefore, he never fell into delusions and hence into the cycle of death and rebirth that is Samsara. This is like the heart of the sun where there is no darkness or shadows to be found. Nevertheless, Kuntu Zangpo encompasses all of existence, both Samsara and Nirvana, and is, at the same time, imminent, inherent at the core of every single sentient being. In this epithet, *kun* means everything in Samsara and Nirvana and *bzang* means Rigpa, or the King that is Self-Knowing Awareness (*rang shes rig gi rgyal-po*), which pervades everywhere. In the same way, this King that is Awareness is naturally pure and has no delusions.

## II. Explicating the Text

### Rigpa, Shepa, and Namshe

Both *rig-pa* and *shes-pa* may be translated as “awareness.” In the Sutra texts, *shes-pa* means “awareness” as a noun and “to know” as a verb. Shepa (*shes-pa*, Skt. *jna*) appears in many compounds, such as *shes-rab*, discriminating wisdom, or the ‘higher intellectual faculty that makes distinctions, *yid-shes*, mental consciousness, ‘*du-shes*, functions of consciousness, especially perception, *rnam-shes*, discursive consciousness, and so on. Consciousness or Namshe (*rnam-shes*, *rnam-par shes-pa*) is more limited and restricted than Rigpa.

Again, in the Sutra system, the term *rig-pa* means “intelligence,” or else “science.” But in Dzogchen it has this special significance of something universally intrinsic to existence itself and co-extensive with space. Rigpa is pure awareness in itself, which may be compared to the sun shining in the heavens, whereas Namshe, “discursive consciousness,” is awareness illuminating and mixed up with the various mental processes that comprise the operations of the functional mind (*yid*). When intrinsic awareness illuminates the processes and mechanisms of the mind, then we speak of mental consciousness, or Yidshe (*yid-shes*,

yid kyi rnam-par shes-pa). The range of Namshe is, therefore, far more limited and restricted than Rigpa. It is like a candle flame compared to the light of the sun. Nevertheless, it still effectively illuminates of the mind, so that we may see the furniture that the room contains. Again, if the Natural State may be compared to a clear mirror, which has the capacity to reflect whatever is set before it, then Rigpa represents the capacity of the Nature of Mind to aware of whatever may arise in the mind. Again, the term “king” (rgyal-po) conventionally indicates the chief or most significant and most important item in any list.

In the texts here, a distinction is made between awareness (rig-pa), which is fundamental to existence and co-extensive with space itself, and consciousness (rnam-shes), which is occasional and local. The occasion is, of course, rebirth. Consciousness as such occurs when primal awareness (ye-shes) becomes entangled and mixed up with mental processes, thereby illuminating them, but at the same time this restricts the range of this luminous clarity.

### Understanding the Cause of Delusions

We must understand the cause of delusions in order to free ourselves and eliminate them. We become deluded because we do not recognize and understand the Nature of Mind in terms of Kunzhi and Rigpa and their inseparable union. This is the primary or root cause (rgyu). The secondary causes (rkyen) are the sounds, lights, and rays which arise out of the Nature of Mind and come to comprise our experience. For example, this occurs just prior to the onset of the Bardo experience after we die. Our mental consciousness does not understand that they, the sounds, lights, and rays, are actually self-manifestations (rang snang) that arise, emerging from our own Nature of Mind. Rather, it thinks they are manifestations due to another (gzhan snang), to some independent, external source. Thus, we create the world about us with our thoughts; we create reality with our thoughts and conceptions. We do not live in reality, but in our conceptual constructions of reality. It is like a lion seeing his reflection in a pool of water and, thinking that it is another rival lion challenging him, jumps into the water to attack it.

## The Bardo and Delusions

According to the Sutra system, immediately after death we are unconscious for awhile. The Sutra system calls this period unconsciousness. Dzogchen asserts that this is not total unconsciousness, but that we abiding in the Kunzhi, in the open, spacious state of Shunyata. In this blank state of near attainment, dark as it is, the sounds, lights, and rays have not yet arisen. However, to be aware at this time, the Bardo of Emptiness, we need the previous experience of Dzogchen practice, otherwise we only experience unconsciousness. The dying process represents the disintegration and dissolution of the energies of our elements. This is followed by the blank state of near attainment (nyer thob). Nevertheless, in this dark blank state Rigpa is present because Rigpa is inseparable from Kunzhi, emptiness itself. The length of this experience of the Bardo of Emptiness depends on how much practice we have done. [5]

According to Tantra, the Bardo of the Clear Light will then arise. A very subtle wind emerges from space, which coordinates with the three manifestations and so, these sounds, lights, and rays appear. If we are undistracted and recognize them and remain in the Natural State, this is called the arising of energy to the primal cognitions of awareness. [6] Even though we remain in the Natural State, still the visions will appear because they represent the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind. At first the virtuous qualities of Nirvana may arise where these primal cognitions represent our awareness of the sounds, lights, and rays.

But if we are not stable in the Natural State, then we do not recognize these three manifestations. Therefore, simultaneously with the arising of these phenomena, there arises a spontaneously-born ignorance, or lack of awareness, and then we follow after these objects that we now believe are existing outside of ourselves. We grasp at them as being real. As said, this is just like that lion jumping into the water to attack his own reflected image. This represents spontaneously-born, co-emergent ignorance (lhan-skyes ma rig-pa). But if we are stable in the Natural State, then our primal cognitions (ye-shes) do not follow after these phantom objects and it comes to recognize our visions as self-manifestations and illusions.

## Ordinary Life as Illusion

There exist several methods for recognizing our ordinary life as illusion. This is not easy. In Dzogchen, we can do practice with the dark retreat, with the empty sky, and with sunlight in order to give us evidence, so that we may realize this. These three manifestations are secondary causes and so the visions are projected outside of ourselves on to these empty screens and develop there as holographic projections. When we practice with these three, we see forms, shapes, colors, and so on. When we practice for a long time, we come to see the worldly images of yaks, mountains, old monks, and so on. Continuing in practice, and because of purification, we may eventually come to see Buddhas and mandalas. Then we integrate these visions with normal life, which also represents a projection from our Natural State. Both the visions of Thödgal practice and of normal everyday life go back to the same source, the Natural State. These practices give us evidence, experience, and understanding. Finally, our normal life and our vision practice become integrated and dissolve into our Basic Nature, the Kunzhi. The Rainbow Body comes about because we dissolve our normal life vision into the Natural State. Both have the same source.

There are certain other exercises that will give us evidence. Pressing our fingers in our ears will give us an experience of inherent sounds (*rang sgra*) and pressing on our eyeballs when the lids are shut will give us an experience of inherent lights (*rang 'od*). We realize that these phenomena are only self-manifestations. In the same way, the sounds, lights, and rays spontaneously arise from the Natural State. We do not need to do anything in order to bring about these three manifestations because they are already present there in potential. Here we are talking about Thödgal visions. Whether we recognize their nature or not, they represent manifestations of our inherent energy (*rang rtsal*) whether we practice with sunlight, with the empty space of the sky, or with total darkness in a dark retreat house. They occur spontaneously and are not something visualized. But in order to recognize them, we need a direct introduction from the master first. It is like being introduced to someone we have not known previously.

Sound practice as such is not given in these Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd texts, but may be found elsewhere, especially as oral instruction.

We fill our ears with wax and listen to the inner sounds manifest. But if we are not in the Natural State, the state of contemplation, the phenomena may come and go, but it is only like watching television with the sound turned on. Visions may come during our practice, but they are only illusions. Why are we deluded? It is because we do not recognize these sounds, lights, and rays as self-manifestations.

How do the delusions of Samsara begin? Both Samsara and Nirvana originate from the Natural State. It is a matter of whether or not we understand this. But once we have first been introduced to the Natural State, then we must continue to practice. Now the question is how long do we practice? And this depends on the individual and his or her capacity. According to the text, there is a measure of time. The movements of our pulse are used as the measure of equal time. We count one hundred pulsations as one moment. One hundred and eight thousand of these is the time required by the individual of superior capacity to reach the goal of the final visions. For those of intermediate and lesser capacities, it takes much longer.

### Eleven Topics in the Commentary

In the commentary that follows, which explicates the text, eleven topics are considered:

1. The fortunate individual (skal-ldan) who has completely renounced the pursuit of worldly activities is 'suitable for the practice of Thödgal.
2. The proper place for the practice of Thödgal is remote and secluded, being without distractions and worldly entertainments, and with a clear view of the sky.
3. We recognize the secondary causes giving rise to delusions.
4. Delusions arise and we become entangled in the visions of Samsara because we do not know and recognize the Natural State.
5. The full measure of the practice of vision is accomplished by taking the pulse.
6. Then there are the occasions of the five stages for the development of visions as follows:
7. The occasion of the increasing of visions (snang-ba 'phel-ba'i dus),

8. The occasion of the multiplying of visions (snang-ba mched-pa'i dus),
9. The occasion of the expanding of visions (snang-ba rgyas-pa'i dus),
10. The occasion of the completing of visions (snang-ba rdzogs-pa'i dus), and
11. The occasion of the final visions (mthar thug gi snang-ba'i dus).

### The Five Stages in the Development of Vision

Some of the above topics have already been discussed, such as who is suitable for the practice and the proper sites for the practice. The primary cause is the presence of the Kunzhi. The secondary causes of delusion are the arising of the sounds, lights, and rays, that is, vibrations, colors, and forms, which arise simultaneously with consciousness, but which mental consciousness subsequently takes to be external, objective, and real. The cause here is our not recognizing and understanding the Natural State. The visions originate from the Natural State and return again to it, like waves continuously rising and falling on the surface of the ocean. Failing to recognize that they are actually spontaneous self-manifestations of the energy of the Nature of Mind, we become entangled in the network of the delusions of Samsara, thinking these visions are solid, permanent, concrete, and real. Our experience with Thödgal visions gives us evidence that this is not so, that all visions, whether pure or impure, are indeed illusions.

In the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, Thödgal is called Clear Light practice ('od-gsal). Here there are the five stages in the development of Thödgal visions (snang-ba lnga), although in some systems elsewhere only four stages are listed (snang-ba bzhi). At first, our visions are not stable, but are like water falling over rocks. When we continue to practice, the visions become more stable. This is a sign of our being in the Natural State. If our contemplation is not stable, our visions will not be stable. In the beginning, the Thödgal visions first appear as specks or spots in empty space and are called thigleys (thig-le, Skt, bindu). They are either white or black, being without color. At the second stage, our visions become like water flowing smoothly in a river. Our visions increase and multiply with spots, threads, rays which have different



shapes. They then organize themselves spontaneously into awareness chains (rig-pa'i lu-gu-rgyud), white and black threads spontaneously arise and form various abstract patterns. The treads become more stable, the spots move about like a man riding on a horse. Later colors progressively appear in the thighs until all five primary colors are present: white, blue, yellow, red, and green. At the third stage, the visions become extended. The thighs begin open up and we see visions inside them, such as letters, symbols, the faces and torsos of Buddhas and Yidam deities. At the fourth stage, eventually entire mandalas and retinues appear and present themselves in five-fold patterns, becoming clear, brilliant, and stable.

At the fifth stage of development, all visions become complete and stable. They become fully developed for a time and ultimately culminate in the final visions. Then they decrease and dissolve into empty space and go nowhere else. They vanish into the Clear Light and become identical with it. These final visions are like the clear, open, empty sky without any clouds. At the end, all visions dissolve into the Natural State. Even though the three manifestations have appeared, they are empty and not substantial. Only if we grasp at them, do they become seeming solid, concrete, and opaque. We see our ordinary life with impure karmic vision and then we might think these Thödgal visions represent pure visions. But whether pure or impure, this makes no difference to the Natural State. On the side of phenomena, nothing is concrete and real; everything comes from the Natural State and returns to the Natural State. We must clearly and definitively decide upon this.

When this realization occurs at the time of death, the elements of the material body of the yogi practitioner revert (ru-log) into their pure form as radiant energy, as different colored lights resembling rainbows. Simultaneously, one's material body shrinks in size until it vanishes, leaving behind only a pile of clothes, hair, and nails because these substances have never been pervaded by consciousness. Thus, the individual is said to have realized the Rainbow Body ('ja'-lus) and this is accomplished by way of the practice of Thödgal.

In the texts, there is no discussion of the cultural conditioning of these images which appear in conventional Indian guise, having the iconography of mandala palaces, richly robed Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, wrathful door guardians, and so on. In terms of the visions of the

Peaceful and Wrathful Deities encountered in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality and described according to the Tibetan Books of the Dead (bar-do thos grol), some commentaries suggest that these deities will appear in this precise way only if the practitioner has fully accomplished the Zhitro meditations (zhi-khro) on these deities in one's preceding lifetime. [7]

This concludes the Second Little Nail dealing with how to cut off the delusions of Samsara.

### 3. The Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality

**Principal Topic:** What is Dimension?

This section, entitled "the Little Nail of the Dimension of Reality," (bon-nyid dbyings kyi gzer-bu), deals with the topic of the dimension (dbyings), or the spacious aspect of the Nature of Mind in the individual sentient being. The Ultimate Reality, or Bön-nyid (Skt. dharmata), is literally "the nature of phenomena," *bon* meaning phenomena in general (Skt. dharma), whether material or purely mental. However, it may just refer to the phenomena that appear to manifest externally, as contrasted with what manifests internally, the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid), although in reality they are nondual. Depending on the context, the term Bön-nyid may embrace both the external and the internal. There are nine points listed below which explain why it is called "dimension."

#### I. The Homage

Hence the homage states: "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is all-pervading and all encompassing without any partialities or one-sidedness," (kun tu bzang-po khyab bdal phyogs ris med la phyag 'tshal-lo). The text now explains how Kuntu Zangpo as the Dharmakaya encompasses all existence, everything high and low, pure and impure. This Basic Nature is the base for both enlightened Buddhas and deluded sentient beings. Because this dimension is universal, all-pervading and all-encompassing like space itself, it is called the Dimension of Reality (bon-nyid gyi dbyings), or in Sanskrit, Dharmadhatu. It abides without center or boundaries, without limits, without any external or internal. Because *bon* and *chos* have the same meaning in Bönpo and Buddhist

texts, we usually translate *bon-nyid dbyings* as Dharmadhatu, meaning “the Dimension of Reality.”

## II: Explicating the Text: Nine Characteristics of the Dimension

According to the explication of the text, the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, is the universal base (*spyi gzhi*) of everything in Samsara and Nirvana, the basis for both enlightened Buddhas and deluded ordinary sentient beings. This section discusses the Kunzhi aspect of the Nature of Mind, while the following section discusses Rigpa and Yeshe, the awareness aspect. The Nature of Mind is Thigley Nyagchik, a single point or sphere, but it has two sides or aspects that are inseparable, just as a coin has two sides, the spacious or empty side (*stong-cha*), and the clarity side (*gsal-cha*) or awareness side (*rig-cha*). These two are never separate (*dbyer-med*), but they are distinguished as an aid to our human understanding. Kunzhi is called the Base, but sometimes it is called the dimension (*dbyings*). The space in which external phenomena appear is called the vast expanse (*klong*) and usually the space of the mind is called Ying (*dbyings*). Or Ying may just be space in general, depending on the context, and so we can speak of integrating internal space (*nang dbyings*) and external space (*phyi dbyings*) in the practice of Thödgal. This practice unites internal and external space, such as when we smash a clay pot on the ground, so that there is no difference then between internal and external space.

In the text, there are said to be nine essential characteristics of this dimension (*dbyings kyi mtshan-nyid dgu*), namely,

1. it is without limits (*mu med-pa*) and without end,
2. it is infinite (*'byams-yas-pa*) and thereby encompasses everything,
3. it is completely without divisions (*yongs su rgya ma chad-pa*) and what it encompass, it does so equally,
4. it is without surface or depth (*kha gting med-pa*), having neither higher nor lower,
5. it is immeasurable (*dpag tu med-pa*), being without size or shape,
6. it is not crowded or congested (*dog-pa med-pa*), or in any way constricted,
7. it is totally all-encompassing (*bdal-ba chen-po*) and cannot be finished,

8. it is inexhaustible (zad-pa med-pa), and
9. it is unchanging ('gyur-pa med-pa).

Therefore, it may be compared to the sky (nam-mkha'). This dimension abides equally within all sentient beings, whether they be enlightened or deluded. It is the basis for all evolution and development, although in itself it does not evolve or develop. It is not narrow, crowded, or lacking in space. It has no bias or partiality toward anything higher or lower, pure or impure. It is the source of both light and dark, pure and impure, good and evil, although in itself it is neither on one side nor the other.

This concludes the Third Little Nail which deals with Kunzhi as the Dharmadhatu, the Dimension of the the Ultimate Reality.

#### **4. The Little Nail of the Primal Awareness of the Nature of Mind**

**Principal Topic:** What is Yeshe?

This section, "the Little Nail of the Primordial Awareness of the Nature of Mind," (sems-nyid ye-she kyi gzer-bu), deals with the topic of gnosis, or primal awareness (ye-shes, ye nas shes-pa). Kunzhi is the Base, or Basic Nature, meaning the state of Shunyata or emptiness, but Yeshe represents union of the Kunzhi and Rigpa. What is Rigpa or intrinsic awareness? It is best illustrated with an example. Just as a mirror has the capacity to reflect whatever object is set before it, so Kunzhi, as the dimension of the Nature of Mind, has the capacity to be aware of what ever may arise into consciousness. In terms of the individual sentient being, there is a single Rigpa, but many Yeshes. Each perception, each moment of discursive consciousness (rnam-shes), is preceded by Yeshe as an instant of primal awareness, being the prior and fundamental element in that mental event. Again, this may be illustrated by another example. Kunzhi is like the clear open sky devoid of clouds, where clouds represent thoughts and emotions. Rigpa is like the single sun in the sky, so that this dimension is suffused and pervaded with the light of awareness; this is not like the sky at midnight when devoid of the light of the moon and stars. Yeshe is like the rays of light of the sun which illuminate everything upon the surface of the earth. Yet Rigpa also has the aspect of intensity, just as does the light of the

sun on a clear cloudless day, in contrast to a day when the sunlight is obscured and diminished because the sky is filled with clouds. Thus, there is always the possibility of the lack of sunlight on some days. In the same way, there is the possibility of a lack of awareness and this condition is known as Marigpa, or ignorance (ma rig-pa, Skt. avidya).

### Translation as “Wisdom”

As noted previously, in English translations of Buddhist and Bönpo texts, this term Yeshe is usually translated as “wisdom,” and in some instances, particularly when it is used as an adjective, such as for a Wisdom Dakini (ye-shes mkha’-’gro) or a wisdom nectar (ye-shes dbd-rtsi), this is appropriate. Nevertheless, as a technical term, this is not correct and it is often misleading. As used in English, “wisdom” is a higher intellectual function of mind that makes distinctions between what is true and false, real and unreal, moral and immoral, worthwhile and worthless, beautiful and ugly, and so on. It is dualistic and judgmental, whereas *ye-shes* (Skt. jnana) is a non-dual, immediate intuition of reality that occurs before the dualistic discursive mind (yid, Skt. manas) comes into operation. It is the primal, basic, fundamental awareness that occurs initially and is co-emergent with sensation before the discursive mind organizes the raw sense data into a recognizable perception (’du-shes) designated with a name and a concept. It is *ye nas shes-pa*, the awareness that comes before, the primordial awareness. It is followed subsequently by mental consciousness (yid kyi rnam-shes), where the light of awareness illuminates mental processes, such as the programs for perceiving, naming, and so on. Rigpa is fundamental to existence, co-extensive with the space of Kunzhi, whereas discursive consciousness (rnam-shes, Skt. vijñana), represents this primal awareness when it becomes mixed up with and illuminates the thought processes or programs run by the mind. Since Sanskrit jnana is cognate with Greek gnosis, so we may use this term on occasion to translate *ye-shes* in texts such as we have here.

### I. The Homage

The text opens with the homage to the Primordial Buddha Kuntu Zangpo: “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the self-awareness that is

without obscurations or coverings,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig sgrub g. yogs med la phyag ‘tshal-lo). In itself the Dharmakaya is uncovered and without obscurations. What obscures and covers the face of the Nature of Mind are conceptions and discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog), acting much like the thick clouds that obscure the face of the sun. This may continue for day after day, or even lifetime after lifetime in Samsara. The sky remains present whether it is clear or filled with clouds. Again, although reflections may entirely fill the surface of the mirror, they in no way change or modify the nature of the mirror. It is the same with the Nature of the Mind. As the mirror has the capacity to reflect whatever is set before it, so the Nature of the Mind has the capacity to be aware of whatever may arise into consciousness. This inherent capacity is called Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness. Thus, the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind, is said to be primordially pure (ka-dag) and it abides as self-arising gnosis, or primal awareness (rang-shar ye-shes). Kuntu Zangpo spontaneously arises and is co-emergent (lhan-skyes) with each sentient being; he abides in the mind-stream of every one of them, whether an enlightened Buddha abiding in Nirvana or a deluded, ordinary being wandering lost in Samsara. Kuntu Zangpo is the self-awareness (rang-rig) that arises spontaneously to itself. It illuminates space, but also illuminates itself, like a lamp flame in a dark room illuminates the space of the room, but also illuminates itself.

## II. Explicating the Text

### The Five Qualities of Primal Awareness

This section deals with the arising of gnosis or primal awareness (ye-shes), which is present in all sentient beings. This is the primal awareness which is inherent and innate in the Nature of Mind. It is what makes beings sentient (sems-can), literally, “having a mind.” Although unitary and single in itself, there are five aspects, or five qualities of clarity, or essential characteristics to this Yeshe as primal awareness:

1. It is empty and lacking any self or substance; this is the primal awareness that knows Shunyata or emptiness. In the Tantra system, it is known as the primal awareness of emptiness (stong-nyid ye-she). It knows Shunyata and sees everything as empty forms.

2. It is clear and unclouded by discursive thoughts and concepts; it knows that all appearances are illusions like reflections in a mirror. This aspect is known as the mirror-like primal awareness (*me-long ye-shes*). It is clear and without discursive thoughts.
3. It is unmixed and wholly perfected and complete in itself, completely perfected and without taint; yet it knows the distinctions among individual appearances. This aspect is known as the discriminating primal awareness (*sor-rtog ye-shes*). It is not adulterated or deluded.
4. It is undivided and abides everywhere equally; it knows all appearances are equally empty. This aspect is known as the primal awareness of sameness (*mnyam-nyid ye-shes*). Clarity and emptiness are inseparable and equally present.
5. It spontaneously accomplishes everything without effort; it knows precisely what action to take in every circumstance. This aspect is known as the all-accomplishing primal awareness (*bya-grub ye-shes*). It is active, not passive and inert.

These all represent the same gnosis, or primal cognition of self-awareness (*rig-pa'i ye-shes*), but these different aspects or qualities may be distinguished in order to aid human comprehension.

### **Kunzhi, Rigpa, and Yeshe**

Although Yeshe sees all things as empty forms, yet we perceive things through the discursive mind that grasps at the solid reality of objects. Yeshe as mirror-like is also empty, but it is self-clear. As being the same and equal everywhere, it transcends eternalism and nihilism. Clarity and emptiness are mutually pervasive, spontaneously perfected without effort from the very beginning.

On the side of the Natural State, the Base has the same quality in all sentient beings; it is the basis for both virtue and sin, but on the side of the individual, there may be purity and impurity, good and bad, right and wrong. The Kunzhi, or Basic Nature, is the same in all beings from enlightened Buddhas experiencing bliss to the denizens in hell suffering torments. Nevertheless, the Base itself is pure and untainted, just as a mirror is untainted by the reflections appearing within it. It is not subject

to karma from the past and it does not generate karma for the future. It simply abides. It is individuals who may be good or bad, and who create karma for themselves. Having minds, individuals engage in thoughts and actions and thereby generate new karma and future rebirth. Therefore, the relationship of particular individuals to their Basic Nature is not the same, although the Natural State is everywhere the same, being empty and primordially pure. It is the same in the elephant and the ant, although their physical qualities differ. In terms of their Nature of Mind, there is no greater or lesser. This Base is pure from the very beginning (ka-dag) because the Natural State is empty. Once again, the example here is that Kuntu Zangpo, as the imminent Basic Nature (kun-gzhi), is like the clear, open, all-pervading sky, whereas Rigpa, intrinsic awareness, is like the orb of the sun in the sky, and Rigpai Yeshe, or primal cognitions of awareness, are like the bright rays of the sun that illuminate everything on the surface of the earth. In terms of the Trikaya, the Dharmakaya is like the sky, the Sambhogakaya is like the sun in the sky, and the Nirmanakayas are like the rays of the sun.

This concludes the Fourth Little Nail which explains the meaning of Yeshe, or primal awareness.

## 5. The Little Nail of the Miniature-sized Dharmakaya

**Principal Topic:** The Dharmakaya

This section deals with the Dharmakaya, whereas the following two sections deal with the Sambhogakaya (rdzogs-sku) and the Nirmanakaya (sprul-sku) in terms of Thödgal practice. This section is entitled, “the Little Nail of the Miniature-sized Dharmakaya,” (mtshon-gang bon-sku’i gzer-bu), and again there are three principal divisions, namely, the homage, the explication of the text, and the conclusion in brief. The principal topic is the Dharmakaya which is said to be miniature-sized (tshon-gang) and abide in the hollow space inside the physical heart (tsita) like a spark of light. What is meant by this will be explained below. Moreover, with regard to Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness, it is said to have two aspects: First, there is the Yeshe Tsön-gang (ye-shes tshon-gang), or miniature-sized primal awareness, which is the innate, pure, primordial awareness abiding in the heart and it is compared to an eye (sphyan) that sees everything. Second, there is the Öd Tsön-gang (’od



tshon-gang), the miniature-sized light, which is the manifest and visible light of awareness, compared to a body or divine form (sku). Nevertheless, these two, unmanifest and manifest, invisible and visible, potential and kinetic, are one and the same, like the self-luminosity of the butter lamp flame. They represent the inseparability of Body and Primordial Awareness (sku dang ye-shes dbyer-med). [8]

### **I: The Homage**

The text opens with the homage: “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the primordially pure self-awareness,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig ka nas dag la phyag ‘tshal-lo). Kuntu Zangpo, as the Dharmakaya (bon-sku), is called the primordially pure self-awareness that is at the core of the mind-stream of every sentient being without exception. Self-awareness (rang-rig) is like the flame of a candle or a butter lamp. It illuminates the contents of the dark room, which represent the external world, but it also illuminates itself. It is self-luminous and clear (rang-gsal) and is not illuminated by anything extrinsic to itself.

### **II: Explicating the Text: Four Topics regarding the Dharmakaya**

In this section, there are four principal topics:

1. The teaching on the essence of the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi ngo-bo bstan-pa),
2. The teaching on the natural state of the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi gnas-lugs bstan-pa),
3. The teaching on the great importance of this Miniature-sized Primal Awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi che-ba bstan-pa), and
4. The teaching on the reason (for the name) the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness (ye-shes tshon-gang gi gtan-tshigs bstan-pa).

#### **A. The Essence of the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness**

Within the first topic, the essence of the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness, there exist two subtopics, namely,

1. The teaching on the Miniature-sized Primal Awareness in itself (ye-shes tshon-gang bstan-pa) and
2. The teaching on the Miniature-sized Light (’od tshon-gang bstan-pa).

### A1. The Miniature-sized Primal Awareness Itself: Yeshe Tsön-Gang

Kunzhi and Rigpa have been inseparable from the very beginning. They represent the two sides or aspects of a single ultimate reality, the Nature of Mind. Kunzhi refers to the emptiness side (stong-cha), which is like the clear, open, unobstructed sky, whereas Rigpa refers to the clarity side (gsal-cha), which is like the sunlight filling the entire dimension of the sky. The latter is called “the King that is self-originated Awareness,” (rang-’byung rig-pa’i rgyal-po). It is the natural, luminous clarity that illuminates everything, and which is in no way obscured or covered by the clouds of discursive thoughts. It is self-arising, self-originated, and not created by anything or anyone extraneous to itself. It does not arise in either Samsara or Nirvana, but is antecedent to them both. It is colourless and formless and immaterial. It is self-awareness aware of itself, so it is also called “the King that is Knowing Awareness.” But it is untouched by any discursive thoughts or any conceptual extremes and limitations, such as the views of eternalism and nihilism. Nevertheless, it is the basis for all mental processes and the source of consciousness itself.

Why does the text say that this primal cognition of awareness (rig-pa’i ye-shes) is miniature-sized like a spark of light? It is called “miniature-sized,” or Tsön-gang (tshon-gang) because it neither develops nor decreases. It can never be vanquished nor destroyed. It is miniature-sized because it is not created by the gods nor threatened with death due to secondary conditions. It knows neither birth nor death. It is not increased by youth, nor deminished by age. The gods cannot help it and the demons cannot destroy it. Not even secondary causes can develop, change, or obstruct it. Neither can our thoughts delude it or our efforts cultivate it. It is clearly present as self-arising at the very core of every single sentient being like a spark of light. Again, it is called miniature-sized because it cannot be got at, captured, or destroyed. There is no increase or decrease in it from an enlightened Buddha down to a lowly worm or insect.

Here miniature-sized is literally “thumb-sized” (tshon-gang), which does not refer to the whole thumb, but only the first joint. The use of this term is purely symbolic. It suggests something very small, a unit or point, a single essence (thigle nyag-gcig), which in its nature is both empty and aware. But actually lacking any size of form, the Dharmakaya

is just a small point of light. "Thumb-size" is only an example and a symbol because the Dharmakaya has no form or shape or size in itself. It is without colour or shape. When we say that the Dharmakaya is miniature-sized, or Tsön-gang, this is not something literal, but a reference to the non-duality and inseparability of the Dimension of Space and Primordial Awareness (dbyings dang ye-shes dbyer-med). Indeed, Yeshe may mean different things in different contexts, but here it means "primal awareness."

Speaking from the standpoint of the Base, there is no development or evolution in itself. It is only from the standpoint of the individual practitioner that we may speak of pure and impure, clear and obscured, or even growth and development. It is the energy of the individual that is pure or impure, not that of the Base, which is primordially pure, like the clear mirror that has the capacity to reflect everything. The individual practitioner may be impure, defiled, and obscured, but not the Nature of Mind, because it is primordially pure from time without beginning. It is equal in all sentient beings because it represents our innate Buddha nature. The Natural State does not increase or decrease or evolve over time.

### The White Shen Deity and the Inner Light

Here in this text, Yeshe, or primal awareness, has two aspects. Firstly, it is designated as the miniature-sized primal awareness, or Yeshe Tsön-gang (ye-shes tshon-gang), which is not manifest or visible. Secondly, its energy aspect as light is called the miniature-sized light, or Öd Tsön-gang ('od tshon-gang), which is both manifest and visible.

Yeshe Tsön-gang is self-arising pure awareness, totally clear without obscurations or coverings, denuded of discursive thoughts. It is self-arising and self-originated, and yet the source of all consciousness. Although formless and nameless, it is conventionally designated as the Dharmakaya (bon sku) and as the White Shen Deity (gshen lha dkar-po). It has the nature of clear luminosity and light, although it is not physical light, rather it is the pure light of awareness. It abides as a point or spark of light in the center of the heart like the sun abiding in the sky. However, it is self-arising and not caused by anything extraneous to itself. It is impartial, not favouring any direction, and immaterial, being co-extensive with space itself and inseparable with it.

The text of the Third Little Nail has first explained the Base, the state of emptiness or pure potentiality, as being space and dimension, and now in the Fourth Little Nail, explains clarity, or the awareness side to the ultimate reality. Finally, there will explained here in this Fifth Little Nail their inseparability from the very beginning, that is to say, the union and inseparability of Dimension and Primal Awareness. This arises as the basis for all the manifestations of energy (rtsal).

This Yeshe Tsön-gang is another name for the King that is Awareness (rig-pa'i rgyal-po). It is clear, unobscured and uncovered in itself and it is self-arising. It cannot be comprehended by the finite intellect and cannot be expressed adequately in words. Nevertheless, in the texts it is also called

1. The Dharmakaya that is invisible (snang-med bon kyi sku), and
2. The white light which cannot be imputed, being the basis of everything ('od dkar bdags-med kun gyi gzhi).

Then, secondly, there is the light of awareness that becomes manifest and is visible. Thus, Öd Tsön-gang is also known as:

1. The Dharmakaya which is the Great Vision (snang-ba chen-po bon kyi sku),
2. The White Light Shen Deity that can be imputed (bdags yod-pa'i gshen-lha 'od-dkar), and
3. The Awareness that is Higher Insight (lhag-mthog gi rig-pa).

It is explained that the invisible Dharmakaya is the Natural State. It is also called the the White Light Shen Deity without ornaments (rgyan med gshen-la 'od-dkar), where ornaments (rgyan) refer to discursive thoughts and conceptions. Therefore, it cannot be imputed. But in terms of spontaneous perfection (lhun-grub), there will arise visions in terms of light, bright and clear in colours like the peacock's feather. The Yeshe Tsön-gang is like the presence of the sun high in the sky and the Öd Tsön-gang are like its rays of light. It is the basis for the manifestations of the Nirmanakayas and, therefore, the basis for the manifestations of all Buddhas and all sentient beings.

Moreover, this inner light is spoken of as being a body or divine form (sku), so that Body and that Primordial Awareness are without duality. This is totally all-pervading and all-encompassing (khyab bdal

chen-po), without center or boundary. It is primordially pure and untainted or disturbed by the discursive thoughts that arise into consciousness, just as the nature of the mirror is in no way changed or modified by whatever is set before it and is reflected. In the same way, the Primordial Base is in no way changed or modified by the visions of Samsara and Nirvana arising during the course of countless lifetimes. Nonetheless, all visions and appearances arise before this eye of Rigpa. Emptiness and clarity have always been inseparable in the Natural State. In this context, clarity (gsal-ba) means not just our having visions, but also self-awareness, which like the lamp flame, illuminates itself. This self-awareness exists in all sentient beings equally whether or not they know and recognize it.

Furthermore, it is this Clear Light that is the source of all the forms of the Yidam meditation deities, for which reason the Sambhogakaya is called Shenlha Ödkar (gshen-lha 'od-dkar). The term Ödkar, literally "white light," actually refers to the Clear Light ('od gsal) in this context. Originally arising out of the Clear Light, and then at the culmination of their development, all visions dissolve again at the end into the Clear Light. Buddhahood is not something that can be created, nor is it something that can be lost, although it can go unrecognized. It has abided from the very beginning, but has been forgotten and gone unrecognized lifetime after lifetime in Samsara, like the sun concealed behind a thick layer of clouds day after day, or a prince wandering the marketplace in disguise so that no one recognizes him. To enjoy the light of the sun and feel its warmth, we must come out of the shadows of the cave which faces to the north. So, it is said that Shenlha Ödkar represents the Sambhogakaya, which is the source of all Yidam meditation deities, just as the sun in the heavens is the source of all illumination.

### **B. The Natural State of Yeshe Tsön-Gang: Abiding in the Heart**

From the very beginning Body and Primal Awareness have been inseparable (sku dang ye-shes dbyer-med). On the one hand, Öd Tsön-gang arises as a miniature-sized Body before the eye of self-awareness (rang-rig spyen). It is called a miniature-sized Body or divine form (tshon-gang sku) because it is unchanging. On the other, Yeshe Tsön-

gang arises everywhere as an eye without any obscurations and coverings. [9] This eye gazes everywhere into the ten directions seeing everything. For it there is no exterior or interior, center or boundary; its vision is all pervading and all-encompassing. Although it is the basis for everything arising in Nirvana and Samsara, whether light or dark, good or evil, enlightenment or delusion, in itself it is in no way clouded or touched by these limits or extremes, in the same way as the mirror is not modified by its reflections.

This miniature-sized primal awareness abides in our heart, at the core and center of our being, where, as knowledge and awareness, it equally encompasses everything. It represents the potential for all knowledge just like the mirror has the potential to reflect whatever is set before it. It has no sides, no front and back, no top and bottom it is like a clear mirror without any dust or obscurations. Everything appears in it. It has no exterior or interior; it encompasses everything equally.

The small hollow space in the physical heart (tsita) is the residence of Rigpa. It is the space of Kunzhi. Then originating from this hollow space inside the physical heart, the kati channel (ka-ti rtsa) goes into the spinal column, through the joint connecting the spine and the skull, over the brain under the membrane at the top of the skull, where it bifurcates, dividing into two proceeding into the two eyeballs. All the visions come through this channel and are projected through the eyes out into the space in front where they are visible. They are projections, so they are not seen by the physical eyes and the optic nerve, or by eye consciousness. They are only seen by Rigpa.

The eye is very important in Dzogchen practice because it looks into space, whether externally or internally. With the eyes open and functioning, we just keep everything as it is. Thus we integrate the inner dimension and the outer dimension. The space inside a clay pot and outside it are equally empty. Our mind or thought process forms the walls of this clay pot. The Dzogchen view is literally seen through the eyes. Critics assert that such a Dzogchen view is only forms and colours. But that is what eye consciousness sees, and here we distinguish Rigpa from eye consciousness. Eye consciousness does not see the nature of Mind; only Rigpa sees this; nevertheless, the eye is necessary in order to facilitate this. When we make the dark retreat for whatever period of

time, the visions only appear in front of us and not behind; this is because the kati channel goes into the eyes and so, the visions appear in front.

### C. Its Great Importance

For the Basic Nature there is no “before” or “after.” This Rigpa, or intrinsic awareness, which has abided from time without beginning, is at the center or hub of the ever-turning wheel of Samsara, whereas all of our lifetimes in Samsara are located on the rim of the wheel. Without this miniature-sized primal awareness, which is the King that is Awareness (rig-pa’i rgyal-po), at the core of our being, there would be no ascending into Buddhahood and no falling into generation in Samsara as a deluded ordinary sentient being. In the center of our being, it is self-originated and self-arising from the very beginning (ye nas rang-byung rang-shar). [10]

It is not created by the enlightenment of the Buddhas, or by the activities of clever sentient beings. Before it, there was no understanding on the one hand, and ignorance and delusion on the other. This self-originated primordial awareness, simply abided as the root and source of everything in both Samsara and Nirvana. Without this King that is Awareness, there would be no elements, no worlds, no Samsara and Nirvana, no universe at all. There would be no enlightened Buddhas and no deluded sentient beings.

It is not enough just to know the Natural State. We must become familiar with it in our personal experience and then stabilize that experience. Therefore, we need to make a retreat in order to practice without distractions and disturbances.

### D. The Reason for Its Name

It has been clearly visible as the self-arising light of awareness from the very beginning. It is called Tsön-gang because it is not increased by youth, nor diminished by old age. It is not vanquished or destroyed by antidotes or secondary causes. It was not itself created by primary causes nor by secondary conditions. It simply abided without beginning and end.

This concludes the Fifth Little Nail dealing with the miniature-sized Dharmakaya in the heart.

## 6. The Little Nail of the Sambhogakaya where the Pairs are United

**Principal Topic:** The Sambhogakaya of the Unifications

In this section, “the Little Nail of the Sambhogakaya where the pairs are united,” (zung-’brel rdzogs-sku’i gzer-bu). The Sambhogakaya (rdzogs-sku) should be understood as the Body of Perfect Unification. It is perfect and complete in itself (rdzogs). Moreover, all the phenomena of Samsara and Nirvana are complete and perfect just as they are, whether that is the impure karmic vision of Samsara or the pure vision of Nirvana. Once again there are the three topics of the homage, the explication of the text, and the conclusion in brief.

### I. The Homage

First there is the homage: “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, where self-awareness is the Sambhogakaya,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rdzogs-pa’i sku la phyag ’tshal-lo). The meaning of the homage is that all phenomenal existence, everything in Samsara and Nirvana, is perfect just as it is from the very beginning. This is the view of Dzogchen, so that in our meditation practice, no modifications or transformations are made in terms of our visions. There is no transforming of impure karmic vision into pure vision as is the case in the practice of Tantra. Moreover, the homage here refers to the unification (zug-’jug) of Kunzhi and Rigpa.

### II. Explicating the Text

Brief and extensive explanations are given and the principal discussion of the view here, as usual, is in terms of Dzogchen. These are the two divisions:

1. The teaching in brief (mdor bstan) and
2. The extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

#### A. The Teaching in Brief

Here again, there are two subtopics:

1. The teaching on the basis of perfection (rdzogs gzhi bstan-pa) and
2. The teaching on the system of perfection (rdzogs lugs bstan-pa).



### **A1. The Basis of Perfection**

As for the brief explanation: The vast expanse of space that is the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi'i klong) is inherently clear, empty, and lacking in any self or substance, appearing much like the clear, open, empty sky devoid of clouds. Yet within it, there will arise spontaneously the miniature-sized primal awareness, or Yeshe Tsön-gang, that is inherently clear, luminous, and without thoughts. Dimension (dbyings) refers to the Base and Yeshe to awareness. It is the primal cognition of awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) that abides in the hollow space at the center of our physical heart (tsita). It embodies a primordial unity, the inseparability and non-duality of Kunzhi and Rigpa known as Thigley Nyagchik, the Unique Sphere. They always occur together.

### **A2. The System or Perfection: The Three Manifestations**

Then there appear the three manifestations (snang-ba gsum), which arise spontaneously out of the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind, in this open space inside the heart, as the sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum). In the beginning, at the onset of the Bardo experience, the sounds, lights, and rays arise, but as yet there is no Samsara or Nirvana, only space and light. Sounds (sgra) mean vibrations in space, lights ('od) mean colors, and rays (zer) mean forms. They are uncreated and self-originated and self-manifested, and are not due to any extraneous causes outside of themselves. When we understand and recognize them as self-manifestations, they will evolve into the pure visions of Nirvana, and all the virtuous qualities of Body, Speech, and Mind will arise spontaneously, but when we do not understand and do not recognize them as such, they will evolve into the impure karmic visions of Samsara. When they go unrecognized and we are afflicted with ignorance, or a lack of awareness (ma rig-pa), they will evolve into the kleshas, or negative emotions, and into the six destinies of rebirth in Samsara. Thus, the originally pure Clear Light becomes the visible subtle lights that eventually solidify into the five elements of space, air, fire, water, and earth. They are individually visible and not merged together indiscriminately. Thus, there is a single Base that is primordially pure, but two Paths, or courses of evolution, Nirvana and Samsara, due to our understanding or not understanding, leading to two Fruits or

results, the enlightened Buddha in Nirvana or the deluded, ordinary sentient being reborn in Samsara.

## II. The Extensive Explanation: The Ten Unifications

Then in terms of the extensive explanation, there are ten unifications (zung-'brel bcu) said to represent the Treasury of the Great Perfection. Here Kunzhi represents the Dimension (dbyings) and Rigpa represents primal awareness (ye-shes). They are always linked as a pair and are never separate, being two aspects of the same thing. Therefore, everything is totally perfected (ye nas rdzogs-pa chen-po) from the very beginning. It is similar with all these pairs.

The ten unifications or joining into pairs (zung-'brel bcu) are

1. Dimension and Primordial Awareness (dbyings dang ye-shes),
2. Space and Vastness (mkha' dang klong),
3. Skillful Means and Discriminating Wisdom (thabs dang shes-rab),
4. Object and Consciousness (yul dang rnam-shes),
5. Cause and Effect (rgyu dang 'bras-bu),
6. Body and Mind (lus dang sems),
7. the vessel-like Universe and its nectar like Inhabitants (snod dang bcud),
8. Divine Father and Divine Mother (yab dang yum),
9. Body and Primordial Awareness (sku dang ye-shes), and
10. The Deity and the Celestial Palace (lha dang gzhal-yas khang).

### Meeting the Natural State in the First Bardo

The commentary reveals the way in which the Base is perfect and complete in itself (rdzogs gzhi) with nothing lacking. This perfection and completeness is the unification or inseparability of emptiness and clarity (stong gsal zung-'brel). There is no separation here, they come together always, but we still may speak of two different aspects and distinguish them for purposes of human understanding. They are perfect because they are inseparable and nondual. The Natural State is complete and perfect because it is the source and base of all the phenomena of Samsara and Nirvana. Samsara has no beginning in any absolute sense, but it has a relative beginning every time we die and the Clear Light arises. We either recognize it or not and understand it as a self-

manifestation or not. At the time of death, the Natural State appears nakedly when the mind disintegrates and dissolves into space. This is the time of the First Bardo, the Bardo of Emptiness (stong-nyid bar-do). It appears to the deceased consciousness nakedly without coverings by clouds of discursive thoughts. This occurs spontaneously whether or not we have previously practiced meditation during our lifetime. The veil is rendered and we behold our original face (rang ngo), the one we had before we were born. This is the moment when we have the maximum opportunity to recognize our true nature and thereby attain liberation from the cycle of Samsarà, or else fail to do so.

### Arising of Sounds, Lights, and Rays

But simultaneously with this experience of the Base, or the empty state of Shunyata, subtle psychic energies (rlung) stir and a very subtle mind arises where consciousness is agitated and thinks that the sounds, lights, and rays (sgra 'od zer gsum) arise not from the Clear Light of Awareness, but really exist out there in space as external objects. These visions manifest spontaneously and simultaneously with this a very subtle mind arises that apprehends them. However, if this awareness remains firm and stable in the Natural State, consciousness develops and evolves into the visions of Nirvana. However, if there is a lack of awareness, this very subtle ignorance will be the cause of not recognizing the sounds, lights, and rays as self-manifestations of the Nature of Mind. Rather, it thinks that they are something external and that they are manifestations due to another outside source, or extrinsic cause (gzhan snang). Thus they develop, proliferate, and evolve into Samsara and the visions of the six destinies of rebirth. Samsara and Nirvana arise out of the same source and Base. But the Nature of Mind does not do this, rather it depends on awareness or the lack of awareness. This state of original perfection has been with us from the very beginning. It is like an old woman who has dwelt for countless years in a cave made of rocks of gold, where she has been living in poverty because she failed to recognize the gold all about her. In the same way, as deluded ordinary sentient beings, we do not recognize our innate Buddha Nature. On the one side, there is intrinsic awareness, or Rigpa, and on the other side, there are the sounds, lights, and rays, which represent energy (rtsal) and visible light ('od). Their union is the Thigley Nyagchik. They are

complete and perfect in the Base and represent the Yeshe Tsön-gang, but then they came into visible manifestation as energy and this is the Öd Tsön-gang.

The Bardo experience separates us from our previous life. In the dying process, after the disintegration of our elemental energies and our mind, we come to experience a blank unconscious state. Our bodily elements have dissolved into space and our mind is naked and alone. According to Dzogchen, whether we recognize it or not, we find ourselves both clear and naked in the Natural State for a time. As a yogi practitioner who recognizes this state, having become familiar with it in our meditation practice, we remain in it for some time, up to seven days, it is said. But if we do not recognize this state, it will appear to be just unconsciousness and this will not help us very much. Nevertheless, this blank empty state only lasts for a time, whether this time be long or short.

Then due to our past karma, subtle vital winds, or psychic energies, arise causing vibrations in space. Therefore, the sounds, lights, and rays arise and simultaneously with the phenomena of these three manifestations, there arises a very subtle mental consciousness. If we remain in the Natural State, we still see these sounds, lights, and rays appear, but we do not follow after them. When we remain in the Natural State, then our wisdom side unfolds; we become enlightened and the visions of Nirvana evolve and elaborate. These three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays represent energy (rtsal), the inherent potential energy of the Nature of Mind, which it contains an inexhaustible supply of such energy. These sounds, lights, and rays become objects for our Rigpai Yeshe, or primal cognitions of awareness, appearing at the same time as the phenomena. Therefore this awareness is said to be “together born” (lhan-skyes). At this time, a sense of subject and object can arise, this representing primordial “together-born” ignorance. When we grasp at and follow after these sounds, lights, and rays, becoming distracted, we lose our center and our nature and get caught up in the unfolding of their evolution. This is the beginning of the process of rebirth in Samsara.

### Three Aspects of Rigpa

Elsewhere in the texts, it speaks of Rigpa in terms of three aspects. When it is all-pervasive and co-extensive with the dimension of the

Base and represents what is fundamental to existence, it is called all-pervading awareness (khyab-rig). When it is primordially perfected within the individual sentient being, this representing that being's basic Buddhahood, it is known as primordial awareness (ye-rig). In this context, awareness knows itself and has always known itself; it never becomes deluded or obscured, neither increasing nor decreasing lifetime after lifetime. Therefore, it is primordial and it does not change. But as consciousness, it has become caught up in mental processes and their limitations and restrictions. It does not know anymore that it knows. It has forgotten its own nature and has entered into limitation and generation, or rebirth. This is called mental awareness, or awareness involved in mental processes (bsam-rig), Primordial awareness knows itself and its nature from the very beginning, but mental awareness does not know. It looks at the visions that arise and thinks that they are solid, real, opaque, and external to itself. Primordial awareness knows itself and it knows the three manifestations are self-manifestations and not due to extrinsic causes. It knows that awareness and the three manifestations are inseparable.

Where does delusion begin? When the sounds, lights, and rays first appear after death, our very subtle mental consciousness (yid-shes) does not recognize the nature of these three manifestations. Therefore, this Sam-rig (bsam-rig), or mental awareness, needs a direct introduction in order to recognize itself (rig-pa ngo-sprod). Consequently, we practitioners need to practice Guru Yoga and pray to the Guru in order that we may be able to recognize our own face.

### Three Terms for Space

Here three different words are used for space: *mKha'* (var. *nam-mkha'*) is the most common and general word meaning space or sky in Tibetan. *Klong* means a vast expanse of space and *dbyings* means dimension, which may be external or internal, such as the space of the mind. Whatever arises, whether external phenomena or internal thoughts, it arises in a dimension. It is the source and the base from which everything arises ('byung gzhi). The Base in itself is empty, but all manifestations of sounds, lights, and rays arise spontaneously within it without limit, being infinite in their numbers and varieties. Because the Base is total and complete in itself, lacking nothing, it is complete and perfect

(rdzogs-pa) and because it manifests infinite numbers and varieties, it is great (chen-po). Therefore, it is the Treasury of the Great Perfection (rdzogs-pa chen-po'i mdzod).

This innate primal cognition of awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) does not arise from something external to itself or from a cause prior to itself, or is created by something or someone external to itself. Rather, this intrinsic awareness is fundamental to existence itself. Where there is space, there is awareness. Space and awareness are inseparable and fundamental to existence. Whatever comes into manifestation is inseparable from the Kunzhi, just like the waves and the water of the sea are inseparable. The Kunzhi is like the great ocean and the visions and experiences are like the waves. Arising like waves from this Base which is empty, these manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays are also empty of any inherent existence. It is only our minds which grasp at these phenomena as actually existing external realities; like it is turning water into ice. Though empty and insubstantial, external appearances seem to be solid, real, and substantial, existing independently of the observer. This is because the mind operates dualistically in terms of subject and object. Our thoughts grasp at appearances as concrete, substantial, and existing inherently. This process of solidification only intensifies and increases when the mind judges them as good and bad. Everything external and internal has the same empty nature and arises from the same Base. This is the meaning of these ten pairs.

This concludes the Sixth Little Nail which explains the Sambhogakaya where the pairs are united.

## 7. The Little Nail of the Impartial Nirmanakayas

**Principal Topic:** The impartial Nirmanakayas who manifest everywhere

The next section is entitled “the Little Nail of the Nirmanakaya that is Impartial,” (phyogs-med sprul-sku'i gzer-bu). The Nirmanakayas are called impartial (phyogs-med) because they can appear anywhere at any period of time or history in all the different worlds inhabited by intelligent life forms. Thus, their manifestations are impartial like sunlight indiscriminately falling upon the surface of the earth. The single Sambhogakaya, like the sun in the heavens, never departs from Akanishtha ('og-min zhing-khams), the highest plane of existence, but

due to its great compassion for all suffering sentient beings still caught up in the rounds of Samsara, it emanates out of its effulgence countless numbers of Nirmanakaya Buddhas as they are needed. These Buddhas manifest on the lower planes of existence to sentient beings whose vision and understanding is still limited and obscured, so that they cannot perceive the Sambhogakaya. In the same way, the three manifestations arise from the potential energy of the Nature of Mind and as holographic magical apparitions (cho-'phrul), they illuminate and give visible form to everything in our universe. This also represents the impartial manifestations of the Nirmanakaya.

### I. The Homage

This section opens with the homage: "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the Self-Awareness which is the Nirmanakaya." When the light of our intrinsic awareness becomes visible in the external space before our eyes, this represents the manifestation of the Nirmanakaya.

### II. The Extensive Explanation

Here once more, there are two divisions:

1. The teaching in brief and
2. The extensive explanation.

#### A. The Teaching in Brief

Whereas the Fifth Little Nail presented the view regarding the Dharmakaya and the Sixth Little Nail presented the view regarding the Sambhogakaya, here we have presented the view with regard to the Nirmanakaya. Samsara and Nirvana now come into visible manifestation (rol-pa) out of the potential energy (rtsal) of Kunzhi and Rigpa united in the heart. This luminous manifestation is known as the Nirmanakaya. Whereas before the dimension of space and primordial awareness were inseparable, now the familiar distinctions, dualities, and polarities of existence evolve and come into manifestation.

Simultaneous and co-emergent with the three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays, there arises the primal cognitions of awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes). These sounds, lights, and rays represent the mani-

festations of the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind and from them arise the apparitions, appearances, and visions of both Samsara and Nirvana. Consequently, there arise the six sense faculties, the six aggregates of consciousness, and the six sense objects. These visions arise as spontaneously self-perfected and self-originated; they are like holograms or magical apparitions (cho-'phrul). Samsara and Nirvana are just such magical apparitions, although they appear real and concrete to ourselves as individual perceivers. These visions that arise in the dimension of space are unceasing and inexhaustible because this inherent energy is inexhaustible. They arise in the vast expanse of the mind and liberate into the vast expanse of the mind.

## II. The Extensive Explanation

The sounds, lights, and rays represent energy, deriving from the unification of Rigpa and Kunzhi. In terms of corresponding to the three principal functions, from Rigpa and light comes the Body aspect, from Rigpa and sound comes the Speech aspect, and from Rigpa and the rays comes the Mind aspect. Collectively, these three represent the Nirmanakaya. Everything comes from their Nature and returns into this Nature. Although we speak of the sounds, lights, and rays as objects and of awareness as subject, these are just names. In reality, there is no subject and object. In the Natural State, there is no external and internal. This initial duality arises with spontaneously-born, co-emergent ignorance (lhan-skyes ma rig-pa). In itself, Rigpa is like a clear mirror without any dust on its surface. Reflections unceasingly appear in the mirror, but the mirror does not grasp at them. When the visions come, they appear to awareness. The natural state of awareness is always with us and never otherwise, even in deep sleep and so-called unconsciousness. However, awareness may vary with intensity, such as we have bright light and dim light, sharply focused light and diffused light. Nevertheless, awareness is never totally absent because it is fundamental and intrinsic to existence itself. The Natural State has abided with us since the very beginning. In absolute terms, Samsara has had no beginning in time and history; it is like a circle or a wheel turning and turning without beginning or end. But it has a relative beginning each time we die, and



the three manifestations arise once more out of the state of the pure potentiality of emptiness.

When we practice meditation and become familiar with the Natural State and stable in it, there will come forth eventually visions in accordance with Nirvana. These are pure visions, rather than impure karmic visions. In terms of the practice of Thödgal, the support for these visions is the total darkness of the dark retreat, the empty space of the sky, or the rays of sunlight. But the visions do not come from these supports, but from the Nature of Mind. At first chaotic and fleeting, gradually they become more stable and clear. Initially anything may appear, even impure visions, but eventually there will appear the deities and mandalas belonging to the Pancha-kula, or Five Buddha Families. These occur spontaneously and are not dependent on the visualization practices created by our minds. The Thödgal visions only arise when the practitioner is in the Natural State. Otherwise visions and hallucinations may arise, but this is no better than watching the cinema or television. These Thödgal visions are self-manifestations arising from the Natural State and with practice they become clear, bright, and stable. Nevertheless, no matter how many visions may come, the Natural State does not increase or decrease. Nor does it matter if the visions do not come at all. The Natural State does not distinguish whether the visions represent Samsara or Nirvana. We integrate with these visions and remain present and aware, like having a lucid dream. This integration is the single point or sphere (thig-le nyag-gcig). These visions experienced in the dark retreat and in the sky and in the sunlight practice do not come from outside, but arise from the Base and return again to the Base, like waves rising and falling on the ocean.

Each of these sections called "Little Nails" expands upon our understanding of the Natural State, but they explain it from different angles, sometimes from the side of emptiness and sometimes from the side of clarity and awareness. When the visions come in our retreat, we do not modify, correct, change, transform, or do anything about them, we leave them as they are and allow them to self-liberate back into the Base. They are not judged to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. They are not anticipated or regretted afterwards. They are just manifestations of our energy, and so we do not follow them or become preoccupied with them. We just leave them be as they are.

This concludes the Seventh Little Nail explaining the impartial Nirmanakayas which can manifest everywhere.

## 8. The Eighth Little Nail of the Illustrative Examples

**Principal Topic:** Examples that illustrate the meaning.

Next there is the Little Nail of the Illustrative Examples (mtshon byed dpe'i gzer-bu). Here a number of examples and metaphors may be employed to clarify matters and explain the Yeshe Tsön-gang, or miniature-sized primal awareness.

### I. The Homage

From among the three divisions, here again the first is the homage: "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who clears away the darkness of doubts," (kun tu bzang-po the-tshom mun-pa sel la phyag 'tshal-lo). When we recognize the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, and definitively deciding upon it, we come to possess confidence in it. The meaning is that the darkness of doubts becomes cleared away by itself. [11]

### II. Explicating the Text: Five Topics

In this section, five topics are considered:

1. Examples of how visible objects and the primal cognitions of awareness are connected (snang-ba'i yul dang rig-pa'i ye-shes zung du 'brel-ba'i dpe),
2. The modes of clarity and shadow in terms of the four occasions (dus bzhi la gsal dang 'grib tshul),
3. The process of liberation and the process of delusion, (grol 'khrul gyi tshul),
4. The full measure of causality and time (rgyu dang dus kyi tshad), and
5. The method for the reversing of the delusions of Samsara ('khrul-pa zlog-pa'i thabs).

### A. Examples of External Objects and Internal Awareness being Connected

There are four examples (dpe) illustrating how external visible objects and the internal primal cognitions of awareness become connected and linked together. Awareness, or Rigpa, is like water and these three manifestations, the sounds, lights, and rays, are like reflections shimmering on the surface of the water. Awareness is like a crystal and these three manifestations are like the rainbows refracted from the crystal upon the far wall. Awareness is like the sun in the heavens and the three manifestations are like the rays of the sun. Finally, awareness is like a butter lamp and the three manifestations are like the rays of light that come from that lamp.

### B. Clarity and Shadow

The second topic here, clarity and shadow, applies to the individual sentient being and not to the Base in itself. Originally awareness was clear and bright and unshadowed. The increase and decrease in terms of four times, or the four occasions (dus bzhi), refers to the uniting and separating again of body and mind. These four times or occasions are as follows: Rigpa abiding in the Base, the coming together of consciousness and the physical body in the birth process, their separating again at the time of death, and becoming deluded in the Bardo of Existence. That is to say, on the first occasion, Rigpa abides in itself primordial awareness (ye-rig) in the Base from time without beginning. It is fundamental to existence itself and does not derive from anything else prior to it. But then, on the second occasion, secondary causes arise and awareness comes together with bodily existence, which limits its dimension and diminishes its intensity, so that what was originally a primordial awareness, open and unlimited, now becomes an embodied, discursive consciousness (bsam-rig). Body and brain act as limiting and constricting factors for primordial awareness. This represents our existence during our present lifetime, where consciousness and the physical body have come together and joined.

Then, on the third occasion, inevitably consciousness and the physical body separate once again at the time of death. The so-called First Bardo, known as the Chikhai Bardo ('chi-kha'i bar-do), is actually

the dying process while we are still alive, although perhaps terminally ill. So, it is not an after-death experience as such. The true First Bardo, or after-death experience, is the Tong-nyid Bardo, the Bardo of the State of Emptiness, or Shunyata (ston-nyid bar-do). For the ordinary sentient being, this is experienced as a black-out after one's vital energies and mind have disintegrated and cease to function altogether. On this occasion, consciousness (rnam-shes) is expelled from the body and Rigpa is once more liberated into space. Thus, there arises the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality. Without the constrictions of body and brain, the inherent energy of Rigpa freely manifests, where Rigpa and visions, such as those of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities described in the Tibetan Books of the Dead, arise. They are not separate from our awareness, but when this very subtle mind does not recognize these visions of the Clear Light to be self-manifestations of the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind, then the Third Bardo, the Bardo of Existence arises. The deceased consciousness, or Namshe, becomes distracted and overwhelmed by karmic visions of the past and the future, and we lose our former sense of presence and center.

Here we are speaking of three Bardos. The Bardo of the State of Shunyata or Emptiness corresponds to the Dharmakaya, the Bardo of the Clear Light corresponds to the Sambhogakaya, and the Bardo of Existence corresponds to the Nirmanakaya. After the mind, or thought process, has disintegrated, at this time of just being, we find ourselves in the state of the Dharmakaya, which is like the sky devoid of clouds. This is the First Bardo, the Bardo of the State of Shunyata (stong-nyid bar-do). As yet there are no obscurations brought on by the arising of the three manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays. There are no delusions because all delusions have progressively disintegrated and dissolved previously in the process of dying. There is just abiding (gnas-pa), just a state of pure being. The yogi practitioner has the opportunity to recognize this state as the Kunzhi, or spacious aspect of the Nature of Mind, because we have experienced it in meditation practice previously during our lifetime.

Then the inherent energy of intrinsic awareness (Rigpa) invariably dawns in this thick darkness and we find ourselves in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do). This Clear Light is the light of awareness inherent in our Basic Nature. It is beginningless

and uncreated in time. However, failing to recognize the three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays, as our own Nature, and not recognizing subsequently the advent of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities as archetypal self-manifestations, the winds of karma are stirred up and become agitated, and we fall into the Third Bardo, that of the Bardo of Existence, or the rebirth process, known as the Sidpai Bardo (srid-pa'i bar-do). The rebirth process commences with its karmic visions of past and future. Thus, the clouds gather and grow thicker and eventually they come to cover the face of the sun, thereby darkening and obscuring its light..

Although the luminous sun of Rigpa is shining in the clear heavens all the time, again the clouds may gather and come to obscure the face of the sun. These clouds represent our samsaric visions and discursive thoughts. When the sounds, lights, and rays are not recognized initially to be self-manifestations of our own Nature of Mind, this is like putting the flame of a lamp inside a clay pot. When the body and the mind are thus connected, we cannot see the Natural State in its nakedness because it is enclosed and covered by the material body and by the discursive mind. But in this Bardo of the Clear Light of Realty, body and mind have become disconnected and so, Rigpa is clearly seen in its nakedness (rig-pa gcer mthong). It is shining like the bright sun in the clear cloudless sky. The Base abides in itself as clear luminosity, but when it is enclosed in the clay vessel of the material body, it becomes obscured. Nevertheless, at the time of death, this clay vessel is shattered and the Clear Light within becomes visible. However, this clarity is only temporary and the sky again becomes filled with the clouds of delusion. With the Bardo of Existence, it becomes shadowed once more with the arising of karmic visions, which our consciousness takes as being solid and real. Thus, it is like the face of the sun being concealed by the clouds.

### **C. Process of Liberation and Falling into Delusion**

Thirdly, in terms of the process of liberation and the process of falling again into delusion, it is by way of understanding that we become liberated and by way of ignorance that we become deluded and experience again the destinies of rebirth in Samsara. How can we purify and dissolve these coverings and free ourselves from delusions? When the sounds, lights, and rays initially appear, if we remain firm and stable

in the Natural State, then these manifestations will self-liberate of themselves and not carry us away in their swift currents. We should not grasp at them or become attached to them. We recognize that they are only manifestations of our energy. We know that all these visions are indeed self-manifestations. In this way, we bring them under control like a skilful king does with his subjects.

The three manifestations arise after our death in our state of intrinsic awareness, but they are actually not separate from this awareness. Rigpa recognizes their nature spontaneously and there is no need for a teacher to point out their nature to us. This is what occurred for Kuntu Zangpo. As soon as they appeared, he recognized them as self-manifestations and did not pursue or follow after these visions. Therefore, he remained centered in his own being and he maintained his independence. This is like having a lucid dream where we recognize the dream to be a dream while we are still dreaming. When we think and perceive the visions as something independent and outside of ourselves, thinking these visions are due to extrinsic causes (gzhan-srang) and follow after them, we lose our balance, our independence, and fall off center and stumble again into Samsara. Seeing these three manifestations as extrinsic and external, as phenomena due to another outside of ourselves, is the secondary cause of delusions.

However, with Dzogchen practice, we go back to the source from which all visions arise. Therefore, we remain in the Natural State. Otherwise, we are like an ignorant fool chasing after rainbows, mirages, and phantoms in the night. It is mental consciousness that follows after such visions, pursuing them into a destiny of rebirth in Samsara, instead of remaining in the Natural State on the side of our true center, our Basic Nature.

#### **D. Causality and Time**

Fourthly, Kuntu Zangpo realized Buddhahood immediately without a teacher because he understood, whereas ordinary deluded sentient beings like ourselves who do not understand continue to wander in Samsara without a guide. There is no extrinsic cause for the arising of the Base or for the beginning of intrinsic awareness, because they are self-originated and self-arising. Moreover, there is no material cause in the Base itself for the arising of delusions. Nevertheless, the visions

come forth from the energy of the inherent potentiality and power of the Natural State. [12] Karmic causality only arises when we fail to understand and recognize the Natural State of the Nature of Mind. In the Bardo experience, we will be blown hither and yon by the winds of our karma, like dry leaves scattered by the autumn winds. Lacking understanding, we find ourselves thrown once more into time and history. We are on the rim of the wheel and not at its center. The visions that arise, whether of Samsara or Nirvana, are only illusions, but failing to recognize that, we become attached to our visions and this gives rise to negative emotions that engender more bad karma.

Dzogchen has been accused by its critics of denying cause and effect. Indeed, karma, its causes and consequences, was a fundamental teaching of the Buddha. Denying karma and its results is reckoned as one of the principal wrong views. However, Dzogchen speaks in the way it does because it speaks from the standpoint of the Base or the Natural State, rather than from the standpoint of the practitioner. It is true that for the Natural State there is no cause and effect, no karma, because this intrinsic awareness is self-arising. There is no extrinsic cause for it. It is characterized neither by virtue or non-virtue and the state of emptiness allows everything to come into manifestation, whether light or dark, good or bad, like a mirror can reflect whatever is set before it without judgment. Again, it is like the sky and the sky is not the cause of the mountains that appear on the horizon. But the practitioner remains under the sway of karma and will inevitably experience its consequences.

In terms of time, for this Basic Nature there is no beginning in an absolute sense, no moment of creation or big bang. Kunzhi and Rigpa have always been there without beginning, being fundamental to existence itself. However, for us as individual sentient beings, there is a relative beginning in Samsara when we reach the Boundary (sotshams) after the culmination of the dying process and before the onset of the Bardo experience. At that time when our energy and our mind have dissolved into empty space, we experience the near attainment (nyer thob) of total darkness, which is the black-out or eclipse before the dawning of the Clear Light. [13] At that moment we have the maximum opportunity to recognize the dawning of the Clear Light as our own self-manifestation, as the light of our own intrinsic

awareness and thereby liberate ourselves from the fate of falling again into Samsara.

### **E. The Method for the Reversing of Delusions**

Fifthly, coming to recognize the Natural State, which is primordially pure awareness, we clearly and definitively decide upon it, thereafter it is not possible to fall back into delusion once again. Once discovering the ultimate source of the vision, and definitively deciding upon that, we do not again become deceived by appearances. It is like meeting again an old acquaintance and so we do not have to be introduced once again. We recognize the sounds, lights, and rays to be self-manifestations and knowing them to be illusions, we are no longer deceived. Truly, it is our everyday life in Samsara that is a delusion. Even though primordial awareness has been with us since the very beginning, it has become obscured by this co-emergent ignorance which divided non-dual reality into subject and object. Recognizing these three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays to be self-manifestations is the principal method to overcome and dispel delusions. Then we are no longer chasing phantoms in the night.

The Sutra system teaches as its method the path of renunciation, the Tantra system teaches the path of transformation, but Dzogchen teaches the path of self-liberation (*rang-grol*). When we are in the Natural State, we allow thoughts and visions to self-liberate on their own. If we do not interfere with them, they spontaneously loose their energy, dissolve, and liberate back into their source, the *Kunzhi* or Basic Nature.

This concludes the Eighth Little Nail which provides examples that illustrate the real meaning of our condition in Samsara.

## **9. The Ninth Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness**

**Principal Topic:** Self-Awareness arising in the heart.

In this section, “the Little Nail of the Interior Arising of Self-Awareness (*rang-rig khong shar gyi gzer-bu*), it is asserted that our self-awareness, although defused throughout the body, is principally located in the



hollow space inside the physical heart (tsita) where it arises. Here again there are found the three divisions.

### I. The Homage

Firstly, the text opens with the homage: "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the self-awareness that is neither conjoined nor separated," (kuntu tu bzang-po rang-rig 'du 'bral med la phyag 'tshal-lo). That is to say, the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind, does not join and come together with anything else ('du-ba), nor does it separate again ('bral-ba), as is the case with consciousness joining with the material body during the birth process and then again separating from the body at the time of death. Rigpa does not undergo birth and death and rebirth. Intrinsic awareness emerges from within itself. Because this awareness did not come from anywhere else, there is no place for it to join or come together. Because it does not go anywhere, it does not separate itself from anything else. It is spontaneously present in the three times of past, present and future, unlike consciousness which undergoes birth, death, and rebirth.

### II. Explicating the Text: The Spark of Light in the Heart

The basic nature of awareness pervades all existence equally (khyab rig), including rocks, trees, everything, but they do not reflect the visions when they arise. Only where there is mind present (bsam rig), where there exists the capacity to take reflections. For example, only water will take reflections and not the other elements. The single orb of the moon may be reflected in many different bodies of water, whereas opaque objects like stones do not reflect these images of the moon. Therefore, a mind, being here like a body of water, must be present for the light of Rigpa to be reflected. Mind is always integrated with subtle psychic wind and this pervades the entire body, but it is concentrated and focused in the heart.

The text says that primal awareness is hidden and concealed because it is difficult to understand and because it is obscured by layers of obscurations, which are karmic, emotional, and intellectual. It is hidden in its own base, the place of its abiding, which is the sky of the Kunzhi.

If the Kunzhi is like the sky, then primal awareness is concealed like the stars in heaven being invisible in the sky during the daytime. Nevertheless, they are always present, although we do not see them and are not aware of them. Therefore, it is difficult to know this Nature.

The Tsita of Light ('od kyi tsi-ta), the light at the center of our being, resembles a tent or pavilion of five coloured rainbow lights, and the primal cognitions of awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes) are concealed within it, residing in the center of the in the heart. This fleshly heart, or Tsita of flesh, which is material (dgos-pa sha'i tsi-ta), is said to be maroon-colored like the color of the cornelian stone (mchong). Primal awareness is like a butter lamp that we have put into a clay pot, whereas the sounds, lights, and rays are like the light streaming forth from this lamp. The heart is like a container and Rigpa is the Yeshe Tsön-gang, which is clear luminosity. In terms of Rigpa, externally it arises from the heart, internally it arises from the light, and secretly it arises from the Base. The Clear Light fully emerges when this clay pot of the material body is broken at the time of death. Then there is no difference between inner and outer space. Thereupon the Son Clear Light merges with the Mother Clear Light.

Nevertheless, there exists a doorway that can be opened from time to time during our lifetime in terms of practice by way of the kati channel and the eyeballs. Although, as said, the primal cognitions of awareness pervade the entire physical body, their principal abode is this hollow space found in the heart. Rigpa appears brightly within this empty nature of the Kunzhi. But it is not recognized externally because it is covered by the sheath of the material body, and internally because it is covered by the arising of the six senses, and secretly because it is covered by many karmic traces. Therefore, it is difficult to recognize like the face of the sun covered with clouds.

The King that is Awareness arises from the interior of the heart, [14] where the vast expanse of the emptiness of the Kunzhi is like the clear sunlit sky. In its outer aspect, this light self-arises from the center of the Tsita, or physical heart. In terms of its inner aspect, it self-arises from the hollow space of the five lights, and in terms of its secret aspect, itself rises from the vast expanse of the Kunzhi. This represents the Treasury of Space (nam-mkha'i mdzod), which is in itself immaculate, completely pure, and uncontaminated. Whatever comes forth from it is

inexhaustible. Nevertheless, these projections have become obscured by its containers, the body and the mind. In the outer aspect, primal awareness is obscured by the material body, like a lamp set in a clay pot. Therefore, it goes unrecognized. In the inner aspect, it is obscured by manifestations of the six sense objects and, therefore, it goes unrecognized, like the stars present in the sky during daytime. And in the secret aspect, it is obscured by karmic traces and, therefore, goes unrecognized like the face of the sun obscured by the clouds.

When there is no doorway to reveal its presence; it remains obscured and we do not see the source of these sounds, lights, and rays. But when we open the door to this treasury, the treasures within are revealed. In the outer aspect, when we do not open the door of the Treasury of the Instructions, we do not see inside the Treasure of Reality, which is the source. In the inner aspect, when we do not open the door to the Treasury of the Lamp, which are the eyes, we do not see inside the Treasure of the Sounds, Lights, and Rays. And secretly, when we do not open the door to the Treasury of the Primal Cognitions of Awareness, we do not see inside the Treasure of the Dimension of the Kunzhi. Here there are three treasuries containing three treasures. [15]

This concludes the Ninth Little Nail regarding the inner light in the heart and the arising therein of interior self-awareness.

## 10. The Tenth Little Nail of the Pathways that are without Deviations

**Principal Topic:** The psychic channels where Rigpa may arise.

This section is called “the Little Nail of the Pathways, or psychic channels, that are without deviations” (*gol-med lam gyi gzer-bu*). The previous Little Nail described the interior arising of light in the heart, this Little Nail speaks of it as moving along the pathway of the kati channel, and the next Little Nail speaks of how it arises as light at the eyeballs and then is projected out into the space in front of the eyes. These pathways of the channels are without deviations (*gol-med*), which means they go directly to their goal and do not go astray from the proper path or diffuse or scatter. Here the central pathway (*dbu-ma'i lam*) refers to the kati channel and not the central channel visualized in yoga practice. The primal cognitions of awareness as light move

through these various channels in the body to the several sense organs and engage with the several sense objects. This is the manifestation of clarity (gsal-ba), especially along the kati channel that connects the heart with the eyes. Because it is without any elaborations, fabrications, or adulterations to its nature due to discursive thoughts and conceptions, its movement along the kati channel to the doorway of the eyes occurs before the mind and thought process comes into operation. Therefore, Yeshe precedes perception.

## I. The Homage

The homage is expressed as “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is self-awareness without distortions,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig yo-gal med la phyag ‘tshal-lo). If we understand the real meaning of the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, that is without fabrications and adulterations, then there is no deviation on the pathways or distortions on them for Rigpa..

## II. Explicating the Text: Three Topics

In terms of explicating the text, there are three topics:

1. The process whereby the body and the mind are produced by the five lights and the five elements (‘od lnga dang ‘byung-ba lnga yis lus sems bskyed tshul),
2. The process whereby Rigpa arises on the pathways of the channels (rig-pa rtsa’i lam la shar tshul), and
3. The process whereby Rigpa transfers along the central pathway (dbu-ma’i lam la ‘pho tshul).

### A. Producing the Body and the Mind from the Five Lights and the Five Elements

The Base is the Kunzhi and it represents the basis for the existence of the body, speech, and mind. This section explains how the human body is produced from the Base at the beginning of the rebirth process, how Rigpa abides in the body during our lifetime, and how it leaves the body at death. From the miniature-sized primal awareness, which is self-awareness, there arises and issues forth five clear lights, which are

exceeding subtle and pure. In turn, they congeal into the five pure elements, which are also very subtle.

When their nature is not recognized, the original lights gradually transform into five impure lights and finally, they solidify into the five impure elements, which are gross, much like liquid water changing into solid ice. Thus, from them arise the five gross elements from which the material body develops. [16] Space coming from white light is the first of these elements to arise and that is followed by air from green light, fire from red light, water from blue light, and earth from yellow light. Therefore, space is the primary support for the existence of the body and the mind. This evolutionary process unfolds in terms of fives.

Each of these primary elements has five qualities or aspects in terms of the other elements, such as the space of space, the space of air, the space of fire, and so on. Thus, twenty-five elements in total are generated. They have their specific functions. The five water elements make things cohere together and binds together body and mind. The five fire elements causes the heat that ripens things, including body and mind. The five air elements create separations between purity, and impurity, and separates substance from the empty nature of body and mind. The elements become the support for both the external universe and for the human body internally. [17]

### **B. The Arising of Awareness in the Channels**

Second, in terms of the teaching regarding the process where Rigpa arises along the pathways of the channels (*rig-pa rtsa'i lam la shar tshul bstan-pa*), there are two further topics:

1. The pathways of the faults (and defects) and those of the virtuous qualities (*skyon dang yon-tan gyi lam*) and
2. The pathways where the faults and the virtues are without duality (*skyon yon gnyis-med kyi lam*).

#### **B1. The Pathways of Faults and Virtues**

Secondly, as the text states, the central pathway (*dbu-ma'i lam*), that is to say, the *kati* channel, is the proper pathway for the Rigpa. There are two basic directions in this pathway, one leading upward and the other

descending downward, leading respectively to the realization of Nirvana and the falling into Samsara.

In the center of the heart there are five different vital winds, or psychic energies. [18] Among them, Udana (gyen-rgyu) is the upward-moving vital wind and when this wind transfers Rigpa upward through the central pathway, this represents the pathway to Nirvana. When Rigpa moves downward in the same channel with the vital wind Apana (thur-sel), this represents the pathway to rebirth in Samsara.

In terms of the male human body, when Rigpa arises from the right in the white channel, this represents the pathway of faults and defects (g.yas dkar gyi rtsa). Moreover, it has many branches where the faulty winds can move. But when Rigpa arises along the red channel on the left, this represents the pathway of virtuous qualities (g.yon yon-tan lam) and we are attired in these positive energies. In turn, these channels are connected with three doors of body, speech, and mind. When consciousness exits the material body, they also represent pathways to rebirth in the three worlds or realms: the Body Door to rebirth in the desire world, the Speech Door to rebirth in the form world, and the Mind Door to rebirth in the formless world respectively. [19]

When consciousness (rnam-shes) transfers at the time of death, the doorway by which it exits the body may indicate the specific process of a new birth, whether apparitional birth, heat-moisture birth, egg birth, or womb birth. These are the four types of birth process (skye bzhi'i lam). In the commentary, the five doors first refer to the pathways to the five sense faculties. But the five doors also refer to the six realms or the six destinies of rebirth in Samsara, that is to say, among the Devas, the Asures, human beings, animals, the Pretas, and the denizens in hell. These are five when we take Deva rebirth and Asura rebirth as a single possibility.. Among these realms of rebirth, it depends on the predominant poison, or negative emotion (klesha) in the mind-stream of the individual at the time of death. Also the human body has nine orifices through which consciousness may exit: the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, urethra, and anus, and these are associated with the nine levels of the cosmos (sa dgu'i lam). When we do Phowa in the Tantra style, we seal these orifices with seed mantras, so that consciousness will only exit the body by way of the aperture at the crown of the head

At the time of death, Rigpa may transfer along any of these doors listed above. But the central channel is the proper pathway for the non-duality of Samsara and Nirvana. Indeed, King Rigpa (rig-pa'i rgyal-po) could arise on any of these pathways. In terms of the outer aspect, it arises on the pathway of the kati central, in terms of the inner aspect, it arises in the hollow tube of five lights, and in terms of the secret aspect, it arises in the Dimension of the Kunzhi.

The central pathway goes from the heart to the spine and then it goes to the joint where the spine is attached to the skull, then inside the skull over the top of the brain to the crown, where it then splits in two and goes to the two eyeballs. This channel, known as the kati, is very fine, hollow, and translucent. Here it is also called "the smooth white channel" ('jam rtsa dkar-po). All Thödgal visions arise through this channel. The Natural State pervades the hollow space in the heart, where the visions initially arise, and the space in this channel as well, but the Thödgal visions only appear in front before the eyes, like the reflections only appear on the surface of the mirror.

## **B2. The Non-duality of Virtue and Vice**

This central pathway is also the pathway for the non-duality of Samsara and Nirvana. Nevertheless, in this channel, there exist no traces of Samsara and Nirvana, no faults or virtues, only pure intrinsic awareness. Rigpa arises in total primordial purity without obscurations and without distortions. It originally arose in the empty dimension of the Kunzhi, then it is projected along this hollow tube of light. In terms of the outer aspect, it arose along the central pathway, in terms of the inner aspect, it arose from the hollow tube of light, and in terms of the secret aspect, it arose in the Dimension of the Kunzhi without distortions. When awareness transfers up this central pathway, then there is no need to be reborn in Samsara, because there is no doorway for Samsara in this central channel.

## **C. The Method of Transferring**

Here there are two subtopics:

1. The actual method of transferring ('pho tshul dngos) and
2. The virtuous qualities of transferring ('pho-ba'i yon-tan).

### C. The Actual Method

How does awareness transfer? Rigpa is like a lame little man who mounts on to the back of the blind horse of the functional mind, which is said to be principally memory. [20] Then propelled by wings of the vital winds (rlung gi gsog-pa), it moves up along the pathway of the kati channel on the road to enlightenment (byang-chub lam), where it enters the secret door of bliss at the crown of the head. [21] Breath is used as a whip or riding crop to drive this horse upward to the transfer point at the eyes, which is the gateway into external space.

#### C2. The Virtuous Qualities of This Transfer

When the King that is Awareness does this, it finds itself liberated into empty space, free of the constraints of the material body, and thus it arises in its nakedness. This leaves no opportunity for the kleshas, or negative emotions, to drag it downward. Rigpa is naked because it is without discursive thoughts and negative emotions. It escapes from the abundant proliferations of discursive thoughts and the thought process. [22] Thus, we come to self-purification and see the face of our own original primal awareness. Rigpa recognizes its own face by itself in the mirror of space. [23] Thus, the darkness of delusion is dispelled. The five poisons, or kleshas, are interrupted, thereby drying up the great ocean of Samsara, so that the Trikaya self-arises. If we practice Dzogchen, then there is no need to do Phowa in the Tantric fashion, because we are already integrated with the Natural State. When we transfer, we leave behind the negative emotions and become naked. Thereupon the door to rebirth in Samsara is closed.

Here concludes the Tenth Little Nail showing how awareness arises along the pathways of the psychic channels without deviations.

### 11. The Little Nail of the Lamp that Removes the Darkness

**Principal Topic:** The lamp of the eyes.

This is the Little Nail of the Lamp that Removes the Darkness (mun sel sgron-ma'i gzer-bu). Here the reference is to the five doorways of the senses and, in particular, to the doorway of the eyes. The sense of sight is what is most important in Dzogchen practice, although Rigpa, or



awareness, can arise along the channel pathways of any of the senses. This sense faculty of sight is called a “lamp” (sgron-ma) because a lamp is a source that generates and diffuses light. Our sense of sight removes the darkness obscuring the world outside.

### I. The Homage

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who removes the darkness of ignorance,” (kun tu bzang-po ma rig sel la phyag ‘tshal-lo), that is to say, the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, is clear and inherently luminous. In it there are no obscurations or coverings due to discursive thoughts or negative emotions. Like the heart of the sun, there is no darkness present. The term “ignorance” (ma rig-pa) actually means a lack of awareness.

### II. Explicating the Text: Three Topics

In this section, there are three topics::

1. The pathways of seeing for Rigpa in terms of the five doors of the senses (rig-pa’i mthong lam),
2. The pathway of seeing for Rigpa in terms of the eye (rang rig-pa’i mthong lam), a detailed explanation of the eye as the pathway for seeing by Rigpa, and
3. The arising in complete perfection of the primal cognitions of Rigpa at the doors of the eyes (mig gi sgo-ma la rig-pa’i ye-shes yongs su shar-ba).

#### A. Awareness at the Five Doors of the Senses

As said, Rigpa, or awareness, may arise at any of the five doors of the sense organs. The five sense organs arise from the energies of the five lights and the five elements as explained previously. The five doors and the five senses represent the pathways for Rigpa. Rigpa is a single unity and totality, but it arises through the five doors of the senses by means of the energies of the five lights. Initially sensations appear clearly to primal awareness without accompanying thoughts, like reflections appearing in a clean mirror. Only subsequently do they appear to mental consciousness and thereupon the operations of the mind begin to

operate, such as perception, naming, and so on. Primal awareness (yeshe) arises at the sense organs first and this will activate the sense consciousness, but this occurs prior to the arising of discursive thoughts and the operations of mind. As yet, even though it is only for a fraction of a second, there are no discursive thoughts and there is no apprehending or grasping or identifying by way of perception. It is like a mirror cleansed of dust that simply reflects the object placed before it. Subsequently, the thought process (blo) attaches discursive thoughts (rnam-rtog) to this initial pure sensation.

### **B. Arising at the Doorway of the Eyes**

In particular, there is the arising of primal awareness at the doorway of the eyes and this is compared to a lamp which diffuses light, illuminating the darkness. This is the pathway for seeing by Rigpa (rig-pa'i mthong lam). Rigpa sees everything in its nakedness (rig-pa gcer mthong), that is to say, free of obscurations and coverings due to discursive thoughts and conceptions. This represents the self-arising of Yeshe, or the primal cognitions. They arise in the empty space of the Kunzhi, which is the Base, and then they go to the kati channel and to the eyes. Rigpa is projected out this hollow tube of the kati channel like a lotus blossom rises above the muck of the pool. The outer aspect is its arising at the door of the eyes, the inner aspect is seeing the five lights, and the secret aspect is seeing the Kunzhi in front. But Rigpa is free of all obscurations and darkness like the sun is free of darkness. King Rigpa arises clear and lucid, like the sun free of clouds, so it arises at the eyes free of obscurations and opaqueness. The opaqueness of external objects is not due to Rigpa, but to the thought process.

### **The Four Lamps**

Then there is a detailed explanation in terms of the eyes. At this doorway, there will appear the Four Lamps (sgron-ma bzhi), which clear away the four-fold darkness:

1. The Lamp of the Water (globe-like eye) that lassos at a distance (rgyang zhags chu'i sgron-ma) clears away the darkness of the external world,

2. The Lamp of the Clear Visions of Higher Insight (lhag-mthong snang-ba'i sgron-ma) clears away the darkness of nihilism,
3. The Lamp of the Primal Cognitions of Awareness (rang rig ye-she kyi sgron-ma) clears away the darkness of the thought process, and
4. The Lamp of the Dimension of the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi dbyings kyi sgron-ma) clears away the grasping at partialities.

The eyeball is called the lamp of the water-globe like eye that lassos visions at a distance because the eyeball possesses the nature of water (chu). It is like a lasso (rgyang zhags) because it catches sight objects at a distance like a lasso ropes in wild animals. This lamp sees external objects and removes darkness of the outside world, where otherwise, we would be blind and sightless. This lamp refers to the physical eyeball in particular. The lamp of the visions of higher insight refers to the manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays. This lamp sees the sounds, lights, and rays and it clears away and removes the darkness of nihilism, the materialistic view that consciousness is destroyed at death and then there is nothing remaining. It clarifies the darkness of mind that obscures emptiness. The lamp of the primal cognitions of self-awareness clears away and removes the darkness ignorance and the thought process. [24] It is also called the lamp of co-emergent awareness (lhan-skyes rig-pa'i sgon-ma). When we realize Rigpa, ignorance itself disappears. The lamp of the Dimension of Kunzhi (kun-gzhi dbyings kyi sgron-ma) clears away and removes darkness of the thought process that grasps at partialities, including the philosophical tenets of eternalism and nihilism. It eliminates the intellectual boundaries produced through philosophical systems; all views are then self-liberated. These Four Lamps arise simultaneously in a self-arising manner at the sense door of the eyes.

The Basic Nature appears by way of visions of light presented to the two doorways of the lamp of clarity (the two eyes). In terms of their outer aspect, they are explained as appearing externally at the doorway of the eyes. In terms of their inner aspect, visions arise as the five lights. In terms of their secret aspect, they appear as inseparable from the Natural State. How does this King of Awareness arise? It is like a lotus blossom rising up into the morning sunlight from the muck of the swamp. It is immaculate and in no way tainted by that dirt and muck

below. Rigpa, or awareness, emerges in this way from the impure physical body, but appears in a completely pure condition at the doorway of the eyes. This awareness is always clean, clear, and pure, without obscurations. It is like the sun suddenly free of clouds. There is also a different classification of the Four Lamps, namely, the hollow space in the heart, the kati channel, the eyes, and the visions appearing outside in front.

### **C. The Arising of Rigpa in Complete Perfection at the Doorway of the Eyes**

The King that is Awareness arises in the empty space of the Kunzhi, the visions arise in the hollow tube of light of the kati channel, and a total clarity arises at the doorway of the lamp of the eyes. The Thödgal visions are then projected by the light issuing from this lamp into the empty space in front of the eyes. Therefore, the outer aspect is seeing at the doorway of the lamp of the eyes, the inner aspect is seeing the five lights, and the secret aspect is arising to see the Kunzhi. The Thödgal visions arise in the heart, pass through the kati channel, and manifest by way of the doorway of the eyes. Therefore, the visions appear in front, even in the dark retreat, but appear there clearly and nakedly.

### **The Six Eyes of Higher Insight**

When the practitioner matures in the practice of vision, the six eyes of higher insight (lhag-mthong spyang drug) arise at the forehead in the manner of a third eye. They are

1. the eye of primal awareness (ye-shes kyi spyang),
2. the eye of Rigpa (rig-pa'i spyang),
3. the eye of compassion (thugs-rje'i spyang),
4. the eye of discriminating wisdom (shes-rab kyi spyang),
5. the eye of emanation (sprul-pa'i spyang), and
6. the eye of the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid kyi spyang).

This concludes the Eleventh Little Nail regarding the Lamp of the Eyes that removes the darkness of the world and the darkness of ignorance by way of the Four Lamps.

## 12. The Twelfth Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points

**Principal Topic:** Direct introduction to the Trikaya.

This section is entitled, “The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Three Essential Points,” (gnad gsum ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu). These three essential points (gnad gsum) are the Trikaya, or Three Bodies of the Buddha. Here we consider how they are already perfected and complete within ourselves and how they manifest as Thödgal visions.

### I. The Homage

As for the homage, it says “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is neither united nor separated from the Trikaya,” (kun tu bzang-po sku gsum ‘du ‘bral med la phyag ‘tshal-lo). This means that the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of the Mind, arises to itself as the Trikaya, that is to say, the Trikaya arises as Thödgal visions. The Trikaya is not separate from the Nature of Mind, because the Trikaya is already wholly present in this Basic Nature.

### II. Explicating the Text: Five Topics

In terms of the explication of the text, there are five topics:

1. The direct introduction to the Trikaya which abides in itself (sku-gsum rang la gnas-par ngo-sprad-pa),
2. the direct introduction to the Base, the Path, and the Fruit, which abide in themselves (gzhi lam ‘bras gsum rang la gnas-par ngo-sprad-pa),
3. the direct introduction to the self-arising of the Trikaya with respect to the three Bases (gzhi gsum la sku-gsum rang shar du ngo-sprad-pa),
4. the direct introduction to Buddhahood in terms of the three Bases (gzhi gsum sangs-rgyas ngo-sprad-pa), and
5. the teaching on the great importance of this instruction (gdams-ngag gi che-ba bstan-pa).

### **A. The Direct Introduction to the Trikaya**

The Dharmakaya is primordially pure, it is self-arising and abides in itself. The primal cognitions of self-awareness is the primordially pure Dharmakaya. Therefore, it is unlimited, unobscured, and not characterized by extremes. But its enjoyment is the Sambhogakaya and its activities are the Nirmanakaya. All these three are self-arising and abide in themselves. Rigpa arises from the Base in space of the heart, goes from there into the kati channel and then to the eyes where it is projected into the empty space in front. Thus, the Trikaya is revealed in the empty space in front of the eyes. The physical heart is Dharmakaya aspect, and it is the Base, the Sambhogakaya aspect is the kati channel and that is the Path, and the self-arising of the Thödgal visions at doorway of the eyes represents the Nirmanakaya aspect. The Primordial Buddhahood (ye sangs-rgyas) is the vast expanse inside the Tsita, the spontaneous perfection inside the hollow tube of the kati represents Buddhahood in the process of perfecting and becoming complete (rdzogs sangs-rgyas), whereas its appearing visibly without obscurations at doorway of the eyes represents Fully Manifest Buddhahood (mngon sangs-rgyas). Therefore, in our practice of vision, we will come to recognize the face of Kuntu Zangpo and meet our Mother, which is the Natural State. Rigpa overflows nakedly. Recognizing the sounds, lights, and rays as the secondary causes of delusion, we come to eliminate doubts and discover the treasure that lies within.

### **B. The Direct Introduction to the Base, the Path, and the Fruit**

The light found in the heart is the Base. When it arises along the pathway of the kati channel, it is the Path. When it manifests at the doorway of the eyes, it is the Fruit or result. The Dharmakaya abides in itself as self-arising and it is the Nature of Mind. The Trikayas of the Base, Path, and Fruit are all called kaya, literally "body," but they are not something material. They are not part of the five elements, the five kleshas, and the five aggregates (skandhas). The Base is always with us, although we do not realize it. It is naturally present and all-pervading. The Base, the Path, and the Fruit abide in themselves. Awareness (Rigpa) and the Basic Nature (Kunzhi) are always inseparable. Together

they represent the Thigley Nyagchik, the Unique Sphere. This is always with us, even in sleep, unconsciousness, and death..

As the final result, the Trikaya of the Fruit appears at the doorway of the eyes without obscurations. We see them as visions in front, but there is no external or internal to this awareness (Rigpa). It may come and go through the kati channel, which represents the Sambhogakaya aspect, but it is self-arising at doorway of the eyes which represents the Nirmanakaya aspect. There are thus three Bases, three Paths, and three Fruits in terms of the Trikayas. Primordial Buddhahood (ye sangs-rgyas) is the Base; it is the pure, natural Buddha that is inherent and abides in the center of heart. The inner light moves through the hollow tube of the kati channel and this represents Buddhahood coming into completeness (rdzogs sangs-rgyas). And when the visions of the Trikaya manifesting before the eyes, this is Fully Manifest Buddhahood (mngon sangs-rgyas).

Thus, there occurs the meeting of the Son, which is Rigpa, with the Mother, the Empty Nature or Kunzhi. Sometimes sounds, lights, and rays are called the Son, and sometimes the energy of awareness (rigpa'i rtsal) called the Son. It depends on the context. We do not develop basic awareness itself, but its manifest aspect returns to the Mother, that is, awareness returns to the Basic Nature. In Tantra, we transform negative emotions into the deity, but in Dzogchen the only method is remain in the Natural State, which represents primordial purity.

In summery, there are three Bases: the heart (the Dharmakaya), the kati channel (the Sambhogakaya), and the eyes (the Nirmanakaya). But it is the Nirmanakaya that we see before us in vision. These bases are already perfected from the very beginning.

### **C. The Direct Introduction to its Self-Arising among the Three Bases**

Dharmakaya is the vast expanse inside the physical heart or Tsita, thus we speak of the interior arising and abiding of Rigpa. The Sambhogakaya aspect is the self-arising of Rigpa on the pathway of the kati channel. This central pathway (dbu-ma'i lam) should not be confused with the central channel that we speak of in yoga practice. It is something special. The Nirmanakaya aspect is the self-arising of the visions of the Trikaya at the doorway of the Lamp, that is, the eyes.

### **D. The Direct Introduction to Buddhahood in terms of Three Bases**

Primordial Buddhahood abides in the vast expanse of the Tsita, it is spontaneously perfected in the hollow tube of the kati channel, and it visibly manifests as Buddhahood without obscurations at the doorway of the eyes. Therefore, there are three Bases: the Tsita for Primordial Buddhahood (ye sangs-rgyas), the hollow tube (sbubs) of the kati channel for Buddhahood coming into perfection and completeness (rdzogs sangs-rgyas), and the doorway of the eyes (mig sgo) for Fully Manifest Buddhahood (mngon sangs-rgyas).

### **E. The Great Importance of this Instruction**

When we recognize the face of the Kunzhi, we meet our Mother. The Kunzhi and the Natural State are identical. There is no Natural State discover the treasure of these Three Manifestations within it, and in terms of the beyond the Kunzhi. These instructions clear away the darkness of obscurations and coverings. When Rigpa is naked, the Trikaya arises naturally and spontaneously. So, the direct introduction to Rigpa seeing nakedly (rig-pa gcer mthong) at doorway of doorway is very important.

We definitively decide upon the sounds, lights, and rays being the source and the secondary causes of delusion. Then we will have no more doubts regarding them and will not fall under the sway of delusions again. In terms of the outer aspect, these instructions open the door to the Treasury of Rigpa and we discover the Treasure of Reality lying within it. In terms of the inner aspect, they open the Treasury of the lamp of the eyes and we secret aspect, they open the Treasury of Rigpa and we discover the Treasure of the Kunzhi within it.

This concludes the Twelfth Little Nail which provides a direct introduction to the three essential points which are the Trikaya.



### 13. The Thirteenth Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Mandalas of the Tikaya

**Principal Topic:** Direct introduction to the Mandalas of the Trikaya.

This section is “The Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to the Mandalas of the Trikaya,” (dkyil-'khor ngo-sprad kyi gzer-bu). The Thödgal visions begin as white and black spots in empty space, gradually becoming awareness chains, and forming patterns, then partial images, and finally complete images of full mandala palaces with Buddhas and deities inside them. A mandala (dkyil-'khor) is a symmetrical sacred space in three dimensions and not a flat surface like that of a thangka. It represents an architectural structure, a celestial palace or temple (gzhal-yas khang) in which abide the chief deity and the retinue (gtso 'khor).

#### I. The Homage

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, the root deity who is self-awareness,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-rig rtsa-ba'i lha la phyag 'tshal-lo). The basis for the arising of the Bodhichitta is by way of the outer, inner, secret mandalas of the Trikaya and their hosts of deities who represent the four magical activities that are peaceful, enriching, enchanting, and fierce. Homage is paid to the root deity (rtsa-ba'i lha) who is our own primordial awareness (ye-rig). It is called the root deity because it is the source for all the manifestations of the Yidam meditation deities.

#### II: The Explicating of the Text

It is not necessary to create mandalas and deities by way of visualization and imagination, which any way represent activities of the discursive mind. Here they are revealed spontaneously in their own forms. These are empty forms, but they are clear and luminous, complete and perfect within Dimension of Dharmakaya, which is Kuntu Zangpo. This Yeshe Tsön-gang is the self-originated Dharmakaya aspect, but the sounds, lights, and rays represent the Sambhogakaya aspect. Magical apparitions (cho-'phrul) appearing in space are the Nirmanakaya aspect.

The five lights represent the basis for the divine realms and mandalas. The thigleys spontaneously form celestial palaces of Five Buddha Families. The energy of compassion arises as the Rupakaya, meaning both the Sambhogakaya and the Nirmanakaya. From the lights together with Rigpa come the emanations of Body. From the sounds together with Rigpa come the emanations of Speech. And from the rays together with Rigpa come the emanations of Mind. They proliferate five by five, becoming hierarchies of deities filling the heavens. This represents the attaining of Mahamudra, the culmination of transformation practice in Tantra, but here they arise effortlessly, perfect and complete in themselves. They are not created by our mind or visualization. All the celestial realms of the Buddhas are displayed in this dimension which is the Dharmadhatu. Nevertheless, they represent illusions and empty appearances, lacking any inherent existence.

The text elucidates upon the Mandalas and the Yidams which spontaneously arise in the Thödgal visions. They are explained from the standpoint of the Base. There is no need to visualize deities or recite mantras because the Mandalas and the Mudras, or divine forms of the Yidams, are already fully present in the Natural State from the very beginning. They are primordially perfected in the Base. We do not have to invoke them from somewhere else, such as some higher heaven world or plane of existence beyond our earth.

The invisible and unmanifest Yeshe Tsön-gang is the Dharmakaya, which abides in the Mandala of the Basic Nature, whereas the sounds, lights, and rays represent the Sambhogakaya, and the emanations having visible forms in the space in front are the Nirmanakayas. The three manifestations are linked together with Rigpa. All of them are integrated into the totality of the Thigley Nyagchik, the unique sphere. The visions appear spontaneously and exist in total completeness within Natural State. They appear like a magician's illusion produced on the stage. Yet we should not get excited or become attached to them because they are only illusions, lacking any inherent existence. They are similar to the eight examples of illusion in the Sutras, such as being like dreams, mirages, conjurer's tricks, and so on.

This concludes the Thirteenth Little Nail which provides a direct introduction to the visible manifestations of the Trikaya.

## 14. The Fourteenth Little Nail of the Direct Introduction to Its Uniqueness

**Principal Topic:** The Unique Sphere.

Here is The Little Nail which Direct Introduction to its Uniqueness (nyag-gcig ngo-sprod kyi gzer-bu). Here we have the explanation of what is the Thigley Nyachik, or Unique Sphere (thig-le nyag-gcig).

### I. The Homage

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the divine form that is unique and self-originated,” (kun tu bzang-po rang-'byung nyag-gcig sku la phyag 'tshal-lo), that is to say, the Bodhichitta, or Nature of Mind, is no different than the Thigley Nyagchik, the Unique Sphere. It is not only singular and unique, but self-originated and self-arising (rang-'byung rang-shar), which means that there is no cause or condition antecedent to it.

### II. Explicating the Text: Two Topics

Here there are two topics:

1. The Nature of Mind is the real meaning of the Unique Sphere (sems-nyid thig-le nyag-gcig gi don) and
2. All the visions that are without exterior or interior are demonstrated to be the energies and the creative manifestations of that (Nature of Mind) (phyi nang med-par snang-ba thams-cad de'i rtsal dang rol-pa yin-pa).

#### A. The Nature of Mind as the single Unique Sphere

Here the Nature of Mind (sems-nyid) is spoken of as the essence of mind (sems kyi ngo-bo). This essence is empty space (nam-mkha'), but it has a potentiality and an energetic quality; it has the inherent radiance of mind. This Reality is the ultimate culmination of mind. [25] Externally it is “space” and internally it is the Nature of Mind. Their non-duality is Reality itself (bon-nyid). This is a single essence, but it manifests in three ways as space, awareness, and energy. Intrinsic awareness and emptiness are the two sides or aspects of the single

Nature of Mind. When the inherent energy (rang rtsal) of this Basic Nature, which is potential, becomes kinetic and comes into visible manifestation, it is a display (rol-pa) of the Nature of Mind. Everything that exists is complete and perfect in this Nature of Mind. Therefore, it represents total perfection (rdzogs-chen). This is the Thigley Nyagchik, that is the single basis for both Samsara and Nirvana.

Self-awareness is the essence of the Bodhichitta, the Nature of Mind, and it arises as inherent luminosity and pervades all phenomenal existence. Therefore, it is called "space" (nam-mkha'). The Nature of Mind arises without discursive thoughts, therefore, called Reality (bon-nyid). It pervades everywhere without exterior or interior, but when it pervades the external elements, we call it "space." But when it pervades internal sense faculties, we call it "the Nature of Mind" (sems-nyid). When it pervades and encompasses everything without regard to external or internal, we call it "Reality" (bon nyid). These three are inseparable as the Thigley Nyagchik. All visions represent energy (rtsal) and the creative manifestations (rol-pa) of that energy. These self-arising creative manifestations of the Nature of Mind are perfected within the Thigley Nyagchik. Therefore, everything is perfect just as it is.

## B. Energy and Creative Manifestation

We distinguish energy (rtsal), which is potential and invisible, from the creative manifestation of that energy (rol-pa), which is kinetic and visible. All visions represent energy and its creative, visible manifestations. The full measure of this are the creative visible manifestations of the Body, Speech, Mind, Quality, and Activity of enlightened awareness. These creative manifestations of the potential energy of the Nature of Mind are self-arising. Therefore, they are not due extrinsic causes or anything else. They are all completely perfected within this single sphere of the Nature of Mind. The vast expanse of space (klong) contains the manifestations of all phenomena, whereas thoughts arise in the dimension of the mind (dbyings). Yet these three, external space (nam-mkha'), the vast expanse of space (klong), and the inner dimension of the mind (dbyings) belong to the single essence of the Thigley Nyagchik.

This concludes the Fourteenth Little Nail of the direct introduction to the Unique Sphere.

## 15. The Little Nail of the Definitive Decision regarding the Mother and Son

**Principal Topic:** The meeting of Mother and Son.

Here is found “The Little Nail of coming to a Clear and Definitive Decision regarding the Mother and Son,” (ma bu dmar thag bcad-pa’i gzer-bu). This section elucidates the unification of the Mother and the Son, thereby eliminating doubts. Depending on the context, the Mother (ma) and the Son or child (bu) may have different meanings. For example, they might mean the Mother is the Kunzhi and the Son is Rigpa. Or it might refer to the Clear Light. The Mother Clear Light is our primordial awareness which has been present since time without beginning, although unrecognized, much like a child having lost his mother. The Son Clear Light is the clear light experiences of awareness in meditation practice while we are yet alive. Then, at the time of dying, we speak of these two lights, Mother and Son, meeting and merging. In the text here, it speaks of the meeting of the Mother and the Son (ma bu dang ‘phrad-pa), which thereby produces energy (rtsal). These three, Kunzhi, Rigpa, and Tsäl, space, awareness, and energy, therefore, form a triad.

### I. The Homage

As it says in the root text, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is without any obscurations or karmic traces,” (kun tu bzang-po bag-chags sgrib-pa med la phyag ‘tshal-lo), that is to say, the Bodhichitta, or the Nature of the Mind, is completely pure without any karmic traces (bag-chags) and without any obscurations (sgrib-pa), whether emotional or intellectual. Therefore, the purpose of our practice is to overcome our clinging to and grasping at such attachments.

## II: Explicating the Text

### A. The Teaching in Brief

First, there is the teaching in brief: Karmic traces represent the principal causes of the kleshas, or negative emotions. Therefore, we should clearly and definitively decide upon these karmic seeds and practice in order to cut the cords of our grasping and eliminate these knots of attachments within ourselves. We should not become attached to anything. If we cut them off at the root, they cannot germinate again. The principal means to accomplish this is finding ourselves in the Natural State. For example, we can put out a fire by eliminating its fuel. The cause of the fire of the negative emotions is just these karmic traces.

Our obscurations may be coarse or subtle. Coarse obscurations are easily liberated and eliminated, but subtle obscurations prevent the expansion of our knowledge. Nevertheless, both types of obscurations may be removed by the Natural State because it purifies their root. Coarse traces are not integral to Kunzhi and are easier to remove. However, subtle traces are more closely linked to Kunzhi, just like the scent of garlic remains after it has been removed from room. However, when they become integrated with the Natural State, our karmic traces grow weaker. When there are no more karmic traces, there is no more Samsara. If we do not purify and eliminate these two kinds of seeds among our karmic traces, defilements and negative emotions will grow continuously.

Where do these karmic traces as seeds collect? They are accumulated in the eighth consciousness known as Kunzhi Namshe. As said previously, this consciousness is different than the Kunzhi in Dzogchen. The Kunzhi in Dzogchen terms is not a consciousness, but the base and foundation and matrix for everything, including consciousness itself. Consciousness may come and go, but the Kunzhi does not. It is always with us. When we completely purify our karmic traces at their root, then our Kunzhi Namshe, or unconscious psyche where karmic traces are accumulated, also liberates into the Natural State.

## B. Extensive Explanation: Eight Topics

In terms of the methods of practice, there are eight topics with six points each:

1. The Six Bases (gzhi drug): These Bases refer to the Natural State. The Natural State is clear and empty in itself. It abides empty, all-pervading, clear, without action and without discursive thoughts. It represents self-originated primal awareness and the primal cognitions of self-awareness. Nevertheless, it is also the source of the sounds, lights, and rays, as well as the negative emotions. [26]
2. The Six Energies (rtsal drug): All phenomenal existence is energy in space. Discursive thoughts and memories are also only energy arising in the dimension of the mind. The five poisons equally represent the inherent energy of the Nature of Mind. All energy comes from that Basic Nature, being unceasing and inexhaustible.
3. The Six Delusion Systems ('khrul lugs drug): When we follow our visions, then we do not realize that they lack any inherent existence and that they are never independent of the Natural State. Thereupon we continue to wander lost in the illusions and phantom worlds of Samsara.
4. The Six Deviations (gol-sa drug): We deviate when we do not renounce the above six energies.
5. The Six Methods (thabs drug): We do not follow after energies of these visions, but allow them all to self-liberate of themselves. To follow after them represents a deviation and a going astray from the path. What shall we do with these energies and these visions when they arise in practice? We do not judge them in any way, nor try to stop them, nor even reject them. We simply leave them alone and allow them to exhaust their energy and self-liberate.
6. The Six Paths (lam drug): We relax these six energies into their original condition and they will liberate into the Six Bases. If we leave our visions just as they are, they will liberate of themselves. For example, if we do not agitate the water, it will become calm and clear of itself. In the same way, on a sunny day the clouds may disappear from the sky without leaving a trace behind.
7. The Six Understandings (rtogs-pa drug): The six energies are allowed to self-purify and self-liberate. We allow our visions to

dissolve back into their original Nature, which is emptiness. Thus, the Son, which is clarity, comes to climb back on to the lap of his Mother, emptiness, the state of Shunyata.

8. The Six Fruits or Results ('bras-bu drug): Natural State of Six Bases then arises into manifestation. Our karmic traces become self-purified. When the six energies of our visions disappear, then we know our karmic traces are purified at their roots and return to their original condition of emptiness. Then, at that point, there will be no difference between the state of contemplation (mnyam-bzhag), when we are practicing meditation, and our experiences afterwards (rjes thob). Because we have cut off karmic traces at the root, we will not be reborn again in the places of Samsara.

This concludes the Fifteenth Little Nail where we, as the practitioners, come to a clear and definitive decision regarding the meeting of the Mother and the Son.

## 16. The Little Nail of the State of Sameness which is beyond Conception

**Principal Topic:** The state of sameness or equality.

Next there is "The Little Nail of the State of Sameness which is beyond conception," (la zla mnyam-nyid kyi gzer-bu).

### I. The Homage

The homage states, "Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who goes beyond everything and is himself nowhere established," (kun tu bzang-po mi gnas pha-rol phyin la phyag 'tshal-lo). The Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, nowhere abides in any limits, whether Samsara or Nirvana. It transcends all our conceptions, including happiness and sorrow.

### II. Explicating the Text

The Natural State is beyond distinctions and does not fall into partialities or polarities. Rigpa is without action and expression, that is to say, it is beyond conception. It cannot be grasped by discursive thoughts or expressed in words. The Natural State is fundamental to existence and



it is the ultimate and original source. Moreover, it is unceasing in producing discursive thoughts. The thought process is without foundation, therefore, it is impermanent, yet it is unceasing and not ultimately annihilated.

The sounds, lights, and rays are self-manifestations. So, we should have no attachment or aversion to them. They are neither pure nor impure in themselves. Our polluted world and body and the unpolluted celestial palaces and divine bodies have the same taste for the Nature of Mind. Therefore, they are in a state of equality or sameness (mnyamnyid). In this state of equality, there is no high or low, good or bad; it is beyond conception. Samsara and Nirvana in essence are inseparable, although their phenomena are quite distinct and separate because of the grasping of the mind. Buddhas and sentient beings are not two; but the difference between them is one of understanding or not understanding. There are no paths to be travelled to Buddha enlightenment and no entering into it either, because we are already there. All philosophical tenets and positions only represent grasping at partialities and do not represent the whole picture.

The state of Sameness resolves the apparent contradictions between Samsara and Nirvana and takes us beyond the extremes of these two. Sameness means equal nature. We arrive at equality and equipoise through being in the Natural State and thus we move past the dualities of Samsara and Nirvana. The Basic Nature has no sides or directions (phyogs ris med-pa). It is the same everywhere and equal. It cannot be captured by philosophical tenets. From side of the Nature of Mind, there are no philosophical tenets which actually define reality. They merely represent discursive thoughts. The landscape is not the map. The Natural State equally pervades everything. Worldly views make distinctions, but only from the side of the intellect, not from side of the Natural State. Furthermore, the sounds, lights, and rays are empty and, therefore, not intrinsically connected with the kleshas. We should not grasp at purity and reject impurity. Both are pervaded by the Natural State. Distinctions between Samsara and Nirvana are made by our discursive thoughts. On side of discursive thoughts, there are, of course, big differences. But on the side of the Natural State, there is only sameness.

This concludes the Sixteenth Little Nail regarding the state of sameness or equality, meaning the identity in their essence of Samsara and Nirvana.

## 17. The Little Nail of the Final Extinction

**Principal Topic:** The culmination and extinction of the final visions.

Here is “The Little Nail of the Final Extinction,” (zad-pa mthar-thug gi gzer-bu). This exhaustion of visions represents the fifth stage in the develop of the Thödgal visions, where all visions culminate in their development, and then become exhausted and dissolve back again into the empty space of the Clear Light, out of which they initially arose.

### I. The Homage

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Body of the Ultimate King,” (kun tu bzang-po mthar-thug rgyal-po’i sku la phyag’tshal-lo). The Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, represents the ultimate culmination and realization of all spiritual paths and vehicles to enlightenment. The homage compares Kuntu Zangpo to a great king (rgyal-po) because there is nothing beyond this state of the Nature of Mind. There is nothing else before it and nothing else after it. Therefore, he is the “king.”

### II. Explicating the Text

According to the text, in terms of Thödgal practice, eventually all the elements become exhausted into the dimension of space and all phenomenal existence becomes exhausted into the Base. Finally, all Tantras and vehicles to enlightenment culminate and become exhausted into the Dimension of Reality, the Dharmadhatu. Mind and its contents become exhausted into Nature of Mind. The sounds, lights, and rays become exhausted into the dimension of Rigpa. Everything in Samsara and Nirvana is exhausted into the Bodhichitta. All the masses of thoughts and memories are exhausted into the dimension beyond thought. All activities are exhausted into non-activity. Once exhausted,

they do not come forth again. All forms dissolve into space, all sounds dissolve into silence, and all thoughts dissolve into non-discursiveness. They arrive again at the source from which they initially arose and this is their ultimate liberation. In the very beginning, the Bodhichitta was the source of everything in Samsara and Nirvana, but now we arrive at the conclusion which represents liberation. [27] We say that they do not come again because we have understood and thereby eliminated the causes for the arising of delusions, that is to say, our not recognising the sounds, lights, and rays to be self-manifestations.

All visions dissolve into the Basic Nature, the Kunzhi. This process of dissolution is completed at Buddhahood. But this does not mean nihilism, where everything is annihilated and nothing remains or comes again. Indeed, all illusions and visions dissolve. Samsara and Nirvana disappear into the Bodhichitta and return to their source, but this is not annihilation because the Natural State is neither existent nor non-existent. The magical apparitions of the Bodhichitta as manifestations of its inherent energy do not cease entirely or become totally extinct. The Natural State still has its inherent energy. Once attaining enlightenment, the Rupakaya will reappear. The meaning here is completion and perfection, not annihilation. Annihilation is the tenet of nihilism and materialism. But in the Natural State, there are no tenets to grasp at reality. Nihilism asserts that we just disappear and cease to exist, never to appear again. When we dissolve into the Natural State, we reach Buddhahood. But in order to benefit others, then we may reappear as the Rupakaya, but Samsara does not come again to us.

Why does everything dissolve? Everything comes from the Natural State and returns to its origin and original nature. Both the ocean and the waves are equally water. But Samsara and wrong views will disappear. They are not intrinsic or essential to the Natural State. The Natural State itself remains stable and abiding and the Dharmakaya remains in its natural place. The Rupakaya arises out of the Dharmakaya. This concludes the Seventeenth Little Nail regarding the culmination and extinction of the final visions.

## 18. The Little Nail of Generating Thoughts when Dying

**Principal Topic:** Thoughts and attitudes at the moment of death.

Here is “The Little Nail of Generating Thoughts when dying,” (*chikha sems bskyed kyi gzer-bu*). The process of dying is also known as the Chikhai Bardo and is elsewhere described in great detail. [28] It is very important to have positive thoughts and positive attitudes at the moment of death because these can greatly affect our experiences after death in the Bardo.

### I. The Homage

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who protects all beings with his compassion,” (*kun tu bzang-po thugs-rjes ‘gro-ba skyob la phyag ‘tshal-lo*), that is to say, he protects all beings from the terrors of Samsara. But Kuntu Zangpo also protects transmigrating beings in the Bardo. Remaining in the Natural State is the best and most effective protection of all.

### II. Explicating the Text: Separating of Mind and Body

There invariably comes a time when the body and the mind will separate. At that moment, we approach the Boundary (*so-mtshams*) just after dying, but before the onset of the Bardo experience and its visions. Nevertheless, at this time, we have the maximum opportunity to attain liberation and enlightenment by recognizing the nature of the Clear Light. Moreover, we may go upward to a better rebirth or downward to a lower rebirth. This is the time when the Namshe, or consciousness, is ejected from the dead material body in accordance with the power of our positive or negative thinking.

For the individual of superior capacity, at the time of dying, Rigpa could be directly introduced as self-arising and without obscurations. Thus, we will come to see our own face in this Clear Light of Rigpa. For the individual of intermediate capacity, we should teach him or her that these sounds, lights, and rays that will arise are in fact self-manifestations and illusions. Therefore, one should have no desire or attachment for them. In this way, we can close the doors to rebirth in Samsara. For the

individual of inferior capacity, they should be strongly advised meditate with intense devotion on the Guru and their Yidam meditation deity and pray fervently to them.

If we do not realize the final goal in this present life, then we die and will experience more lifetimes. Therefore, we need to know something about dying process. While dying, we should engage in positive practices like taking Refuge and generating the Bodhichitta vow, doing Sutra recitations, and so on. It is best if the dying person has a helpful friend nearby who can repeat instructions regarding the Natural State. The Natural State becomes uncovered at death, when it is revealed in its nakedness. The dying person should be reminded of this and of the Dzogchen teachings in general. At this time, we should not be attached to our relatives or our property. Rather, we should put the emphasis on spiritual practices.

This concludes the Eighteenth Little Nail regarding the generating of thoughts at the time of dying.

## 19. The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo

**Principal Topic:** The time of the Bardo after death.

Here there is "The Little Nail of the Time of the Bardo," (bar-do dus kyi gzer-bu). Failing to recognize the Clear Light as our own Rigpa, or light of awareness, in the vast space of the Kunzhi, and thus failing to remain in the Natural State, then inevitably the experiences of the Bardo arise. First, there is the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality with its pure visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities. But failing to recognize these visions as self-manifestations, this Bardo is followed by the Bardo of Existence with its impure karmic visions. Thus, the rebirth process commences. Nevertheless, in these Bardos, there still exists the possibility of realizing liberation by recalling the Guru and the teachings.

### I. The Homage

The homage states, "Homage to Zuntu Zangpo, the perfect Buddha who is self-liberation itself," (kun tu bzang-po rdzogs sangs-rgyas la phyag 'tshal-lo). If we recognize and understand the Bodhichitta, the Nature of Mind, we can attain Buddhahood without the necessity to undergo

the Bardo experience. Kuntu Zangpo represents our self-purification and our self-liberation by our remaining in the Natural State, which dissolves the delusions of the Bardo and their terrors. Thus, in this way he protects us.

## II. Explicating the Text

Here there are two topics:

1. the teachings in brief regarding liberation and delusion ('khrul grol mdor bstan-pa) and
2. the extensive explanation (rgyas-par bshad-pa).

### A. The Teachings on Liberation and Delusion in Brief

At the time of the Boundary, if we understand, then we can liberate and if not, then we fall again into delusion and consequently rebirth in Samsara. At the time of dying, our external elements disintegrate into their original condition and our internal elements dissolve into Kunzhi. This represents a dual process of disintegrating and process of ingathering or re-absorption. This process of gradual dissolution (thim rim) has been described in more detail elsewhere. [29] Our mind dissolves into vast expanse of the Nature of Mind. All discursive thoughts, and even subject and object dissolve into the vast expanse of the Nature of Mind. Consciousness, the Namshe, finds itself expelled from its old material body and is now alone in space. Thereby Rigpa becomes naked. It is self-originated primal awareness without obscurations and coverings due to the thought process, and so, it becomes like the sun free of clouds.

### B. Extensive Explanation: Two Topics

Here again there are two further topics:

1. The process of liberation (grol tshul) and
2. The process of delusion ('khrul tshul).

## **B1. The Process of Liberation**

With death we disconnect body and mind, so at that time the Natural State will appear naked, whether we are a practitioner or not. The liberation process is here described in the text in terms of three levels of capacity in practitioners, namely, that for the individual of superior capacity, that for the individual of intermediate capacity, and that for the individual of inferior capacity. [30]

### **B1a. Liberation for the Superior Individual**

As for the individual of superior capacity, we have practiced Dzogchen to its culmination in the development of vision and therefore possesses full confidence. We are ready to attain the final goal. We are like the lion cub who fears no other animals in the jungle and like the garuda chick who is fully mature when coming forth from the egg, being full grown and able to fly. We have entered into the Natural State at death, being without distractions and are freed thereby from nets of the body, speech, and mind. We have confidence and recognize that we are in the Bardo of Emptiness (stong-nyid bar-do). This Bardo may last for only a moment or up to seven days, but non-practitioners merely experience unconsciousness. This Bardo experience is similar to the process of falling asleep each night.

### **B1b. Liberation for the Intermediate Individual**

As for the individual of intermediate capacity: We experience the total black-out and the vast space of emptiness, but we fail to liberate at the Boundary just at the precise moment when the body and the mind separate. Even though we are abiding in the condition of the Natural State, there will arise then for us the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal kyi bar-do). Nevertheless, this Bardo also provides a maximum opportunity to attain liberation when the sounds, lights, and rays invariably appear. These represent the inherent sounds, inherent lights, and inherent rays of the Natural State.

With regard to this process of liberation (grol tshul) for the individual of intermediate capacity, there exist two further considerations:

1. the process of their arising ('char tshul) and
2. the process of their liberation (grol tshul).

### **B1a.1. The Process of Arising**

As for the first consideration, the process of their arising, in terms of the lights, the manifestations of the five lights arise without any above or below; they are without any cardinal or intermediate directions and they are without any center or boundaries. What we see is light without substance and these inherent lights (rang 'od) arise like rainbows in sky. The sounds are immaterial; they vibrate and resound in a self-originated manner in the vast expanse of the mind. They are the inherent sounds of emptiness (rang sgra), which is the Ultimate Reality (bon-nyid). Being self-originated and uninterrupted, they are like distant thunder resounding in the sky in a continuous manner. The manifestations of the inherent rays (rang zer), which represent the magical apparitions of Rigpa, come to arise spontaneously in an uncertain and unpredictable manner without any deliberate or premeditated activity on the part of the mind. [31] This is like opening up a woollen blanket or a glossy silk cloth in the bright sunlight where the reflections of sunlight may appear everywhere on them. Thus, there will appear visions of mandalas and deities that are like rainbows filling the sky.

### **The Arising of the Body of Light**

With regard to a person to whom these three manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays are familiar and well known: It says in the text that the divine forms and the mandalas arise as perfect and complete in themselves. [32] This means that those who are well acquainted with these instructions concerning vision practice within Dzogchen and find it familiar at that time, will find ourselves in a Body of Light ('od lus) that has arise in our heart. Furthermore, the six clairvoyant knowledges (mngon-shes drug) and the six recollections (rjes dran drug) spontaneously manifest. [33] Thereupon, from the Miniature-sized King that is Rigpa, there will manifest its own inherent form as a fathom-long Body of Light. [34] Our illusory body of the present time, that is to say, our current material body, is not like this. Rather, it begins to dissolve into space. Its gross elements revert to their pure form as coloured lights.

This Body of Light manifests without any front or back and it is without any cardinal or intermediate directions. This fleshly heart, the



Tsita, may be material, but these visible, although immaterial lights arise from the physical heart like the immaculate lotus blossom from the muck of the swamp. From the base for the arising of this miniature-sized Body of Light, which is the light of awareness at the center of our physical heart (tsita), there will arise in the spaces of the ten directions around this body incalculable numbers of thigleys and pavilions of rainbow light. Moreover, within each of these thigleys, there arise five-by-five rainbow pavilions. In the centers of these five-fold pavilions, there will arise five-by-five divine forms (sku). These may appear in the manner of rows and clusters like hierarchies. Moreover, these divine bodies and pavilions do not arise from elsewhere or from extrinsic causes. They only arise from the intrinsic awareness (Rigpa) that is our own being. [35]

#### **B1a.2. The Process of Liberation**

In these visions, we come to see our own face. [36] It is like looking at ourselves in a clear mirror. These divine forms (sku) and thigleys represent the inherent face of our own awareness. Our own being sees itself, our own self-awareness meets itself. [37] There we awaken in a self-awakening; our ignorance and delusion self-dissolve. We recognize ourselves and find ourselves in our own original condition, so that Rigpa is like a king who remains on his throne in his capital city. Therefore, even the sounds, lights, and rays pass away. All impure elements have been self-liberated into the pure Clear Light. Our karma and our kleshas are liberated into the Base, so it is like the sky cleared of the masses of clouds. The Sambhogakaya arises from the inherent energy of the Dharmakaya and the Nirmanakaya arises from the inherent energy of the Sambhogakaya and thus the latter can proceed to spontaneously accomplish the benefit of sentient beings.

#### **B1c. Liberation for the Inferior Individual**

As for the individual of inferior capacity, our Rigpa remains in concealment in the folds of the Kunzhi. Even though we have been taught the instructions for Dzogchen, we do not know how to remain in the Natural State, or only remain for a short time. We may abide up to

seven days in this state of empty space. Then the Clear Light of our innate awareness inevitably manifests and there successively appear clear lights in various colours: white, green, red, blue, and yellow. These sounds, lights, and rays arise before us in the Bardo of the Clear Light, however, the mandalas and deities are not complete. Recognizing them, we can liberate in this Bardo, but failing to recognize them as self-manifestations, we come to find ourselves in the Bardo of Existence with its relentless winds of karma and masses of impure karmic visions. The five pure clear lights have gone into concealment and occultation, and now the sounds, lights, and rays arise as karmic visions. At this time we should meditate on the Guru and our Yidam deity and fervently call upon their aid and we should recall the Dzogchen teachings. Nevertheless, by virtue of this practice, we can still undergo rebirth in good conditions and liberate in our next life.

## **B2. The Process of Delusion**

If we do not recognize the initial pure visions in the Bardo as illusions and self-manifestations, then impure visions arise and the process of delusion ('khrul tshul) begins. We see these impure visions in the Bardo of Existence as inherently existing and some of them will portend our future rebirth. We have not recognized the Clear Lights as the inherent luminosity of our Natural State. We do not realize the Clear Light and the sounds, lights, and rays as self-manifestations, but think they are external to us and due to extrinsic causes (gzhan snang). Not coming to a clear and definitive decision regarding these visions as self-manifestations, we think these visions are real, solid, concrete, and external to us and so, we continue to wander lost in the delusions of Samsara.

This concludes the Nineteenth Little Nail regarding the time of the Bardo experience after death.

## 20. The Little Nail that Removes the Extremes of Wrong Thoughts

**Principal Topic:** Refuting the wrong views of eternalism and nihilism.

Here there is “The Little Nail that removes the Extremes of Wrong Thoughts,” (log rtog mtha’ sel gyi gzer-bu). These especially consist of the wrong views of eternalism and nihilism (rtag chad).

### I. The Homage

The homage in the text states “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who Removes the Darkness of wrong thoughts,” (kun tu bzang-po log rtog mun-pa sel la phyag ‘tshal-lo). When we understand the real meaning of Bodhischitta, the Nature of Mind, we self-awaken from darkness of wrong thoughts regarding the nature of reality

### II. Explicating the Text

What shall we do with individuals who are unfit vessels for the teachings and who lack the good karma and the good fortune to have been previously in contact with them? Should they be taught the precepts of Dzogchen? Misunderstanding them, they will probably grasp at a substantial self as real and adhere to eternalist views. Even though we may teach them, they misconstrue the Dzogchen teachings and fall into these eternalist views of the Tirthikas, or else into the nihilistic views of materialism, which assert total annihilation and extinction. What do they think when they hear about the manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays? Furthermore, what will they think when the sounds, lights, and rays appear to them in the Bardo after death? Those individuals practicing virtuous conduct and doing good deeds that help others, but who hold eternalist views, may be reborn among long lived gods in a higher dimension. Materialists, however, with their nihilistic views, will continue to be reborn among the different destinies found in Samsara. This will be the case even though they think that with the death of the body and the brain, there will be no more consciousness, only nothingness

and absence. If such an individual rejects and ridicules the Dzogchen teachings, then he will not meet them again for a entire kalpa.

The aim of this section is to purify our wrong views regarding Dzogchen. Such views are best purified by the Natural State, but if the individual is unqualified, then wrong views will arise within him. Therefore, we should not give out the teachings heedlessly. If we say to them that the sounds, lights, and rays are merely illusions, they may fall into nihilism. Then when they sense the empty Nature, they may become frightened, even terrified. Some others may think that there are no rules and, therefore, everything is permitted because there are no karmic consequences. But we must clearly distinguish between Dzogchen as the Natural State, where there is no karma, and the practitioner of Dzogchen. For the latter, there are definitely karmic consequences for his or her actions. Thus, there are two sides: The side of Dzogchen and the Natural State and the side of the Dzogchenpa, or practitioner. It is like being on a precipice. If we are not careful and watch what we are doing, we may fall off.

This concluded the Twentieth Little Nail concerned with eliminating wrong thoughts and the extreme views of eternalism and nihilism.

## **21. The Little Nail of the Fruit that has become Visibly Manifest**

**Principal Topic:** The visible manifestations of the Trikaya.

This final section is entitled, “The Little Nail of the Fruit that has become Visibly Manifest,” (mngon ‘gyur ‘bras-bu’i gzer-bu). This represents Fully Manifest Buddhahood (mngon sangs-rgyas).

### **I The Homage**

The homage states, “Homage to Kuntu Zangpo who is the Trikaya become manifest as the Trikaya,” (kun tu bzang-po sku gsum mngon du ‘gyur la phyag ‘tshal-lo), that is to say, the Bodhichitta becomes visibly manifest by way of Thödgal practice as the Fruit in terms of Buddha enlightenment.

## II. Explicating the Text

Here again there are two topics:

1. The teaching in brief and
2. The extensive explanation.

### A. The Teaching in Brief

Practicing according to the instructions, we come to a clear and definitive decision regarding the real meaning of the Natural State; thereby we eliminate our doubts and obtain confidence. We practice continuously our integrating with the Natural State and without doubt the final result will come as the visible manifestation of the Trikaya, that is to say, realizing liberation from Samsara and attaining Buddha enlightenment as the Dharmakaya and the Rupakaya.

### B. The Extensive Explanation

When we definitively decide upon the Natural State, all hopes and fears regarding Samsara and Nirvana evaporate. We clearly and definitively decide upon the state of Rigpa, thereby we self-awaken from the darkness of delusion. We clearly and definitively decide upon the thought process (blo) and see that all discursive thoughts and memories arise as the energy of self-originated primal awareness. [38] Misunderstanding the sounds, lights, and rays represents the very basis for delusion ('khrul-gzhi). unchanging (g-yung) and unceasing (drung). This represents the culmination of all Tantras, of all Agamas Therefore, by clearly and definitively deciding upon this, we cut the current of the kleshas, we move beyond our philosophical tenets, and we realize the Swastika Body (g.yung-drung sku) which is, and of all Upadeshas, indeed, the goal of all spiritual paths. All hopes of attaining Nirvana and all fears of falling again into Samsara are spontaneously dissolved.

This is the Final Goal, the final teaching beyond lower eight vehicles. Our discursive thoughts disappear and instead there is only Yeshe, or primal awareness. There thus remains no basis for delusion or wrong views to remain with us. Sutra and Tantra recognize the kleshas and provide extensive descriptions of Bhumis, all the way up to the Tenth Bhumi. [39] But this is not so in Dzogchen, where everything is

spoken in terms of the Natural State. There is only the single Bhumi of the Natural State. We only need to practice the Natural State. Therefore, it is not necessary to recite mantras or to do any visualizations. The causes of Samsara are exhausted. All elements dissolve into space, everything returns to its source. The sounds, lights, and rays dissolve into the Basic Nature. The three Mandalas of the Body, Speech, and Mind arise spontaneously. The mandalas and Buddha realms appear as the Body aspect. Sounds become Dharma teaching as the Speech aspect. Mind dissolves and becomes omniscient knowledge as the Mind aspect. The Rupakaya then manifests according to needs of sentient beings which are still need of the teachings.

The unity of Basic Nature and Awareness, Kunzhi and Rigpa, is still individual. It is not like a drop of rain falling into the great ocean and dissolving there and ceasing to exist. The Dharmakaya may be universal and the same everywhere in all beings like space itself, but the Rupakaya is always an individual manifestation. Moreover, we do not need to search for Buddha enlightenment elsewhere; it has been already within us from time without beginning, including the Dharmakaya and the Rupakaya. In Primordial Buddhahood, there is no change or development or evolution. Therefore, it is also called the Swastika Body which does not know birth and death. It automatically possesses the six clairvoyant eyes. Then there will be no more darkness or obscurations to plague us. The Treasury of the Mind means that all wishes, all knowledge, all virtuous qualities are completely present. However, if we are not ready for the Dzogchen teachings and practices, then it is better just to do shamatha meditation, recite mantras, and perform rituals. This is the advice of the masters.

MU-TSUG SMAR-RO!

## Notes to Chapter Six: Futher Annotations to the Twenty-One Little Nails

1. On the relationship of the view of Dzogchen to the views of the philosophical systems of Madhyamika and Chittamatra, see Reynolds, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, *ibid.*, pp. 57-87.
2. Again on Kuntu Zangpo as the Primordial Buddha, see Reynolds, *Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung*, *ibid.*, pp. 17-28.
3. On vision practice, see Reynolds, *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-zhung Tradition of Tibet*, *ibid.*, pp. 69-89. On the dark retreat practice in particular, see the translation of the '*Od-gsal bdun skor* in the same volume, pp. 247-313
4. This is also well expressed in the famous Three Statements of Garab Dorje, namely, direct introduction, definitively deciding without doubts, and complete confidence in the view. See Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996.
5. The texts of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd refer to three Bardo experiences after death:
  - 1) The Bardo of Emptiness, or Shunyata (stong-nyid bar-do), where the deceased consciousness experiences the vast, empty dimension of the Kunzhi. The superior yogi practitioner may recognize this experience from one's meditation practice.
  - 2) The Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality (bon-nyid 'od-gsal kyi bar-do), where the deceased consciousness experiences the Clear Light and the archetypal visions of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities.
  - 3) The Bardo of Existence, or the Rebirth Process (srid-pa'i bar-do), where the deceased consciousness experiences karmic visions from previous lives and also those that portend one's next future life.

The Bardo of the Dying Process ('chi-kha'i bar-do) occurs before the moment of death, commencing when the individual acquires a terminal illness. The familiar Tibetan Book of the Dead, based on the *Kar-gling zhi-khro*, included the Bardo of Emptiness within the Chikhai Bardo.

6. *Rig-pa'i ye-shes du rtsal shar-ba*.
7. See the various translations of the *Bar-do thos-grol*, "liberation through hearing while in the Bardo," the so-called Tibetan Book of the Dead, such as W.Y. Evens-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1957; Francesca Freemantle, and Chögyam Trungpa, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead. The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*, Shambhala Publications, Berkeley CA 1975; and Robert Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of the*

*Dead: Liberation through Understanding in the Between*, Bantam Books, New York 1994. On Dzogchen being the philosophical basis for this tradition, see Reynolds, *Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1998. On the development and propagation of this genre of Tibetan literature, see Bryan J. Cuevas, *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003.

8. Someone might object that when the human heart is cut open by a surgeon during an autopsy, no such light in a hollow space inside the heart is found there. But autopsies are performed on dead bodies after the life-force (srog, Skt. prana) has departed. One might still object, asking, what about open-heart surgery performed when the patient is still alive? Still no little light is found in a hollow place there. But this light of basic awareness is not something material, so it is not visible to the hospital staff. Again, someone might object that modern medical science with its brain scanning technology shows that the brain, rather than the heart, is the location of mental activity and that the heart merely pumps blood to the rest of the body. That may be true as far as it goes. But Rigpa, as the light of awareness, is diffused throughout the body of the living organism, although it is said, traditionally, to be concentrated in our heart, the symbolic center of our being. Certainly it is our emotional center and so we speak of the conflict between the heart and the head. Again, one might object, although a brain transplant does not appear to be possible, what about a heart transplant? In that case, would the surgeon take away our Rigpa and discard it in the trash? Of course not. Rigpa remains with the individual, even after death, because the actual support for intrinsic awareness is space itself. Rigpa is inseparable from space and is not some disposable organ in the body. The hollow space in the heart is symbolic; it is the space at the center of our being. Similarly, the kati channel, which connects the Tsita, or physical heart, with the eyeballs, by way of passing over the brain, thus facilitating the manifestation of Thödgal visions, is immaterial, unlike the optic nerve. It also will not be found in the autopsy.

9. Ye-shes tshon-gang gang la sgrib g.yogs med-pas spyan shar-ba.

10. Ye nas rang-byung rang-shar.

11. *Byang-chub kyi sems ngo-shes thag-chod gdeng dang ldan/ the-tshom gyi mun-pa rang sangs-pa'i don.*

12. gNas-lugs rang shugs kyi rtsal las byung.

13. In terms of the system of the Guhyasamaja Tantra, after the four stages of the disintegration and re-absorption of the elements ('jig tshul dang bsdu tshul), there come in sequence the four stages of the white experience, the red further experience, the near attainment, and the dawning of the Clear Light. The near attainment (nyer thob) represents a black-out of total darkness compared to an eclipse of the moon and the sun. These three experiences result from the



dissolutions of the thoughts connected with the negative emotions of anger, desire, and confusion respectively. Only then does the Clear Light arise to consciousness. In the Zhang-zhung texts, this is spoken of as the spontaneous arising of the three manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays (sgra 'od zer gsum) in the Kunzhi, or the state of Shunyata. Failing to recognize these three manifestations as self-manifestations, and not being due to extrinsic causes, is the secondary cause for the arising of delusions. The primary cause for their arising is the inherent energy (rang rtsal) of the Nature of Mind itself. With their appearance, the visions of the Bardo begin to arise and confront consciousness, or the very subtle co-emergent mind, first in the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality and subsequently in the Bardo of Existence.

14. Rig-pa'i rgyal-po khong nas shar-ba.

15. Open the door of the Treasury of the Instructions (gdams-ngag gi mdzod) and inside there is the Treasure of Reality (bon-nyid kyi mdzod-phugs). Open the door to the Treasury of the Lamp (sgron-ma'i mdzod) and inside there is the Treasure of the Sounds, Lights, and Rays (sgra 'od zer gsum gyi mdzod-phugs). Open the door to the Treasury of the Primal Cognitions of Awareness (rig-pa'i ye-shes kyi mdzod) and inside there is the Treasure of the Dimension of the Kunzhi (kun-gzhi'i dbyings). Here there are three treasuries (mdzod) containing three treasures (mdzod-phugs).

16. From the miniature-sized primal awareness, which is self-awareness (rang rig-pa'i ye-shes tshon gang), there arise five clear lights (snang-ba'i 'od gdams rnam lnga), which, in turn, congeal into the five pure elements (dangs-ma'i 'byung-ba lnga), which are exceedingly subtle. Finally, they solidify into the five impure elements (snyig-ma'i 'byung-ba lnga), which are initially subtle, but gradually become gross and coarse, much like liquid water transforming into solid ice. This evolution of pure light descending and become the gross elements that comprise our material universe and our own human body is presented in some detail in the text of the *'Od-gsal sems kyi me-long*, "The Mirror of the Mind of the Clear Light," in the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd collection.

17. For details, the note in the text tells us to see the translation of the *Byang-chub sems kyi gad drug* in the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd cycle. However, this information is actually found in the *sGron-ma drug* and the *'Od-gsal sems kyi me-long* texts in the collection.

18. The five principal vital winds (rlung, Skt. vayu) in both Yoga and Tibetan medicine are:

- 1) Prana (srog-'dzin) for respiration and breathing,
- 2) Udana (gyen-rgyu) for speaking and upward moving air,
- 3) Vyana (khyab-byed) for muscular movements,

- 4) Samana (me-mnyam) for digestion and assimilation, and
- 5) Apama (thur-sel) for excretion and elimination of wastes.

19. These are the groupings of the various planes of existence in traditional cosmology in both Buddhism and Bön:

- 1) The Desire World ('dod-khams, Skt. Kamadhatu), so called because the sentient beings therein are dominated by their sensual desires (kama). This includes beings with gross material bodies like humans and animals, as well as beings with more subtle etheric bodies like Devas, Asuras, Pretas, and hell beings. Thus, the Desire World encompasses the usual six Lokas, or destinies of rebirth.
- 2) The Form World (gzugs-khams, Skt. Rupadhatu), where sentient beings called Brahmas inhabit very subtle bodies of light and live a purely intellectual existence free of any sensual desires. One obtains rebirth on such planes of existence by mastering one of the four Dhyanas, or levels of concentration in meditation (bsam-gtan bzhi).
- 3) The Formless World (gzugs-med khams, Skt. Arupadhatu), where the bodies of sentient beings are so subtle, they are invisible and they only experience cosmic consciousness for long periods of time. One obtains such a level of rebirth by mastering one of the Samapattis, or four levels of equanimity (snyoms-'jug bzhi). Nevertheless, all of these exalted planes of existence remain within Samsara. They are impermanent, no matter how long lasting, because they are brought about by antecedent causes.

20. *Rig-pa sems kyi mi-pho/ dran-pa yid kyi rta la zhon.*

21. *sPyi-gtsug bde-ba'i gsang sgor byon.* The aperture of Brahma at the crown of one's head is the usual place of exit for the Namshe, or consciousness, in Phowa practice ('pho-ba), or the transference of consciousness, when it is deliberately expelled from one's body.

22. *rNam-rtog blo'i g.yang-lugs.*

23. *Rang-'byung ye-shes bdag zhal mthong/ rig-pa rang ngo rang gis shes-pa.*

24. *Ma rig blo'i mun 'thibs.*

25. *Sems kyi rang gdangs/ bon-nyid sems kyi mthar-thug.*

26. As for the the Six Bases, these are listed in the text of the commentary as follows:

- 1) The Bodhichitta, or the Nature of Mind, abides as all-pervading and all-encompassing, empty and clear, and yet it is the base for the arising of the elements and all phenomenal existence.
- 2) The Bodhichitta abides without action or motion, and yet it is the base for the arising of all actions and movements.

- 3) It abides without expression, and yet it is the base for the arising of the various different expressions.
- 4) It abides without thoughts, and yet it is the base for the arising of various different memories and thoughts.
- 5) It abides as self-originated primal awareness, and yet it is the base for the arising of the five poisons and the emotional defilements.
- 6) It abides as the primal cognitions of self-awareness, and yet they are the basis for the arising of the three manifestations of the sounds, lights, and rays.

And as for the Six Energies, they are as follows:

- 1) The elements and all phenomenal existence represent the energy of space.
- 2) The various different kinds of actions and movements represent the energy that is without action.
- 3) The various different kinds of expressions represent the energy that is without expression.
- 4) The various different memories and thoughts represent the energy that is without thought.
- 5) The five poisons and the emotional defilements represent the energy of self-originated primal awareness.
- 6) The sounds, lights, and rays represent the energy of Rigpa. Even though these six energies are explained in this way, they represent the single inherent energy of the Bodhichitta.

27. *'Byung-ba'i phugs dang grol mtha' 'di la thugs.*

28. See the various translations of the Tibetan Book of the Dead cited previously.

29. *'Byung-po zhig tshul dang bsdu tshul.* The process of gradual dissolution (thim-rim) experienced while dying consists of the disintegrating of the elements (zhig tshul, v. 'jig tshul) and their re-absorption (bsdu tshul) progressively into space.

30. *dBang-po rab 'bring tha-ma gsum grol tshul bstan-pa.* The ranking of practitioners according to whether their capacities are superior (dbang-po rab), intermediate (dbang-po 'bring-po), or inferior (dbang-po tha-ma) is quite traditional.

31. *Zer ni cho-'phrul nges med ston.* These magical apparitions (cho-'phrul) are three dimensional and so they appear real, but are only structures of light, like holograms.

32. *sKu dang dkyil-'khor rdzogs-par 'char.*

33. As for the six clairvoyant powers or knowledges (mngon-shes drug), they are as follows:

- 1) Because Rigpa abides without support, one will know one's past and future lives.
- 2) Because the Kunzhi abides without obscurations, one will know the causes and consequences of karma (for other beings).
- 3) Because the divine eye has been completely purified, one will know all the realms that are pure and impure.
- 4) At the time when the manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and rays arise, one will know that there exists the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality.
- 5) Because one has been directly introduced to the Essence itself (ngo-bo nyid), that is to say, the Natural State of the Nature of Mind, one will know that one's own mind is the Trikaya in spontaneous perfection.
- 6) Because one has been directly introduced to higher insight, one knows the self-manifestations of the sounds, the lights, and the rays to be the visions of the Trikaya. (mngon-shes drug ni/ rig-pa rten med du gnas-pas tshe snga phyi shes/ kun-gzhi sgrib med du gnas-pas las rgyu 'bras shes/ lha'i mig rnam-par dag-pas dag ma dag gi zhing-khams shes/ sgra 'od zer gsum gyi snang-ba shar-ba'i tshe/ bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do yin-par shes/ ngo-bo nyid la ngo-sprad-pas/ sku gsum rang sems la lung gyis grub-par shes/ lhag-mthog la ngo-sprad-pas/ sgra 'od zer gsum rang snang sku gsum gyi snang-bar shes-so).

As for the six recollections (rjes dran drug), they are as follows:

- 1) At the beginning, there is the recollection that one has transferred from this life, that is to say, one has died.
- 2) Then there is the recollection that one now exists in the Bardo.
- 3) Then there is the recollection that Rigpa now abides without any physical support.
- 4) Then there is the recollection of the instructions of the Lama.
- 5) Then there is the recollection that the sounds, the lights, and the rays that one experiences are merely self-manifestations.
- 6) Then there is the recollection that one's own mind, that is to say, the Nature of Mind, is the Buddha. (rjes dran drug ni/ thog-mar tshe 'phos-pa rjes su dran/ de nas bar-do yin-par rjes su dran/ de nas rig-pa rten-med du gnas-pa rjes su dran/ de nas bla-ma'i gdams-ngag rjes su dran/ de nas sgra 'od zer gsum rang-snang yin-par rjes su dran/ de nas sems sangs-rgyas yin-par rjes su dran te).

34. *gDams-pa 'di la goms shing 'dris-pa rnams ni/ de tshe rig-pa'i rgyal-po tshon-gang las/ rang lus 'od lus 'doms gang du snang.*

35. *De yang da-lta'i sgyu-lus 'di lta-bu ma yin te/ 'od kyi sku la mdun dang rgyab med/ phyogs dang mtshams med-par snang-ngo/ de 'i phyogs bcu 'i nam-mkha' la/ thig-le gur-khang grangs med-par 'char-ro/ de 'i thig-le re re la yang gur-khang lnga lnga 'char te/ gur-khang lnga 'i dbus na/ sku lnga lnga 'char-ro/ de rnams dang tshom-bu dang gral thabs kyi tshul du snang-ngo/ sku dang gur-khang de rnams kyang/ gzhan nas shar-ba ma yin te/ bdag-nyid kyi rig-pa la shar-ba 'o/ de yang bdag gi tsi-ta 'i dbus kyi 'od kyi sku tshon-gang gi 'char gzhi las/ phyog bcu 'i nam-mkha' la de ltar 'char-ro/ de yang gdos-pa sha 'i tsi-ta ni ma yin/ snang-ba 'od kyi tsi-ta las shar-ba 'o.*

36. *sNang-ba bdag zhal bdag gis mthong.*

37. *Rang-rig bdag dang bdag tu mjal.*

38. *Rang-'byung ye-shes kyi rtsal du 'char-ba.*

39. In the career of the Bodhisattva, there are five paths and ten stages (sa lam). According to the Sutra system, the Bodhisattva becomes irreversible upon attaining the Seventh Bhumi or stage and cannot fall back again into Samsara. Attaining the Tenth Bhumi, the Bodhisattva stands on the threshold of enlightenment, like a crown prince about to ascend the throne.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works in English:

- Beckwith, Christopher, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1987.
- Bellezza, John Vincent, "High-Country Culture: A Civilization Flourished in the Himalayas before Buddhism Reached Tibet," *Discovering Archaeology* v.1 n.3, May-June 1999, pp. 78-83.
- Bellezza, John Vincent, "Pre-history of Tibet," *Himal*, December 1999, Kathmandu, pp.42-43.
- Bellezza, John Vincent, "A Preliminary Archaeological Survey of gNam mtsho and Dang ra g.yu mtsho," in *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 21, Dharamsala 1996, pp. 58-84.
- Bernbaum, Edwin, *The Way to Shambhala: A Search for the Mythical Kingdom beyond the Himalayas*, Anchor Press/ Doubleday, New York 1980.
- Chandra, Lokesh, *History and Doctrine of Bon-po Nispanna-Yoga*, International Academy of Indian Culture, Introduction in English, Sata-Pitaka Series Indo-Asian Literatures, volume 73, New Delhi 1968.
- Chönam, Lama, and Sangye Khando, *Yeshe Lama: Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 2008.
- Corbin, Henry, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth; From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1977.
- Cuevas, Bryan J., *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003 1957.

- Dargyay, Eva, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1977.
- Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt, Brice & World, New York 1957.
- Ermakov, Dmitry and Carol Ermakova, *Masters of the Zhang Zhung Nyengyud: Pith Instructions from the Experiential Transmission of Bönpo Dzogchen*, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi 2010.
- Evens-Wentz, W.Y., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1957.
- Franke, A.H., "gZer-myig: A Book of the Tibetan Bönpos," in *Asia Major* I, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1930, 1939, n.s. I, 1949.
- Freemantle, Francesca, and Chögyam Trungpa, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead. The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*, Shambhala Publications, Berkeley CA 1975.
- Gard, Richard, and Sangye Tandar, *The Twelve Deeds: A Brief Life Story of Tonpa Shenrab, the Founder of the Bon Religion*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, New Delhi 1995.
- Haarh, Erik, "The Zhang-zhung Language: A Grammar and Dictionary of the Unexplored Language of the Tibetan Bönpos," in *Acta Jutlandica*, Vol. 40, no. 1, Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus, Copenhagen 1968, pp. 7-43.
- Hoffmann, Helmut, *The Religions of Tibet*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1961.
- Karmay, Samten G., *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, and Rituals in Tibet*, vol. I, Mandala Book Point, Kathmandu 1998.
- Karmay, Samten G., *Catalogue of Bon-po Publications*, Toyo Bunko, Tokyo 1977.
- Karmay, Samten G., "A Discussion of the Doctrinal Position of the rDzogs-chen from the 10th to the 11th Centuries, in *Journal Asiatique* 1-2, Paris 1975, pp. 147-155.
- Karmay, Samten G., "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon," in *The Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 33, Tokyo 1975, pp. 171-218.

- Karmay, Samten G., *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, Brill, Leiden 1988.
- Karmay, Samten G., *The Little Luminous Boy: The Oral Tradition from the Land of Zhangzhung depicted on two Tibetan Paintings*, Orchid Press, Bangkok 1998.
- Karmay, Samten G., and Yasuhiko Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bon Studies*, Saujanya Publishing, Delhi 2004
- Karmay, Samten G., *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon*, Oxford University Press, London 1972.
- Kuznetsov, B.I., "Who was the Founder of the Bon Religion," in *Tibet Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1, Dharamsala 1975.
- Kvaerne, Per, "Aspects of the Origin of Buddhist Tradition in Tibet," in *Numen* 19, 1972, pp.30-40.
- Kvaerne, Per, "Bönpo Studies: The A-khrid System of Meditation," Part One: "The Transmission of the A-khrid System," in *Kailash* v. I, n. 1, pp. 19-50, Part Two: "The Essential Teachings of the A-khrid System," in *Kailash* v. I, n. 4, pp. 248-332, Kathmandu 1973.
- Kvaerne, Per, "A Chronological Table of the Bon-po: The bsTan rcis of Nyi-ma bstan-'jin," in *Acta Orientalia*, vol. 33, Copenhagen 1971, pp. 205-282.
- Kvaerne, Per, "The Great Perfection in the Tradition of the Bönpos," in Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster (eds), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley CA 1983, pp. 367-392.
- Kvaerne, Per, and Thubten Rikey, *The Stages of A-khrid Meditation: Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1996.
- Lamotte, Etienne, *History of Buddhism from the Origins to the Saka Era*, Universite Catholique de Louvain, Peeters Press, Louvain-Paris 1988.
- Lhagyal, Dondrup, "Bönpo Family Lineages in Central Tibet," in Karmay and Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bon Studies*, Saujanya Publishing, Delhi 2004.
- Ligmincha Institute, *The Twenty-One Nails, Volume II, Oral Commentaries by Lopon Tenzin Namdak and Tenzin Wangyal*



- Rinpoche, Ligmincha Institute Heartdrop Editions, Charlottesville VA 1996.
- Martin, Daniel, *Mandala Cosmology. Human Body Good Thought and the Revelation of the Secret Mother Tantras of Bon*, Asiatische Forschungen Band 124, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1994.
- Martin, Dan, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2009.
- Nagru Geshe Gelek Jimpa, Dmitry Ermakov and Carol Ermakova, *Heart Essence of the Khandro*, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi 2012.
- Namdak, Lopon Tenzin, "The Condensed Meaning of an Explanation of the Teachings of Yungdrung Bon," in John Reynolds, *Yungdrung Bon: The Eternal Tradition*, Bönpo Translation Project, New York 1994.
- Namdak, Lopon Tenzin, and John Reynolds (tr), *The Condensed Meaning of an Explanation of the Teachings of Yungdrung Bon*, Bönpo Foundation, Kathmandu n.d.
- Namdak, Lopon Tenzin, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya: Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition*, Snow Lion, Ithaca 1993.
- Norbu, Namkhai, *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen*, Arkana Penguin Books, London 1993.
- Norbu, Namkhai, *Drung, Dreu and Bon: Narrations, Symbolic Languages, and the Bon Tradition in Ancient Tibet*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1995.
- Norbu, Namkhai, *The Necklace of gZi: A Cultural History of Tibet*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1981.
- Padmakara Translation Group, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, Harper Collins Publishers, San Francisco 1994.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings*, Bönpo Translation Project (privately printed), Freehold and Amsterdam 1992.; reissued in an expanded edition as *Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings according to Lopon Tenzin Namdak*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2006.

- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *The Golden Letters*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1996.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *Namkhai Norbu: The Cycle of Day and Night*, Station Hill Press, Barrytown NY 1987.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *The Oral Tradition of Zhang-Zhung: An Introduction to the Bönpo Dzogchen Teachings of the Oral Tradition of Zhang-Zhung, known as the Zhang-Zhung sNyan-rgyud*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2005.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-zhung Tradition of Tibet, Translations from the Gyalwa Chaktri of Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung*, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu 2011.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *Practices from the Zhang-zhung Nyan-gyud*, Bönpo Translation Project (privately printed), Freehold and Amsterdam 1992.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness*, Station Hill Press, Barrytown 1989; second edition: Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca NY 1998.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *The Seven-fold Cycle of the Clear Light*, Bönpo Translation Project (privately printed), San Diego and Amsterdam 2001.
- Reynolds, John Myrdhin, *Yungdrung Bon: The Eternal Tradition*, Bönpo Translation Project (privately printed), New York 1991.
- Rossi, Donatella, "The *Lo-rgyus chen-mo* in the Collection of the *Ye khri mtha' sel* attributed to Dränpa Namkha," in Karmay and Nagano (eds), *New Horizons in Bon Studies*, Saujanya Publishing, Delhi 2004.
- Sharma, D.D., *A Discriptive Grammar of Kinnauri*, Studies in Tibeto-Himalayan Languages 1, Mittal Publications, Delhi 1988.
- Skorupski, Tadeusz, "Tibetan gYung-Drung Bon Monastery in India", Kailash, vol. VIII, nos. 1-2, Kathmandu 1981; reprinted separately by gYung-Drung Bon Monastic Centre, Solan, India 1983.
- Snellgrove, David, and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, Geo Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1968.

- Snellgrove, David, *Himalayan Pilgrimage: A Study of Tibetan Religion by a Traveller through Western Nepal*, Shambhala, Boston 1989.
- Snellgrove, David, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors*, Serindia Publications, London 1987.
- Snellgrove, David, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, Oxford University Press, London 1967.
- Stein, R.A., *Tibetan Civilization*, Faber and Faber, London, 1972.
- Tarthang Tulku, *Ancient Tibet*, Dharma Publishing, Berkeley 1986.
- Thar, Tsering, "The Ancient Zhang Zhung Civilization," in *Tibet Studies: Journal of the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences*, Lhasa 1989, pp. 90-104.
- Thondup, Tulku, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet: An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of the Nyingmapa School of Buddhism*, Wisdom Publications, London 1986.
- Thondup, Tulku, *The Tantric Tradition of the Nyingmapas*, Buddhayana, Marion MA 1984.
- Thurman, Robert, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Liberation through Understanding in the Between*, Bantam Books, New York 1994.
- Tucci, Giuseppe, *The Religions of Tibet*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1980.
- Tucci, Giuseppe, *Travels of Tibetan Pilgrimes in the Swat Valley*, The Greater India Society, Calcutta 1940.
- Trungpa, Chogyam, *Born in Tibet*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1966.
- Upasak, C.S., *History of Buddhism in Afghanistan*, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath Varanasi 1990.
- Uray, Geza, "The Old Tibetan Verb Bon," in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 17. no. 3, pp. 323-334, Budapest 1964.
- Vajranatha, Lama, *The Sadhana Practice of Wrathful Deities in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra*, Bodhisattva Publisher, Budapest 2009.
- Wangyal Rinpoche, Tenzin, *The Wonders of the Natural Mind: The Essence of Dzogchen in the Native Bon Tradition of Tibet*, Station Hill Press, Barrytown NY 1993.

### Works in Tibetan:

- sNyan-rgyud rgyal-ba'i phyag-khrid* by Bru-chen rGyal-ba g.yung-drung in *sNyan rgyud nam-mkha' 'phrul mdzod drang nges skor* and *Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud skor*, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, New Delhi 1972.
- sNyan rgyud nam-mkha' 'phrul mdzod drang nges skor* and *Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud skor*, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, New Delhi 1972, ff. 539-726.
- Thun-mtshams bco-linga-pa man-ngag khrid kyi rim-pa lag-len thun-mtshams dang bcas-pa*, Tibetan text in Kvaerne and Thubten Rikhey, *The Stages of A-khrid Meditation: Dzogchen Practice of the Bon Tradition*, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala 1996.
- rDzogs-chen yang-rtse klong-chen gyi khrid gzhung cha-lag dang bcas*, Bönpo Monastic Centre, New Delhi 1973.
- Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud* in *History and Doctrine of Bönpo Nispanna Yoga*, Sata-Pitaka Series Indo-Asian Literatures, Volume 73, International Academy of Tibetan Culture, New Delhi 1968; Introduction in English by Lokesh Chandra.
- Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud kyi bla-ma'i nyams rgyud 'bring-po sor bzhaq-pa dang bsdus-pa 'thor-bu bcas*, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, Solan HP 1973.
- Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud kyi bla-ma'i nyams rgyud rgyas-pa skya smug gnyis*, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, Solan HP 1973.
- Zhang-zhung snyan-rgyud kyi bla-ma'i nyams rgyud rgyas-pa skya smug gnyis*, Tibetan Bönpo Monastic Centre, New Delhi 1973.
- g.Yung-drung bon gyi bstan-pa'i 'byung khungs nyung bsdus* by Namdak, Lopen Tenzin, Kalimpong 1962.
- Legs-bshad rin-po-che'i mdzod dpyod-ldan dga'-ba'i char* by Shardza Tashi Gyaltsän, Romanized Tibetan text in Samten G. Karmay, *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon*, Oxford University Press, London 1972.
- Sangs-rgyas kyi bstan rtsis ngo-mtshar nor-bu'i phreng-ba* by Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin, in *Tibetan Zhang-zhung Dictionary*, Tibetan Bönpo Foundation, New Delhi 1966.



## GLOSSARY

<i>ka-ti rtsa</i>	translucent channel connecting the heart with the eyeballs
<i>ka-dag</i>	primordial purity, primordially pure
<i>kun tu bzang-po</i>	“the all-good,” epithet for the Primordial Buddha, Skt. Samantabhadra
<i>kun-gzhi</i>	the basis of everything, Basic Nature
<i>kun-gzhi rnam-shes</i>	store consciousness, collective unconscious psyche
<i>klong</i>	vast expanse, vastness
<i>dkyil-'khor</i>	mandala
<i>bka'</i>	precept, scripture, order, command
<i>bka'-'gyur</i>	the collection of Bönpo scriptures containing the words of Tönpa Shenrab
<i>bka'-brgyud</i>	the Precepts Transmission
<i>bka-brgyud skor bzhi</i>	the four cycles of the Precepts Transmission
<i>bka'-brten</i>	collection of commentaries and other works relating to the Bönpo scriptures
<i>rkyen</i>	secondary condition, secondary cause
<i>skal-ldan</i>	fortunate one, disciple
<i>sku</i>	Body, divine form
<i>sku gsum</i>	Trikaya, the Three Bodies of the Buddha
<i>bskyed-rim</i>	the generation process
<i>khyab-bdal</i>	all-pervading and all-encompassing
<i>khyab-rig</i>	all-pervading awareness
<i>khyung</i>	the garuda
<i>khyung-rdzong</i>	“garuda castle,” the residence of king Ligmincha on the Dangra Lake
<i>khyung-lung dngul-mkhar</i>	“the silver castle of the garuda Valley, residence of the kings of Zhang-zhung
<i>khregs-chod</i>	“cutting through rigidities and tensions,” the practice of contemplation

<i>mkha'</i>	space, sky
<i>'khrul-gzhi</i>	the basis of illusion
<i>'khrul-pa</i>	delusion
<i>'khrul-tshul</i>	the process of delusion
<i>'khrul-lugs</i>	the system of delusion
<i>gang-zag nyi-shu rtsa gcig</i>	the Twenty-Four Masters, literally "the twenty-four persons"
<i>gangs-chen ti-se</i>	Mt- Kailas in West Tibet
<i>gyer</i>	the Zhang-zhung term for Bön or Dharma
<i>gyer-spungs snang-bzher lod-po</i>	disciple of Tapihritsa, who first wrote down the Dzogchen precepts of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd
<i>grol-tshul</i>	the process of liberation
<i>dgongs-gter</i>	a mind treasure
<i>dgongs-brgyud</i>	the Mind Transmission
<i>'grel-pa</i>	commentary
<i>rgyu</i>	primary cause
<i>rgyu'i theg-pa</i>	the Causal Ways, or vehicles
<i>sgo bzhi mdzod lnga</i>	the Four Doors and the Treasury the fifth, a classification of the Bönpo scriptures
<i>sgom-pa</i>	meditation
<i>sgom-med</i>	non-meditation
<i>sgra 'od zer gsum</i>	sounds, lights, and rays
<i>sgrib-pa</i>	obscuration
<i>sgron-ma</i>	a lamp, the eyes
<i>brgyud-pa</i>	lineage, transmission
<i>ngo-'dzin</i>	recognition
<i>ngo-sprod-pa</i>	a direct introduction
<i>ngos bzung-ba</i>	to recognize, recognition
<i>dnagos-gzhi</i>	principal practice
<i>mngon sangs-rgyas</i>	Fully Manifest Buddhahood
<i>gcig-brgyud</i>	the single transmission to one individual only
<i>cho-'phrul</i>	magical apparition, hologram
<i>'char-tshul</i>	process of arising
<i>'chi-kha'i bar-do</i>	the Bardo of the Dying Process
<i>'chi-med gtsug-phud</i>	Chimed Tsugphüd, the spiritual pre-existence of Tönpa Shenrab

<i>'ja'-lus</i>	the Rainbow Body
<i>rjes-thob</i>	subsequent attainment, post-meditation experience
<i>nyams</i>	experience
<i>nyams-brgyud</i>	the Experiential Transmission
<i>nyer-thob</i>	near attainment, the phase of total black-out after death
<i>mnyam-nyid</i>	the state of sameness or equality
<i>mnyam-nyid ye-shes</i>	the primal awareness of the sameness of everything
<i>mnyam-bzhag</i>	contemplation, the state of even contemplation
<i>snyan-brgyud</i>	The Oral Transmission, oral tradition
<i>bsnyan sgrub las gsum</i>	evocation, conjuration, and ritual application
<i>ta-pi-hri-tsa</i>	the enlightened master who transmitted the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd
<i>ting-nge 'dzin</i>	samadhi, contemplation
<i>gter-ma</i>	treasure, hidden treasure text
<i>rtag-chad</i>	eternalism and nihilism
<i>rtags</i>	sign, indication
<i>lta-ba</i>	view
<i>lta sgom spyod gsum</i>	view, meditation, and action
<i>stag-gzigs</i>	Tazik, Central Asia
<i>stong-cha</i>	the side of emptiness
<i>stong-nyid bar-do</i>	the Bardo of Emptiness
<i>stong-nyid ye-shes</i>	the primal awareness of emptiness
<i>stong-pa nyid</i>	emptiness, Skt. Shunyata
<i>ston-pa</i>	teacher, founder of a tradition
<i>ston-pa gshen-rab mi-bo-che</i>	the Buddha who established Bön
<i>thabs-shes,</i>	skillful means and discriminating wisdom
<i>thabs dang shes-rab</i>	
<i>thig-le</i>	essence drop, tiny sphere, point of light, Skt. bindu
<i>thig-le nyag-gcig</i>	the Unique Sphere, unique point, single point, unique singularity
<i>theg-pa dgu rim</i>	the nine successive vehicles to enlightenment
<i>thod-rgal</i>	the practice of vision
<i>mthar-thug gi snang-ba</i>	the final visions, the fifth and final stage of vision practice



<i>dag-snag</i>	pure vision
<i>don</i>	meaning, purpose, goal, benefit
<i>dran-pa nam-mkha', bla-chen</i>	Dzogchen master in the 8th century, in his previous incarnation a prince of Zhang-zhung
<i>gdams-ngag</i>	oral instruction
<i>gdon</i>	evil spirit, a negative provocation of energy
<i>bde gsal mi rtog-pa'i nyams</i>	experiences of bliss, clarity, and no thought
<i>bder-gshegs,</i>	Sugata, "well gone," epithet of the
<i>bde-bar gshegs-pa</i>	Buddha
<i>mdo 'dus</i>	the short hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab
<i>mdor bsdu</i>	the conclusion in brief
<i>'du 'bral med-pa</i>	neither uniting nor separating
<i>'dul-ba</i>	the Vinaya, the monastic discipline
<i>nang-skor</i>	inner cycle
<i>nang-rgyud</i>	the Inner Tantras, the Higher Tantras
<i>nang-dbyings</i>	internal dimension
<i>nam-mkha'</i>	space, sky
<i>nam-mkha'i mdzod</i>	the treasury of space, sky treasury
<i>gnad</i>	essential point
<i>gnas-tshul</i>	mode of being
<i>gnas-lugs</i>	the Natural State
<i>rnam-rtog</i>	discursive thought
<i>rnam-shes, rnam-par shes-pa</i>	consciousness
<i>snang-ba</i>	vision, appearance, visible manifestation
<i>snang-ba rgyas-pa</i>	the expanding of visions, the third stage of vision practice
<i>snang-ba chen-po bon kyi sku</i>	the Dharmakaya of the Great Vision
<i>snang-ba mched-pa</i>	the multiplying of visions, the second stage of vision practice
<i>snang-ba 'phel-ba</i>	the increasing of visions, the first stage of vision practice
<i>snang-ba rdzogs-pa</i>	the completing of visions, the fourth stage of vision practice
<i>snang-ba gsum</i>	the three manifestations which are the sounds, lights, and rays
<i>snang-ba'i yul</i>	visible object
<i>snod bcud</i>	the vessel-like universe and the inhabitants it contains
<i>dpe</i>	example
<i>dpe don rtags gsum</i>	example, meaning, and indication

<i>spyod-pa'i rgyud</i>	the Tantra of Conduct, Chārya Tantra
<i>sprul-sku, sprul-pa'i sku,</i> <i>sprul-pa</i>	Nirmanakaya an emanation, Skt. nirmita
<i>pha rgyud</i>	Father Tantra
<i>phyag-rgya</i>	mudra, divine form, gesture, seal
<i>phyag 'tshal-ba</i>	homage
<i>phyi skor</i>	the outer cycle
<i>phyi rgyud</i>	the Outer Tantras, the Lower Tantras
<i>phyi-dbyings</i>	external dimension
<i>phyogs ris med-pa</i>	without partiality or one-sidedness
<i>'pho-ba chen-po'i 'ja'-lus</i>	the Rainbow Body of the Great Transfer
<i>'pho tshul</i>	the process of the transferring of consciousness
<i>spyi-gzhi</i>	the Universal Base
<i>bag-chags</i>	karmic traces
<i>bon</i>	Dharma, the spiritual teachings and practices coming from the Buddha Tönpa Shenrab, phenomena, Skt. dharmas
<i>bon-sku</i>	Dharmakaya
<i>bon-nyid</i>	Reality, the Ultimate Reality, Skt. Dharmata
<i>bon-nyid dbyings</i>	the Dharmadhatu, the Dimension of Reality
<i>bon-nyid 'od-gsal gyi bar-do</i>	the Bardo of the Clear Light of Reality
<i>bon-po</i>	a practitioner of Bön
<i>bya-ba'i rgyud</i>	the Tantra of Ritual Activity, Kriya Tantra
<i>byang-chub sems</i>	Bodhichitta, the thought of enlightenment, the Nature of Mind, the inherent Buddha Nature
<i>blo</i>	thought process, mental process, thought, mind
<i>dbu-ma'i lam</i>	the central pathway, the kati channel
<i>dbyings</i>	dimension of space, Dimension (i.e., the Dharmadhatu)
<i>'bras-bu</i>	fruit, result
<i>'bras-bu'i sku gsum</i>	the Trikaya of the Fruit
<i>'bras-bu'i theg-pa</i>	the Fruitional Ways, or vehicles
<i>'bras-bu'i sangs-rgyas</i>	the Buddhahood of the Fruit
<i>sbas-yul</i>	a hidden land
<i>ma rgyud</i>	Mother Tantra
<i>ma rig-pa</i>	ignorance, lack of awareness, Skt. avidya
<i>man-ngag</i>	upadesha, secret oral instruction
<i>mi rtog-pa</i>	no thought, non-discursiveness
<i>mun-khang</i>	dark retreat house

<i>mun-mtshams</i>	dark retreat
<i>me-long ye-she</i>	the primal awareness that is mirror-like
<i>dmarm thag-bcad-pa</i>	a clear and definitive decision
<i>dmarm-mchod</i>	a blood sacrifice
<i>smarm-yig</i>	the writing system used in Zhang-zhung
<i>tsi-ta</i>	the physical heart
<i>gtso 'khor</i>	the principal deity and its retinue
<i>rtsa</i>	channel, psychic channel
<i>rtsa-ba</i>	root, root text
<i>rtsa'i lam</i>	pathways of the channels
<i>rtsal</i>	energy
<i>rtse-gcig</i>	one-pointed concentration
<i>tshul</i>	method, mode, process, manner
<i>tshon-gang</i>	miniature-sized, thumb-sized
<i>mtshan-nyid</i>	philosophy, epistemology, Skt. <i>pramana</i>
<i>rdzogs-sku</i>	Sambhogakaya
<i>rdzogs-chen, rdzogs-pa chen-po</i>	the Great Perfection
<i>rdzogs-gzhi</i>	the basis of perfection
<i>rdzogs-rim</i>	the perfection process
<i>rdzogs-lugs</i>	system of perfection
<i>rdzogs sangs-rgyas</i>	Buddhahood coming into perfection and completeness
<i>zhang-zhung</i>	the ancient name for Far Western and Northern Tibet, once an independent kingdom with its own language and religious culture
<i>zhang-zhung snayn-brgyud</i>	the oral transmission from the country of Zhang-zhung
<i>gzhan-s nang</i>	manifestation due to another (extrinsic cause)
<i>gzhal-yas khang</i>	celestial palace
<i>gzhi</i>	base, basis
<i>gzhi lam 'bras gsum</i>	The Base, the Path, and the Fruit
<i>gzhi'i sku gsum</i>	The Trikaya of the Base
<i>gzhi'i sangs-rgyas</i>	the Buddhahood of the Base
<i>gzhung dkrol-ba</i>	the explicating of the text
<i>zad-pa</i>	exhaustion, extinction
<i>zung 'brel bcu</i>	the ten unifications
<i>gzi-brjid</i>	the longest hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab

<i>gzer-bu</i>	a little nail, an essential point to remember
<i>gzer-myig</i>	the intermediate length hagiography of Tönpa Shenrab
<i>'og-min</i>	Akanishtha, the highest plane of existence
<i>'od tshon-gang</i>	the miniature-sized light
<i>'od-lus</i>	the Body of Light
<i>'od-gsal</i>	the Clear Light, the practice of vision
<i>'ol-mo lung-ring</i>	the home land of Tönpa Shenrab, sometimes identified with Shambhala
<i>yang-ston shes-rab rgyal-mtshan</i>	the Bönpo Lama who collected together the texts of the Precepts Transmission and the Experiential Transmission in the 11 <sup>th</sup> century
<i>yang gsang skor</i>	exceedingly secret cycle
<i>yi-dam lha</i>	meditation deity
<i>yid</i>	the functional mind, Skt. <i>manas</i>
<i>yid-shes, yid kyi rnam-shes</i>	mental consciousness
<i>ye-khri mtha'-sel</i>	one of the four principal traditions of Bönpo Dzogchen
<i>ye-gzhi</i>	the Primordial Base
<i>ye-rig</i>	primordial awareness
<i>ye-shes</i>	primal awareness, Primordial Awareness, gnosis, Skt. <i>jñāna</i>
<i>ye-shes tshon-gang</i>	miniature-sized primal awareness
<i>ye sangs-rgyas</i>	Primordial Buddhahood
<i>g.yung-drung</i>	indestructible, everlasting, Skt. <i>swastika</i>
<i>g.yung-drung dgu brtseg</i>	the nine-tiered swastika mountain, lying at the center of Olmo Lung-ring
<i>g.yung-drung bon</i>	the Eternal Tradition, the spiritual teachings or Dharma of Tönpa Shenrab
<i>g.yung-drung sems-dpa'</i>	Bodhisattva
<i>rang-grol</i>	self-liberation
<i>rang-snang</i>	self-manifestation
<i>rang-'byung</i>	self-originated
<i>rang-rig</i>	self-awareness
<i>rang-rig khong shar</i>	interior arising of self-awareness
<i>rang-shar</i>	self-arising, self-arisen
<i>rig-cha</i>	the side of awareness
<i>rig-stong dbyer-med</i>	inseparability of awareness and emptiness
<i>rig-pa</i>	awareness, intrinsic awareness

<i>rig-pa ngo-sprod</i>	direct introduction to intrinsic awareness
<i>rig-pa gcer mthong</i>	awareness seeing nakedly
<i>rig-pa'i rgyal-po</i>	the King that is Awareness
<i>rig-pa'i rtsal</i>	the energy of awareness
<i>rig-pa'i ye-shes</i>	primal cognitions of awareness
<i>rol-pa</i>	display, visible manifestation, creative manifestation of energy
<i>rlung</i>	vital wind, psychic energy, wind, air
<i>lam</i>	path, pathway, road
<i>lam gyi sku gsum</i>	the Trikaya of the Path
<i>lam gyi sangs-rgyas</i>	the Buddhahood of the Path
<i>lung ma bstan</i>	a dull neutral state of mind
<i>li-shi stag-rings, snya-chen</i>	Bönpo Dzogchen master in the 8th century
<i>lig-mi-rgya</i>	Ligmincha, the last native king of Zhangzhung
<i>shes-pa</i>	awareness, to be aware, to know
<i>gshen</i>	a practice, a practitioner, priest
<i>gshen-chen klu-dga'</i>	the discoverer of the largest collection of Bönpo Terma texts in the 11 <sup>th</sup> century
<i>gshen-lha dkar-po</i>	the White Shen Deity, the root deity who can be named and imputed
<i>gdogs yod rtsa-ba'i lha</i>	
<i>gshen-lha 'od-dkar</i>	"the White Light Shen Deity," epithet of the Sambhogakaya
<i>bshad-lugs rnam bzhi</i>	the four types of systems of explanation
<i>sa-lam</i>	the paths and stages of the Bodhisattva career
<i>sangs-rgyas</i>	Buddha, an enlightened being
<i>sems</i>	mind
<i>sems-nyid</i>	the Nature of Mind
<i>sems-nyid gnas-lugs</i>	the Natural State of the Nature of Mind
<i>so-mtshams</i>	the Boundary between this life and the next life
<i>sor-rtog ye-shes</i>	the primal awareness that discriminates
<i>srid-pa'i bar-do</i>	the Bardo of Existence
<i>gsang skor</i>	secret cycle
<i>gsang-ba 'dus-pa</i>	Sangwa Düpa, disciple of Chimed Tsugphüd
<i>gsal-cha</i>	the side of clarity
<i>gsal-ba</i>	clarity
<i>gsas-mkhar mchog lnga</i>	"the Five Supreme Citadels," the five principal wrathful deities of the Father Tantras

---

<i>bsam-rig</i>	awareness constrained in the mind or thought process
<i>lha</i>	god, spirit
<i>lha gsol-ba</i>	invoking the gods
<i>lhan-skyes, lhan-cig skyes-pa</i>	co-emergent
<i>lhug-pa</i>	alertness
<i>lhun-grub</i>	spontaneous perfection, spontaneously perfected
<i>lho-gter lugs</i>	Terma system of the Southern Treasures
<i>A-khrid</i>	“guiding instructions regarding the primordial State,” a system of Bönpo Dzochén



# INDEX

- Accumulating merit 178  
Atri tradition of Dzogchen 28
- Bardo, the after-death experience of  
192, 251  
Bodhichitta, the generating of 180  
Body of Light 31, 33, 34, 36, 162,  
191, 196, 287, 288  
Buddhahood of the Base, Path, and  
Fruit 206, 313, 314, 316
- Channels and pathways, psychic  
198, 210, 258, 263  
Chimed Tsugphüd 15, 16, 29, 31,  
41, 47, 310, 316  
Chittamatra 184, 200, 203, 294  
Classification of Bönpo texts 23  
Clairvoyant powers, the six 299  
Cycles of Precepts, the four 38
- Dharmakaya 16, 30, 33–36, 42, 56,  
57, 63, 64, 75, 78, 80, 107, 109,  
110, 140, 141, 144, 164, 181,  
190, 194, 197, 204–208, 218,  
225, 229, 231–235, 238, 246,  
251, 269, 270, 272, 273, 282,  
288, 292, 293, 304, 312, 313
- Dolanji 22  
Dränpa Namkha 15, 16, 19, 29, 30,  
45, 48, 305  
Dru Lineage 21  
Druchen Gyalwa Yungdrung 22,  
29, 48, 179, 184, 193, 201, 305  
Dzogchen, meaning of the term
- Experiential Transmission 37, 91,  
195, 196, 302, 311, 315  
Eyes of higher insight, the six 139,  
267
- Family Lineages of Bön 16, 42, 46,  
303  
Fixating of mind on the white A  
185
- Great Transfer 32, 33, 313  
Guru Yoga 180, 200, 244  
Gyalwa Chaktri 22, 201, 305  
Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö 32, 33,  
34, 36, 37, 49, 52, 74, 95, 191,  
197
- Hagiographies of Tönpa Shenrab  
17, 42
- Kati channel 61–63, 78, 138, 142,  
183, 211, 212, 237, 238, 257–  
260, 263, 265, 267, 269–271,  
295, 313  
Kuntu Zangpo, meaning of the name  
16, 30, 42, 49, 51, 52, 54–65,  
67–69, 71, 72, 91, 92, 95, 102,



- 105, 106, 108, 114, 120, 122,  
124–126, 129, 135, 140, 144,  
146, 148, 152, 155, 157, 159,  
167, 169, 180, 194, 196, 200,  
204–206, 217, 218, 225, 228,  
229, 231, 232, 239, 246, 249,  
253, 256, 259, 264, 268, 269,  
272, 274, 276, 279, 281, 283,  
285, 290, 291, 294
- Kuntu Zangpo, the Primordial  
Buddha 49, 51, 180, 194, 204,  
218, 228
- Kunzhi, recognizing
- Kunzhi, Rigpa, and Tsäl 266
- Lamp of the eyes 63, 138, 198, 263,  
267, 271
- Lamps, the four 137, 265, 267
- Later Lineages 36
- Light in the heart 60, 78, 258
- Ligmincha, king of Zhang-zhung 19
- Lishu Tag-ring 19, 29, 48
- Lodän Nyingpo 20, 45, 46
- Madhyamaka 12, 183, 200
- Mahamudra 144, 145, 180, 183,  
184, 200, 273
- Masters, the twenty-four 32, 195,  
196, 310
- Mind and the Nature of Mind,  
distinguishing 52, 53, 96, 97,  
98, 99, 207, 214
- Mind Transmission 30, 49, 52, 91,  
95, 195, 196, 310
- Mother and Son, the meeting of 276
- New Bön 15, 16
- Nine Ways of Bön 21, 24, 46, 47
- Nirmanakaya 13, 16, 30, 31, 34, 35,  
36, 58, 63, 64, 78, 120, 141,  
142, 144, 145, 164, 190, 198,  
204, 231, 245–247, 251, 269,  
270, 272, 273, 288, 313
- Padmasambhava 15, 27, 33
- Paramitas, the ten 181, 182
- Persecutions of Bön 23, 46
- Plagiarism, the accusation of 42
- Precepts Transmission 37, 309, 315
- Principal topics 197
- Process of Delusion 160, 165, 249,  
285, 289, 310
- Process of Liberation 160, 252, 286,  
288
- Pulse measurement 54, 103, 222
- Olmo Lung-ring 15, 16, 17, 315
- Oral Transmission 20, 30, 46, 73,  
94, 173, 197, 208, 314
- Rainbow Body 16, 31, 32, 33, 36,  
191, 196, 221, 224, 311, 313
- Recollections, the six 162, 287, 299
- Refuge in the Three Jewels 178,  
180
- Rupakaya 33, 34, 76, 80, 181, 190,  
191, 273, 282, 292, 293
- Sambhogakaya 16, 30, 34, 57, 58,  
63, 64, 76, 78, 114, 120, 140,  
141, 142, 144, 145, 164, 190,  
197, 204, 231, 236, 239, 245,  
246, 251, 269, 270, 272, 273,  
288, 314, 316
- Sangwa Düpa 17, 31, 49, 196, 316
- Shambhala 17, 18, 43, 294, 301,  
302, 306, 315
- Shen (gshen), the meaning of 16
- Shenchen Luga 20, 21, 42, 46, 47,  
48
- Shenlha Ödkar 16, 30, 200, 236
- Spaces, the three 183

- Sounds, lights, and rays 67, 74, 78,  
103, 115, 121, 128, 137, 143,  
144, 150, 156, 165, 219, 220,  
221–223, 240, 242–244, 246,  
247, 250, 252, 255, 257, 258,  
266, 269–273, 278, 280–283,  
286, 288, 289, 290–293, 298,  
310, 312
- Southern and Central Treasures 23
- Tapihritsa 19, 20, 31–38, 40, 49, 52,  
74, 95, 196, 197, 200, 208, 310
- Tazik 12, 15, 16, 17, 31, 311
- Termas, or hidden treasure texts 19,  
20, 21, 38
- Tönpa Shenrab 12–17, 20, 23, 24,  
29, 31, 41–43, 47, 309, 310,  
312, 313–315
- Trekchöd practice 33, 76, 184, 189,  
192, 193, 221, 231, 281, 291
- Truths, the Two 181, 182, 200
- Unifications, the ten 241
- Unique Sphere 59, 65, 121, 122,  
136, 146–148, 198, 240, 270,  
274, 276, 311
- Vision, the five stages in the  
development of 223
- Yeru Wensakha monastery 22
- Yeshe, translation of 75
- Yeshe Tsön-gang 231, 234, 235,  
236, 240, 243, 249, 257, 272,  
273
- Yetri Thasel tradition of Dzogchen  
29
- Yungdrung Böñ 11, 12, 13, 15, 18,  
20, 21
- Zhang-zhung, the country of 17, 18,  
30, 32, 49, 314
- Zhang-zhung, the language of 13,  
16, 17, 18, 31, 36, 41, 43, 49,  
74, 197
- Zhang-zhung Meri 34
- Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd 7, 8, 22,  
28, 30, 37, 38, 39, 176, 179,  
184, 186, 196, 200, 201, 204,  
207, 221, 223, 294, 296, 310,  
311

**The** teachings of Bön are organized into nine ways, or nine vehicles to enlightenment, the ninth and highest of which is known as Dzogchen, "the Great Perfection." Among the four principal traditions of Bönpo Dzogchen, the oral tradition from the country of Zhang-zhung is of unique importance because it never became a Terma, or hidden treasure text rediscovered long after its original composition. The precepts of Dzogchen were said to have originated with the Primordial Buddha, Kuntu Zangpo, passing down at first through the Direct Mind-to-Mind Transmission and then later through the Oral Transmission of the Twenty-Four Masters, all of whom attained the Rainbow Body of Light. In Zhang-zhung in the 7th century, these precepts were communicated by the last in this line of masters to his disciple Tapihritsa, who subsequently attained Buddha enlightenment through the practice of vision, or Thodgal. In the next century, he appeared on a number of occasions at the Darok Lake in Zhang-zhung, or Northwestern Tibet, to the Tantric master Gyerpung Nangzher Lödpö, who set down these precepts in writing for the first time in the Zhang-zhung language. In the next century, they were translated into Tibetan and thus these precepts have come down to our own day in an unbroken line of transmission.

The teachings of the Zhang-zhung Nyän-gyüd, "the Oral Tradition from Zhang-zhung," are classified into four cycles of texts, which are designated outer, inner, secret, and exceedingly secret. Accordingly, these precepts are said to represent the actual words of the enlightened master Tapihritsa. The outer cycle focuses on the general view of Dzogchen, the inner cycle on the practice of contemplation, or Trekchöd, the secret cycle on the practice of vision, or Thödgal, and the very secret cycle on the removing of doubts with regard to the Natural State of the Nature of Mind being the source of all visions, both in meditation practice and in normal life. In this last class, there is found the text known as "The Twenty-One Little Nails," these representing twenty-one essential points of Dzogchen practice. Included here in this volume is the translation of the root text, and also that of the commentary attributed to Gyerpung. This represents one of the most important texts coming from early times for the understanding of Dzogchen Upadesha practice.



**Vajra Books**

Kathmandu, Nepal

[www.vajrabooks.com.np](http://www.vajrabooks.com.np)



9 789937 623155