

Oral instructions on the practice of guru yoga Chogye Rinpoche Trichen

The descent of blessings

In the biographies of great masters, it is often said that they beg to Guru until they shed tears from their eyes and until the hair on their body stands on end at the end. These are signs of fervent devotion, which leads to ever increased faith. **In order to receive the blessings, the most important quality needed is faith.** As the famous story tells, if we have faith, even the tooth of a dog can produce relics.

Whatever your prayer, be it taking refuge or guru yoga, more important than just visualize well and sing correctly is to have the quality of devotion. This is also true when you offer prayers of love, compassion and bodhicitta. Through contemplation and understanding of suffering, and generating loving kindness and compassion, once again, the tears can flow. Tears do not come often, but they can come when there is a real experience of compassion and desire to help suffering beings. We can feel empathy for their suffering, and sincerely wish to save them.

The key point is that in all these moments, such as a time of intense devotion, a time when we experience the descent of the primordial wisdom during initiation, or when we enter the flow of blessings during the practice of guru yoga, and also at a time when we are deeply affected by compassion, in each of these cases the experience is similar. These are different causes that give rise to a same experience, the experience of the descent of blessings.

Remembering the kindness of our mother and that she is suffering, feeling compassion for her and trying to help her is the beginning of the development of compassion. Knowing that all beings have been our mothers becomes a cause for the development of love and compassion.

When you reach the point of being deeply affected by love and compassion is a sign of the descent of the blessings of great compassion, a sign that the blessings of the bodhisattvas are falling on you. When you feel kindness and compassion for all beings as if they were your own mother and understand their suffering, you will be blessed by bodhisattvas and the experience of their blessings will be born in your mind.

Some are moved to tears because of their previous practice of meditation on emptiness. To see for oneself the suffering of beings from the lower realms can also move one very deeply. Through our own compassion for all beings, the blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are able to flow to all beings. It is the same as other types of prayer, where the blessings are invoked on behalf of all

beings. There is no doubt that the sentient beings are benefited when they truly give rise to compassion.

For example, during our practice of guru yoga, there is a kusali offering, where one offers one's body to the gurus and the sources of refuge. The other guests who partake of this compassion, are sentient beings who need blessings and a variety of benefits. This is a practice of faith and devotion, and compassion and sacrifice. This is a very powerful practice to receive blessings that definitely benefits sentient beings. Faith, devotion and compassion enable us to receive blessings and this is what helps sentient beings.

Signs of receiving blessings are, for example, we can cry spontaneously, the hairs of our skin shiver at the end, there can be a tremendous chill through our body and so on. Our hearts may be flooded with powerful feelings of resignation, faith, devotion and compassion. These are signs we are receiving the blessings of the Guru and the lineage masters, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. These are signs that we have experienced faith and devotion, genuine love and compassion for sentient beings, and so on. One can feel deeply moved inside and it gives rise to different experiences.

At such moments, it is more important to remember the introduction of the Guru to the nature of mind, and to recognize and continue the maintenance of that vision. **The nature of mind is introduced in a very direct way through blessings.** It is the realization of the nature of mind what will accomplish our own benefit. The blessings carry both benefits, the benefit of others and our own benefit.

The descent of primordial wisdom

If we want to know whether we can receive such blessings and recognize the nature of mind during the course of our practice, the answer is yes we can. This is especially true for the practice of guru yoga. When the Guru dissolves into your heart and your mind merges with the mind of the Guru, you remain in this state of emptiness. This is simply a less elaborate form of what happens during an initiation, the method by which blessings can be received and the recognition of the nature of mind can occur.

If we have more time and want to practice a slightly more elaborate guru yoga, then when supplicating the Guru, we can bring to mind those sublime qualities of the enlightened. To review in our minds all the spiritual qualities of the guru is a very powerful way to awaken our devotion. We may recall the attributes of the Master, remember situations in which we witnessed those qualities for ourselves. We can rejoice in the immeasurable qualities of the Gurus, and delight in our good fortune of having a relationship with our Gurus, of being their disciples and following their teachings.

This will help us to have a positive attitude toward ourselves as practitioners, as well as in the generation of faith and devotion towards the Guru. We rejoice in our good fortune and strive to emulate the noble qualities Guru and benefit sentient beings.

Through the practice of guru yoga, our faith will continue to increase. By practicing guru yoga, first we generate faith by contemplating the qualities of the Guru, the Three Jewels and Three Roots. Then through faith and devotion, we receive the blessings, and the blessings give rise to experience. Having received blessings, we are able to experience the meaning of the teachings through our own practice, which in turn will increase our faith.

The most important point is that when dissolving the Guru within ourselves, we must have complete faith and devotion to the Guru. It is not just a matter of going through the motions of visualization and recitation of everything properly. **We really need to feel in our hearts that this is the real Guru and the lineage masters who are dissolving in us, who are bestowing their blessings on us.**

Once we are accustomed to this practice, the experience of the blessings does not disappear with our recognition of the view of emptiness. In fact, as we get the recognition even more blessings will come, and at the same time, our recognition of the View will become more and more sustained. Resting in the vision of emptiness, faith and devotion continue to increase, blessings will continue to be received and the View continues to become more stable.

This is a very important point for our practice of guru yoga. It is said that as blessings descend from above, the realization burns upwards. "The realization of burning upwards" means that our faith and devotion rise, and that recognition of the view becomes broader and continuous. It isn't only that faith and great devotion increase, our mind merges with the mind of the Guru and we are face to face with the unequivocal View, that is an immutable empty consciousness.

These two mutually benefit one another: **The more blessings come down, the more our faith, devotion and realization of the View burn upward. The more our faith, dedication and realization of the View burn upward, the more blessings come descend. This is the process that leads to great realization.**

The meaning of guru yoga: the unification of the Guru's body, speech and mind

Let me repeat once again some of the key points of guru yoga, so you can learn well. In the practice of guru yoga, the unification with the Guru, you first have to visualize and pray to the Guru. Then imagine that all phenomena dissolve in the form of Guru, and then the Guru dissolves into our hearts. Our mind and the mind of the Guru are inextricably mixed.

Now we relax body, speech and mind naturally resting on the recognition of emptiness. Everything we see around us is created by our mind, everything that appears and exists is a manifestation of the mind. Beyond the mind there is nothing outside of us.

Whatever phenomenon that we perceive, we must consider them as being the same as our Guru. This is something that we can practice all day and night. All appearances are the nature of the deities, inseparable from the Guru. Knowing this with confidence, then we dissolve all phenomena in the Guru and the Guru in ourselves. As all phenomena are dissolved into emptiness, we see that the Guru is none other than our own mind.

Thus, once we are able to understand the true nature of mind - empty - we then pray to the Guru and dissolve the Guru in our heart, dissolving the blessings on ourselves.

Dissolve the Guru in your heart and infuse your mind completely with the mind of the Guru, so that you and the Guru are indistinguishable from one another. Now remain in the View without attachment. That means to allow your body, speech and mind to rest naturally. These are some of the key points of guru yoga that you can keep in mind.

Allowing the body, speech and mind to rest

In the instructions of guru yoga, we are taught to let our body, speech and mind rest naturally. What does this mean? The basis for the practice of meditation in the Vajrayana tradition of Secret Mantra are the three key areas of the body, speech and mind. The key point of the body is to place your body in the correct physical posture. Along with this, the key point for speech is that the eyes should adopt the appropriate gaze. The key point for the mind is that the mind will rest, relaxed but alert in the state free of thoughts.

The practice is simply to allow our three gates -body, speech, mind to remain in their natural state. That simply means letting your body, speech and mind be, without altering or modifying anything.

In general, our actions of body, speech and mind have been a big waste of time. Despite our infinite actions since beginningless time, we have wasted all our opportunities until the present moment. This way, we are still common sentient beings, not having achieved anything of real consequence through our mundane activities.

No benefit comes from allowing our body, speech and mind to wander away through the realm of desire. But if we abandon all these meaningless activities, then we can certainly obtain the realization of sublime joy, of great bliss.

Through this, all our afflictions, such as those of our elements, physical constituents and emotions, can be brought to an end.

For our body, this means not only abandoning body movements and remain sitting in meditation posture, but to abandon all thoughts about possible activities, such as "I should do this, should not do that ..." Our body is left free of activity.

For our speech, we let our breathing be natural and also maintain the proper gaze, saying nothing. This includes thinking about what we would say or what we should not say.

For our mind, we let our mind be free of any activity. There's nothing to think about, nothing to apply our mind to, just rest in the interval between past and future thoughts.

We are abandoning all activity of body, speech and mind. Instead of performing any activity, we simply sit in the meditation posture. When the body is upright, our channels are straight and our mind will become stable. Thus, we can let our bodies rest.

Our breath is relaxed and natural, and we maintain the focus of our gaze. Practicing the correct gaze is very powerful to remove all types of internal disharmonies of our elements, winds and so on. If our eyes change their focus frequently and our eyes move, this may corrupt the meditation. The eyes are focused forward on the space along the direction of the gaze, straight ahead and slightly upwards. This is the practice to let our own speech rest.

As we are practising the gaze, our mind should neither be focused too far away in space, nor too close to the body. These teachings mention a distance the size of a bow, about four to six feet. We look normally, without strain, without any tension. We are simply looking along the direction of our gaze, effortlessly.

Our mind rests on emptiness, in the interval between past and future thoughts. There is nothing else to do. **The key point for the mind is to have nothing in mind.**

While we are maintaining an attentive presence with careful effort, we do not concentrate too tightly, or too loose so that the mind sinks into torpor.

The mind is left with no reference point, meaning that the mind is not placed anywhere, and is not focused on anything. In fact, our mind is not making any efforts of any kind. At the same time, it is not an empty blank. We are present, attentive and able to cognize whatever happens.

Sustaining the Vision

It is said in the teachings that during the day, you can visualize the Guru at the top of your head, and at night, in your heart. During the day, visualize your Guru sitting on a lotus on the crown of your head. At night when you go to sleep, you can visualize that the Guru above the top of your head dissolves into you and remains in a sphere of light inside your heart. This is a practice that can be applied at bedtime, and then go to sleep with the Guru in the heart.

Through this practice, you will receive blessings and your practice of sustaining the View will improve. Trusting in the lineage of blessings will lead you to the practice of sustaining the View.

The key point is to dissolve the Guru in your heart and then truly fuse your mind to the mind of the Guru, remaining in the View of the nature of mind that the Guru introduced to you. During the day and night, every time the Guru dissolves into your heart, we rest on this and recognize the empty nature of this experience. Within this state of bliss, we are able to experience emptiness.

We must allow ourselves to continue in this experience of emptiness that came through the blessing of the Guru. At some point, the clear light, the self-aware consciousness, will emerge within this experience of emptiness, we only have to recognize it. If you practice this as much as possible, the practice will purify many stains and obscurations and you definitely obtain many blessings for doing so.

The key point is that while the mind rests on the emptiness, the blessings of the Guru are received more effectively. It is the experience of emptiness that allows us to adequately receive the blessings of the Guru and makes them remain with us. Receiving blessings, we collect the accumulation of merit. Resting on emptiness, we collect the accumulation of wisdom.

In the practice of Guru Yoga, the Guru is appearing before us, which we visualize as an object. This is the sign or appearance of your teacher, who symbolizes the Guru. However, ultimately the Guru is the wisdom in our own consciousness, the primordial wisdom of self-aware consciousness.

Recognizing the nature of mind

Under ordinary circumstances, it is not necessary to speak much directly of the View. In general, in many texts and teachings, indirect explanations are given. When a teacher offers an initiation to a large group, often he can give only a brief general explanation, of the View of the four initiations.

If the meaning is clearly explained, we can get an experiential understanding of our own consciousness. Without this experience of consciousness, our practice of emptiness would be as inert as physical space, cognizing nothing.

The actual meaning of self-aware primordial wisdom cannot be understood intellectually. It is through receiving the blessings and oral instructions from the Guru, which must be put into practice, that we will be able to recognize the true nature of mind. While scholastic texts are useful to get a general idea about the true nature of mind, the nature of mind is inexpressible. The nature of mind can only be experienced by oneself through one's own practice. The study leads to meditation practice, and practice brings the genuine experience of the meaning of the View.

These teachings belong to the lineage of practice, the lineage of experiential realization. This must be so, for the true nature of mind is free from all elaborations and intellectual constructs. In other words, it must be experienced for oneself in a state free of thoughts.

Consciousness can be understood only by receiving instruction from the Guru and then practising in accordance with this instruction. If we practice well, blessings are received. By the blessings and the application of the oral instructions from the Guru as to the true nature of mind, we are able to recognize the awareness and sustain the Vision.

Some teachers may introduce the disciples to the nature of mind through a variety of means. They can introduce it through their gaze or through gestures. A loud sound like thunder that frightens everyone can be skilfully used by a teacher as an opportunity to introduce the nature of mind. Once the thought-free state has arisen, the master instructs his disciples to remain in that state.

For those who are able to remain in the state free of thoughts, the introduction to consciousness can be given. The teacher tells us that while the mind is empty, self-aware consciousness is also able to recognize itself in the state of emptiness. Just as we are at first able to recognize emptiness, so our own consciousness is also able to recognize itself within the state of emptiness.

The true nature of mind is hard to express in words or truly illustrate through examples. This is because it is very subtle. However, by necessity, the nature of mind is often introduced symbolically. There are many examples used in teaching, but these are just signs to point out what should be recognized.

For example, it is said that consciousness is like a vajra or diamond, meaning it has the power to cut anything. Awareness can cut through the thoughts, like a diamond can cut anything, but cannot be broken by anything. Similarly, awareness cannot be broken, damaged or disturbed by thoughts.

Another example is that the nature of mind is said to be similar to the middle of space. While it is like empty space, it is not an inert emptiness, without cognition. The true nature of mind has the aspect of clarity, therefore it has the quality of empty cognition, which is different from physical space that knows nothing. It is said that consciousness is like the middle of the space because it can not be pointed. When you try to point out the nature of mind, it disappears, it can not be found anywhere. To accomplish this, push yourself in practice to seek the mind, trying to discover if there is any place where the mind or thought arises, where it remains and where it goes or ceases to be.

It is also said that the true nature of mind is like an echo in space. Although it cannot be located, it can be recognized. The space example is one of the best to introduce dharmata, the true nature of phenomena. First, our appreciation will not be as vast as space. This is something that happens naturally as we learn to leave the clinging and attachment that binds and constrains our experience of the View.

To point out the nature of mind, I especially like to use these short words of SakyaPandita:

In between two thoughts,an unbroken continuityof clear light.

When the last thought has passed, but the next thought has not yet arisen, there is a gap,a state free of thoughts. Despite this state of being free of thought, it is not a blank state,without knowledge. There is one aspect of knowledge that experiences everything. When this is recognized in the state free of thoughts, it is in reality a continuous continuity of clear light.

Once recognized, this continuity of clear light is rapidly lost to us, although we are always in it. It is lost, because again we fall from the state free of thoughts and become involved with thinking. **Therefore we must apply the meaning of the words of Sakya Pandita again andagain. We return to the state between two thoughts, recognizing the empty essence ofour mind. This state free of thoughts should be entered without any attachment orgrasping the experience of emptiness.**

The quality of the empty knowledge without attachment that remains within the statefree of thought, only needs to be recognized. Now, we stay with this recognition withoutallowing ourselves to be distracted by thoughts. When we become distracted, again weapply the meaning of the words of Sakya Pandita. For any thought or feeling that arises,again look at your mind and recognize the emptiness. The thought vanishes in therecognition of emptiness.

This is a key point of continuity in practice. This is how we learn to recognize and begin to practice the support of the Vision. That is the meaning of the practice of Vision according to the Sakya tradition. It is also the meaning of the Great Perfection and Great Seal.

The practice of support of the Vision requires a special type of diligence. At first, our recognition of emptiness does not last long because we are quickly distracted and become involved with dualistic thinking. If we do not notice this, we do not return to the Vision. So we need an attentive presence. Without this special type of diligence, the Vision will not be sustained.

An attentive presence is a combination of attention and vigilance. Attention means to remember the essence of our mind, which is emptiness. Besides, to remind oneself to recognize the emptiness, the clarity aspect of our mind also continues to function through the knowledge of whatever is happening around us and inside our mind.

As a function of our clarity, alertness perceives what is happening and also perceives when we are distracted or when we engage in thought. Therefore once we perceive we have lost the focus on the essence, once again we return the attention to the essence of our mind.

We can now understand the meaning of the quality of attentive presence needed to sustain the Vision. The key point is to be diligent in our practice to sustain the continuity of view.

Going back to the interval between two thoughts, the empty essence of our mind, is the aspect of calm abiding. To recognize the clear light, which has the quality of being free of thoughts, cognizing emptiness without attachment, is the aspect of clear vision.

Many people like to receive the remedy of blessing (?amrita pills) and receive blessings by ingesting those substances. Remedy blessing is very important, but that's just the medicine of external blessing which helps us to complete the accumulation of merit. The real remedy of blessing is our own wisdom consciousness. Consciousness is what we must recognize in order to complete also the accumulation of wisdom.

During an initiation, if you have faith, you may receive the blessings and recognize the true nature of mind. Even if the teacher is an ordinary person, if you receive the initiation with faith, the blessings of the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and lineage masters will come to you and you will be able to gain an experience of the nature of mind. The experience of the nature of mind that comes through blessings is called the descent of primordial wisdom. It is something that can also be repeated continuously during

ourown practice of receiving the initiations during the practice of guru yoga.

When our own practice is accompanied with the blessings we receive, it will give us a good reason to have respect and reverence, gratitude and devotion for the Guru. Once we recognize the Vision shown by the Guru, we experience by ourselves his great kindness in lifting the veils of confusion and misunderstanding, the source of our afflictions.

I was very fortunate to receive many introductions to the true nature of mind from my own Gurus. I received teachings extensively from Dampa Rinpoche, Zhenpen Nyingpo and Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, as well as my other Gurus. When I think of their kindness, my eyes immediately fill with tears. I can not help but feel the deepest gratitude, faith and devotion to them. Through his kindness, I received the ultimate teachings and blessings of their ultimate lineages.

When we recognize the empty awareness, we see our Buddha nature in ourselves. Westill do not realize the state of Buddhahood, but we have finally found our Buddhanature. If we trust in the Guru and we can trust the wisdom that he has pointed out, wewill quickly gain confidence in the recognition of that wisdom. Our vision will begin tostabilize and realization will be born in mind.

Practicing guru yoga it is necessary to merge the visualization of the teacher with our own mind. The mind itself will fuse completely with his, so that the Guru and empty awareness become inseparable.

When the Guru and our own consciousness rest inseparably, that is what is known asthe ultimate guru yoga. Just let it be, resting naturally in the state where the Guru andyour own mind are indivisible. Just as one cannot separate the water from its humidity,as they are always together, so one's own mind is inseparable from the mind of theGuru.

The blessings lineage

In the Buddhist tradition, the lineage is very important. If there is no lineage, there is no way to receive the blessings. The most important point at the beginning is to know whether a tradition has real lineages or not. A real lineage is verified through experience. Many have attained realizations through the practice of its teachings.

The Tsarpa tradition originates with Dagchen Lodro Gyaltsen, of the Sakya Khon family. He was a great holder of three vows and his faith so inspired Doringpa, who received the three vows from Dagchen Lodro Gyaltsen and

became his chief disciple. The main disciple was Doringpa Tsarchen Losal Gyatso, who realized the meaning of the practices of the Sakya tradition through his own experience.

For example, we can consider the blessings of the lineage of Vajrayogini practice. In the prayer line of Tsarchen Vajrayogini, the verses that describe the stages of meditation on the Path are all the words of Tsarchen, describing his own experience of the complete path. He attained all the stages of the practice and his lineage prayer describes his encounters with the real Vajrayogini.

Khyenrab Chöje was the first holder of the throne of Chogye Trichen that came from my family, the clan Chetsun. Since the time of Khyenrab Chöje, I am now the eighteenth Chogye Trichen of Nalendra from the bone lineage of the Chetsun family.

Khyenrab Chöje beheld a pure vision of Vajrayogini on several occasions. Then he had a vision of a red and a white Vajrayogini appearing on the cliffs of Drak Yewá near Lhasa. The two Vajrayoginis granted the Kalachakra initiation on Khyenrab Chöje and he brought back a translucent kusa grass that glowed with the light of the rainbow, as proof that he had received the initiation from Vajrayogini herself.

Chogye Trichen Khyenrab Chöje received prophecies that he would attain the rainbow body if he went to the holy mountain of the Tsar and remained there in retreat. However, he was not able to go at the moment, due to their responsibilities in the monasteries of Nalendra and Zhalu. Later, however, having received the Kalachakra initiation, blessings and teachings from Vajrayogini, he actually attained the body of rainbow light.

When Khyenrab Chöje informed his assistant of his achievement, his assistant asked, "What is the body of light?" Khyenrab Chöje said: "Here, touch my head." Khyenrab Chöje's attendant touched the head of the master with his hand, but his hand went straight down through the entire body of Khyenrab Chöje who, although appearing solid, was nothing but transparent light. This was the sign by which Khyenrab Chöje revealed his realization of the rainbow body. Khyenrab Chöje is one of the most important teachers of the Tsarpa Vajrayogini tradition.

We have an unbroken lineage of these teachings down to our present Guru. The lineage represented by those teachers who really knew Vajrayogini and received her teachings has continued to date. In recent times, the teacher who has continued this tradition was Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. He actually met Vajrayogini and received the short lineage, a direct transmission of the pure vision of Vajrayogini.

Jamyang Khyentse was extraordinary, a most exceptional master, one of the great masters who appeared in Tibet. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo is so respected that he is known in Tibet as a "second Buddha." In our times, the root of the Sakya tradition of Vajrayogini is Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

If we would like to mention a few points about the lineage of the blessings of the teachings of Vajrayogini, we can say that it is a line of practical experience, and that it is an unbroken lineage that has been proven through experience.

It is a lineage of experiential realization, once masters like Dagchen Lodro Gyaltsen realized the teaching by themselves. It is a visionary lineage of whispered instructions from Drakpa Gyaltsen and many masters since his time who have seen the face of Vajrayogini.

It is a lineage of Vision, because it contains a blessing, a practice manual and oral instructions of the "Dharmata directly shown," the teachings about the ultimate View.

When there are dedicated disciples, whose relationship with the Guru is like a child to their father, and keep well their samaya commitments, it is allowed to the master to teach the absolute meaning, such as the oral instructions on "Dharmata directly shown."

My gurus

My root guru, Dampa Rinpoche was a disciple and holder of the lineage of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgon Kongtrul Yonten Gyatso and Jamgon Loter Wangpo. All three teachers transmitted him the ultimate lineage of blessing, the teachings on how to recognize and sustain the Vision. These are the blessings and teachings I have received from Dampa Rinpoche, which is why I say that we are all very fortunate.

Dampa Rinpoche was really amazing. He was called a "Dampa" because he was a sublime being. Whenever he received some teaching, he immediately read it fifty times. Anyway, it was hard to compare anyone with him. That's why it was called "Dampa", meaning "sublime" or simply "the best".

I feel that he was equal to his own Gurus, he was endowed with the same qualities as Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgon Kongtrul and Loter Wangpo. From Khyentse Wangpo through Dampa Rinpoche to our present teacher, is a very close transmission. As mentioned earlier, if we ask: "What is the root of our Vajrayogini tradition in these times?" We must answer that the root is Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

My other root Guru, Zimog Rinpoche granted many blessings to many different people and many times introduced people to the nature of mind, giving a brief blessing. But he was more of a secret master and didn't openly explain the Vision so clearly to many people. However, in particular, I received many introductions and instructions from Zimog Rinpoche. From Dampa Rinpoche, I received very detailed lessons on how to recognize the consciousness and sustain awareness of the Vision. Dampa Rinpoche was very well learned in the whispered lineage and he taught me these things in depth. Often Zimog Rinpoche could not give more detailed explanations, but would bestow blessings upon the disciples and to introduce the nature of mind with a few words of blessing, along with the look of his eyes and gestures of his body, throughout the remainder of the Vision. Zimog Rinpoche especially liked to introduce through the short words of Sakya Pandita, that I always repeat when I introduce the true nature of mind. Sakya Pandita says:

In between two thoughts, an unbroken continuity of clear light.

Zimog Rinpoche often blessings bestowed upon the disciples and then he explained: "When the last thought has ceased, and the next thought has not yet arisen, there is an unbroken continuity of clear light. In the space where there are no thoughts, this luminosity is clear to one's own wisdom consciousness. It is the inseparability of samsara and nirvana. This is what you must now recognize by yourselves. " His words were often very short and precise, yet complete, just like that. They were very effective to introduce his disciples to the true nature of mind.

From Zimog Rinpoche I received the entire lineage of the Collection of Sadhanas . This was a very special lineage Collection of Sadhanas that he had received from the siddha master Jetsun Pema. Jetsun Pema received the Collection of Sadhanas from Jamgon Loter Wangpo who was the compiler of a collection of teachings collected by his guru Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo was extraordinary, a most exceptional master, one of the great masters who appeared in Tibet. He was the first in a line of recent times' Khyentse who later appeared as emanations of Khyentse Wangpo. The first direct rebirth was Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö. The recent Khyentse were just incredible in their realizations. After Khyentse Chokyi Lodro, there were five different emanations of Khyentse Rinpoche.

I also received the teachings of the absolute lineage, which emphasize the introduction to the true nature of mind, from Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö. I was very fortunate to receive the Dzogchen teachings from Khyentse Chokyi Lodro on two separate occasions. Twice during my time in Tibet, Khyentse Chokyi Lodro came to Central Tibet to teach and both times I received the teachings.

In response to a request I made, Khyentse Chokyi Lodro privately gave me an initiation and instructions in a line very close to my family, the teachings of Chetsun Senge Wangchuk, the Chetsun Nyingthig. Khyentse Chokyi Lodro said he would give me a very special teaching of the Chetsun Nyingthig since I was the bone lineage holder of Chetsun Senge Wangchuk.

Chetsun Nyingthig is one of the treasures of the mind of Jamyang Khyentse. During the teachings of Khyentse Chokyi Lodro in Lhasa, I also received other treasures of the mind of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and the Nyingthig Yabzhi. In addition, I received privately many precious whispered lineage [teachings] in the traditions of Vajrayogini and Hevajra from Khyentse Chokyi Lodro.

I also specifically asked for teachings about the nature of mind from the great master, the Shugsep Jetsunma. Like Dampa Rinpoche, she was also a disciple of Khyentse Wangpo Jamgon Kongtrul, Jamgon Loter Wangpo and many other great masters. Again, from those teachers, through the Shugsep Jetsunma to me, is a very short transmission. It is a very close lineage that comes to Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and his contemporaries.

When I asked for teachings from the Shugseb Jetsunma, I felt that I had already received very well the ultimate lineage from Dampa Rinpoche. However, I found that my practice of the Vision benefited and improved from her teachings. The Shugsep Jetsunma must have lived over 130 years old. She spent more than twenty or thirty years in retreat in total darkness. Despite having been in the black darkness in her retreat, she could see clearly, read her books and carry out all her activities, as well as contemplating pure vision of luminosity.

The previous Trulshig Rinpoche, Trulshig Zhude Rinpoche was one of the Shugsep Jetsunma's teachers and a teacher of my guru, Lama Ngaglo Rinpoche, from the monastery of Nalendra. Both the Shugseb Jetsunma and Lama Ngaglo were great practitioners of the Dzogchen tradition of the Black Quintessence, that they had received from Trulshig Zhude Rinpoche. Yangti Nagpo is a visionary practice of one hundred peaceful and wrathful deities, which is practiced in a dark retreat.

When I was young, my Guru Lama Ngaglo trained me in these practices in Nalendra, placing me in the dark retreat. Some of the old monks at Nalendra monastery complained saying, "Oh, that Ngaglo Lama is doing something wrong. He has confined our teacher in a room. How could he do such a thing?" In particular, there was an old monk who was in charge of the small temple where our big prayer wheel was located. He complained to everyone who Ngaglo Lama should not treat our lama so hard! Still, the practice was very beneficial.

I spent some weeks in the dark retreat led by Lama Ngaglo. I was able to gain the visions of samsara and nirvana and saw the realms of samsara, to the lower realms and the hell realms. And yet, even the realms of hell have been completely permeated by the pure realms of the mandalas of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities.

I also received many introductions to the essence of consciousness from Rinpoche, of Nalendra monastery. Lama Ngaglo's father was a Tulku of the Taklung Kagyu tradition and his mother was a nun from my family, the clan Chetsun. Since I was very young, Lama Ngaglo taught me all the Buddhist teachings, both sutra and tantra.

Lama Ngaglo taught me to do all the methods and practices of the Sakya tradition. He also taught me the practices and oral instructions from many other lines of practice. Lama Ngaglo was very diligent in receiving the teachings of a great number of Buddhist traditions, and he also passed all these to His Holiness Sakya Trizin.

I received the same kind of education and training from Dampa Rinpoche. He gave me during a period of several years, the complete Collection Of Tantras, which represents all The Eight Great Chariots Of The Practice Lineage . The Collection of Tantras contain the complete initiations of the eight schools of Buddhism that flourished in Tibet: Nyingma, Kadam, Sakya, Marpa Kagyu, Shangpa Kagyu, Kalachakra Jordrug, Nyendrub, Shijo and Chod.

From Dampa Rinpoche, I received all these initiations, together with oral instructions and whispered lines that explain the practices of view, meditation and practice of conduct for all eight carriages of the lineage of the practice. I passed all these the Sakya Trizin and many other lineage holders.

Among those traditions that I received from Dampa Rinpoche, I offered, for example, the complete transmissions together with oral instructions to the Six-branch-Kalachakra Yoga on numerous occasions, teaching the completion stage in detail.

I have continuously given initiations and transmissions of the teachings contained in the Collection Of Tantras and the Collection Of Sadhana throughout my whole life. These collections include the initiations, sadhanas and oral instructions of the Eight Great Chariots Of The Practice Lineage. The Tsarpa tradition follows the Sakya practices of Hevajra, Vajrayogini, Mahakala and so forth, practicing the two phases of creation and completion, together with all oral instructions that come with these practices. At the same time, Tsarpa yogis have always been able to enrich and improve their understanding of their practices through oral instructions of all eight carriages of the practice lineage.

This is the true meaning of Tsarpa tradition, which is rich in oral instructions of all eight practice carriages. This has always been the case in the practice lineage of the Tsarpa tradition since its inception, from the original master Dagchen Lodro Gyaltzen of the Sakya Khon family, to Doringpa to Tsarchen and his chief disciple Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk. If someone asks about this, just let them read the biographies of these masters.

The Vision: one unique essence

The end result or fruition of the Vision in all the schools of secret mantra is the same –we can call it the indivisibility of Samsara and Nirvana, Mahamudra or Dzogchen, they are of one essence. If they were not the same essence, we would speak of the Sakyapa realization, the Kagyupa realization and so on. In that case, if we received a Sakya initiation, we would not obtain the Kagyu result. But it really is not like that.

The names of the views are different but the meaning behind them is no different. This is because the end result of all vehicles of secret mantra is to realize the nature of mind itself. Someone who attains it can express it in different ways, such as Mahamudra, Dzogchen, and so on.

The only real difference is that different schools have different methods - different methods of introducing the nature of mind, different methods of practicing the path and so on. Once you know the real meaning of the View, the methods are the same in essence.

For this reason, I can teach according to the Nyingma tradition, according to the Sakya tradition or to any of the other modes of explanation. From the experience of the master in practice, he found that, once the real meaning is known, these teachings are not really all that different.

I feel that the words of Sakya Pandita are truly wonderful when he says, "My experience of Mahamudra is the descent of the primordial wisdom at the time of the initiation." Sakya Pandita means Mahamudra is not a doctrine or dogma belonging to Sakya, Kagyu or Gelug. Mahamudra refers to one that recognizes the true nature of mind. This Mahamudra is introduced through the power of the lineage of experiential realization, through the power of the lineage of ultimate blessing.

When we talk of the inseparability of Samsara and Nirvana, or the naked consciousness, or if we refer to Mahamudra, or to recognizing the consciousness, the meaning is the same for all of them, are all of one essence.

Some traditions may introduce it more generally with few words, some may introduce it in a rather naked way with many explanations, but their intentions

are the same. All these teachings are talking about the same point, recognizing the true nature of mind. The words are different, but if you really know the meaning, this is the same.

For example, sometimes Dampa Rinpoche meditated on the vision of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana, sometimes he meditated according to the Vision of Dzogchen. For him, the result of these was the same realization of the Vision.

The introductions to the nature of mind and to sustaining the Vision that I received from Khyentse Chokyi Lodro according to the teachings of Dzogchen, were the same in essence to the instructions I received from Dampa Rinpoche when he explained these teachings according to the Sakya tradition. There was no real difference between them.

Different traditions may emphasize different stages of meditation. Some place more emphasis on the early stages, others on the latter stages of meditation practice, according to the needs of beings. The methods of introduction and explanation may differ in some ways, but once you understand them, they all introduce the same fundamental Buddha-nature.

In the philosophical schools of Buddhism, the views of different traditions are debated. Philosophy students try to distinguish their Vision from those of other schools. Not so in the lineage of the practice. All schools in the practice lineage reach the same essence and express it in very similar ways.

Sakya Pandita said he had a special way of understanding the basis, the path and the fruition or result. In the Sakya tradition of explaining the Vision it is said that base, path and result are inseparable, meaning that they share the same essence.

However, these special words of Sakya Pandita are not based on theoretical understanding or on written treatises. They can only be understood through our own experience of meditation practice. This is because base, path and the result is the same only to those who recognized the emptiness, the true nature of mind.

Practicing guru yoga day and night

Precious guru, embodiment of all refuges, Greatly kind Master of Dharma, to you I pray.

Unmatched in kindness, look at me with compassion, Bless me in this life, at death and in the bardo.

Bless me to recognize the essence of my own mind.

This is a traditional four-line prayer often sung during the practice of guru yoga. I have included a fifth line for those who wish to pray for blessings to be able to recognize the true nature of mind. It is a prayer that can be added to your practice of guru yoga at any time. It is very short and has all the key points within it, so you can rely on this prayer for your practice of guru yoga, throughout day and night.

When you recite this prayer, as this is the Vajrayogini tradition you could visualize the Guru as Buddha Vajradharma, red. If you are practicing in the Hevajra tradition you could see visualize the Guru as Buddha Vajradhara, blue. **You can visualize the Guru in all the formsadequate to your practice. Visualize the Guru while you supplicate and then dissolve theGuru into light that is absorbed into your heart. With this, you fuse your mind to themind of the Guru. Having dissolved the Guru into yourself, the Guru no longer has anyform, but you are fused to his wisdom mind.**

This prayer includes all sources of refuge, the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and the three roots of the Guru, Deity and Dharmapala. Everything included in the Guru, who incorporates all the jewels.

This four lines prayer is very excellent. I added a fifth line so that practitioners can pray to the Guru for wisdom. Actually, it is a prayer that can be used by followers of any tradition of Secret Mantra. If you want to pray elaborately, you can just change one little line of prayer, in order to pray for each of the individual sources of refuge, leaving the other three lines the same. That way you can pray to the Three Jewels and Three Roots, one by one. If you want to do this, then, following from the verse as it is written here, you recite the verse again, praying, "Precious guru, embodiment of all deities," then, thirdly, you pray, "Precious guru, embodiment of all dharmapalas", and so on. That's like praying to the Guru who has the three roots, one by one. Likewise, you can add the words for the protector deities and then for the dakinis, and so on.

In the same way, for the Three Jewels, you can say, "Precious guru, embodiment of all Buddhas", then the same for "dharma" and "sangha." When you recite each verse, pay attention to the spiritual qualities of each of the sources of refuge and consider how these qualities are incorporated into the Guru. This is an elaborate way to meditate on the qualities of our gurus with a single verse.

There is also a very famous guru yoga prayer of four lines that can also be used throughout the day and night to practice guru yoga. The following verse is usually recited at the beginning of a meditation session, while the verse that we discussed above comes from the guru yoga session. Both can be recited at any time during the day and night.

It is said that you can visualize the Guru on top of your head during the day, or in your heart at night as you go to sleep. This is a special instruction. Furthermore, any one of these visualizations is also appropriate at any time. In connection with this visualizations, you can recite the four lines guru yoga prayer.

Pray to the Guru with sincere desire and devotion. Generate faith in the immeasurable qualities of the Guru and of the enlightened ones. **If you want more benefits from the practice of guru yoga, practice a short prayer and practice guru yoga as often as you can.**

Receiving the blessings of the Guru and remembering the true nature of mind are practices that can be practiced continuously all day and night.

Glorious root guru, precious Master, Please sit in the lotus throne on the crown of my head. Accept me through your great kindness, and grant the siddhis of body, speech and mind.

During the practice of guru yoga, first generate faith and devotion while offering prayers and supplications. The best way to receive the blessings that introduce the true nature of mind is the generation of faith in the Guru. Through faith you can have an experience of emptiness, the true nature of mind. Pray to the Guru repeatedly with intense and fervent devotion.

Next, dissolve the Guru and the lineage gurus in your heart. When you do that, merge your body, speech and mind with those of the Guru and the lineage masters.

Now rest your mind on emptiness, remaining without attachment. Within emptiness, clear luminosity emerges with the power of blessings. When this arises, you can apply the introduction from the Guru to recognize the Vision and continue to support it. This is the essence of the practice of guru yoga.

All experience is the manifestation of Guru

In your practice of guru yoga, if you are able to consider everything you see and experience as an expression of the body, speech and mind of the Guru, this will be a great enhancement to sustain the Vision. Understanding the whole experience as being the manifestation of Guru allows us to take guru yoga as the path. As we join with the body, speech and mind of the Guru in the guru yoga, everything that we see and experience is included within our Vision, within the recognition of emptiness' essence.

The most precious teaching of the Dharma is the introduction to the view of the true nature of mind. It is not possible to make many efforts to try to

understand this teaching. Once we receive the teaching, its meaning will occur naturally through our practice of guru yoga, just as the cream naturally emerges on top of the milk. The pure essence of your mind, the clear light, will arise naturally from mixing it with the mind of the Guru in the practice of guru yoga, as the cream emerges on top of the milk, or as the pure essence naturally separates from impure sediment.

While the Vision does not come naturally, we need to induce or assist the process by purifying our minds and practicing pure vision. **In the guru yoga, the practice of pure vision means to consider everything that we experience as the manifestation of the Guru.** In everything we see, we are seeing the face of the Guru; everything we feel is the heart of the Guru; everything we touch is the body of the Guru; everything we hear is the speech of the Guru, and so on.

When we join this way of experiencing everything with the practice of merging the wisdom of the Guru's consciousness with the recognition of the Vision, this is the way to practice the guru yoga throughout the day and night. **As we learn to remain with the Vision, everything will begin to emerge as the display of the Guru's wisdom.** This has similarities with the creation stage in which everything is the manifestation of the yidam. **As Tilopa said to Naropa:**

If you understand everything you experience as being a manifestation of the Guru, this is the practice of guru yoga.

In practicing guru yoga, some can recite the Guru's mantra, and some can recite some verses of praise such as those just described. **If you do not want to pray to the Guru in the elaborate way just described, simply recite the five lines as a prayer. Then dissolve the Guru in your heart and merge your body, speech and mind with those of the Guru.**

Dissolving the blessings of the Gurus in yourself, now unite with the mind of the guru. Your mind and the Guru's mind merge indiscriminately, so that they are non-dual with each other. Maintain the vision for as long as you are able to remain with it.

This is the most important point of Guru Yoga. After having learned this point well, you are on the right track. It is difficult to enter on the right path, but once we do find the right one, everything goes very well. This is known as having the blessings of the Guru as the path.

Summary of the practice of guru yoga

Briefly, we must understand that our root Guru incorporates the four kayas of body, speech, mind and wisdom of the enlightened Buddha. The Guru is the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, Dharmakaya and Svabhavikakaya of the Buddha.

Although we are unable to meet the Buddha in person, we know the root Guru. Thus, his kindness to us, personally, is even greater than that of the Buddha. As explained, the Guru embodies all objects of refuge, of all the enlightened qualities. It is said that if the Guru's disciple prays constantly, in this way, realization will be definitely born in his mind.

After supplicating to the Guru, all phenomena dissolve into the Guru and the Guru dissolves into you. Merge your body, speech and mind inseparably with the enlightened body, speech and mind of the Guru. This is like pouring water into water.

Continue to mix your body, speech and mind with the Guru and rest on the recognition of consciousness. Ground your recognition of consciousness on the enlightened consciousness of the Guru. Just as there is an ultimate taking of refuge, where the objects of refuge dissolve in our heart and remain without attachment, the practice of unifying with the wisdom of the Guru in the Vision is called the ultimate guru yoga.

If you practice guru yoga in this way, you will be able to recognize and maintain therecognition of the clear light. At first, our recognition of clear light can only last for a short moment. We must recognize repeatedly, hundreds or even thousands of times per day, continuing to strive in praying to the Guru and merging with his consciousness.

Through the practice of guru yoga, our moments of recognition will gradually become more and more sustained. Through practice, the clear light that is present between two thoughts will arise spontaneously and begin to be sustained naturally. Thus, the practice of guru yoga will improve your recognition of consciousness, and in turn your recognition of consciousness will increase the blessings of guru yoga practice. Both practices will support and complement each other.

Guru yoga practice is the most important mean to be able to continue beyond our initial recognition of the Vision. By the blessings in the union with the mind of the Guru, we mix our practice of maintaining the Vision with all that we experience. Therefore, our recognition of consciousness will last longer and be more stable. This is the key point.

Practicing in this way, we will remain more comfortable. Everything will seem effortless, without difficulties.

Final Advice

We should remember and be aware of the teachings and precepts that we have received and taken. This is *drenpa*, which means attention or the act of

recollection. To maintain attention is extremely important. One important meaning of attention is that the instructions that were given to us by the Guru must be kept clearly in mind.

Shezhin, which means vigilance or the act of self-awareness, takes note of whether we are conducting ourselves properly or improperly. Whatever the teaching that the Guru gave us, we must examine them and verify them through our own experience. This is shezhin, to observe carefully.

Another extremely important point is the question of what lineage is received and practiced, as Milarepa emphasizes in his teachings. In the presence of a true lineage, there is continuity of blessings transmitted through the lineage. And of course, the blessing also depends on oneself, the practitioner. If one has pure conviction and pure devotion, then one is sure to receive the blessings of the lineage. Receiving the blessings depends on one's own faith and pure vision, rather than depending simply on the teacher. Even if the Master is a great Buddha, if the disciple lacks faith, what benefit is there?

It is necessary to determine with certainty that all our gurus and all enlightened beings are condensed into a single one, who appears in the form of Guru, as described in our practice of visualization in guru yoga.

In addition to this, from time to time, remember to dedicate the merit of your practice. This will prevent all the merit and blessings that you received are destroyed and will help you to advance in your practice. Finally, although we have the true nature of the mind within us, some of us may resemble burnt seeds; without enough faith, it is difficult to accept the nature of mind and recognize it. It's very simple, but some people have difficulty accepting, because it seems too simple! In the absence of faith, we cannot accept and recognize the nature of mind, our own wisdom consciousness within us, even if pointed out outside of us. Once we have faith, we are like a seed that will bear fruit; all spiritual qualities can manifest from within.

Genuine meditators first learn and acquire knowledge and then clarify all doubts and all their acceptances and rejections, progressing through contemplation and reflection, until they come to understand the words and oral instructions of their teachers through their own experience. This is the traditional Sakya way. Finally, the yogis will find all the qualities of the teacher arising within themselves and these qualities will only continue to grow and grow.

My five main Gurus of the teachings of the lineage of ultimate meaning are: Dampa Rinpoche, Zhenpen Nyingpo; Zimog Dorje Chang, Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, Lama Ngaglo Rinpoche and Shugseb Jetsunma. Among them, the more detailed teachings that I received were those of Dampa Rinpoche.

There was no contradiction, no big difference between what I received from any of them. Their introductions to the recognition of the true nature of mind and how to sustain this recognition shared the same unique essence. Although the introduction methods varied slightly, once you recognized the Vision that they introduced, you could see that it is the same.

The last advice that I received from all those great masters was also the same: you must be very diligent. If you are not diligent in your practice, not much will happen. If you are diligent, you will definitely receive the blessings and obtain results. The final advice of my gurus was to put much energy and attention in the practice.

As the great Yogi Kunleg Drukpa said in front of the statue of Jowo Sakyamuni in Lhasa: "Before, you and I were the same. You were very diligent in your practice and became a Buddha. I have not been diligent, and I'm still a common sentient being. So, I prostrate to you."

It is also like the last instruction of Jetsun Milarepa to his disciple Gampopa. Milarepa told Gampopa that he had a final instruction to give him. They went to a high mountain with a wide view. When they got there and Gampopa supplicated respectfully Milarepa raised his cotton skirt and showed Gampopa his bottom. It was callous as leather, from his years sitting day and night in meditation on the stone floor of caves. Milarepa said to Gampopa, "This is my final teaching. You must be as diligent as I've been."

Since this was the final teaching of my gurus for me, I feel that it is sufficient for my disciples. Now you received all the oral instructions. It is up to you to apply them. I have asked my disciples to translate my oral instructions on the teachings of Parting from the Four Attachments, as well as those concerning Vajrayogini practices.

You have the teachings, but it depends on your practice if they will bear fruit. Try to remain mindful of the Guru's oral instructions. Study them and apply them at all times. Samaya, the sacred commitment that we share with our Gurus, is maintained through faith in the Guru and through purifying the obscurations and receiving blessings. Realization is achieved through the union of these with the practice.

I personally have nothing to be proud of, but I feel very fortunate and proud to have received such a lineage from those masters of high realizations. These are very powerful unbroken lineages of blessings which produce realizations up to the present moment. I feel rich when it comes to lineages.

I also feel that we are all very fortunate. Although I am an ordinary being, I had gurus like Dampa Rinpoche, Zhenpen Nyingpo, Khyentse Chokyi Lodro and

Zimog Rinpoche. I feel that we are all very fortunate, which is why I'm always telling you that when Dampa Rinpoche gave the initiations of the “Collection of Tantras”, during the descent of the blessings I definitely experienced the flow of the lineages of blessing. This flow of blessings is with us and that is why we are fortunate and realized on the path.

Translated by John Dewese and Guru Rinchen Chodar, according to the aspiration of Chogye Trichen Rinpoche. Compiled and edited by John Dewese.

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