

**Concluding teachings given at the Empowerment of
the Profound Dharma of the Natural Liberation through Contemplating the
Peaceful and Wrathful: Stage of Completion Instructions on the Six Bardos
April 21, 2013 at Dechen Rang Dharma Center**

1. This empowerment of the 100 Peaceful and Wrathful Deities is directed towards people receiving teachings on the six bardos (transitional processes) at the center. These bardo teachings are very essential and I believe that they are of great benefit and importance to you. Do you think that you are not in a bardo now? In fact, all of us are currently in the bardo of living, or the "natural bardo of this life." We should realize that this very moment is the bardo of this life. Whatever we hear, see, touch, or think of is all part of this transitional process of living.

2. After the bardo of living comes the transitional process of dying. What is the bardo of dying? It is the intermediate state between one's becoming ill and one's very last breath. At the dying moment, when outer and inner respiration ceases, one becomes unconscious. Then, when awareness awakens again, the manifestation of the bardo of dharmata (reality-itself) dawns. Those who are highly experienced in meditation and who practice bardo teachings well in this lifetime will be liberated during this transitional process of reality-itself. After the bardo of reality-itself, one enters into the bardo of meditation. For those who practice the bardo teachings diligently, this transitional process is another opportunity for liberation. During the transitional process of meditation, the forty-two peaceful deities within one's heart and the fifty-eight wrathful deities above one's crown will separate from one's body and manifest in front, filling space. Now that you have received the empowerment of the bardo teachings, if you practice and familiarize yourself with the hundred deities then when in the transitional process, you will be able to realize that these are the very deities of the bardo teachings that you have practiced. Moreover, as soon as you recognize them, you have accomplished Sambhogakaya.

3. If we excel in our practice now, we will have the opportunity to achieve liberation. If you comprehend the bardo teachings and practice genuinely, and there will be nothing to worry about when faced with death. If we can recognize the hundred deities right this moment, it is certain that liberation will be achieved. Those masters who practice Breakthrough (trekcho) and Leap-over (togonal) can attain enlightenment in the bardo of dharmata.

4. If you practice well, it is possible to be liberated in the bardo of meditation. Being liberated in

this transitional process does not require us to know all of the hundred deities. As long as we can recognize one of the hundred deities, we will be liberated. The recognized deity will lead you to a certain pureland or help you attain realization of the Sambhogakaya. Thus, recognizing just one deity you can attain liberation. If one is not liberated in the bardo of meditation or bardo of dharmata, it will become more and more difficult to gain liberation in the following stages.

5. I suggest that whoever listens to the Bardo teachings should take time to recite the mantras of the hundred deities or the Prayer of Natural Liberation. In the prayer, there are the names of the hundred deities and the invocation praying that one can recognize the hundred deities in the transitional process. It is best if one can recite the prayer once every day. If not, once every week or once every month will work. Or one can sit down and recite the prayer 100 times, 500 times, or 1000 times uninterruptedly. In this way, one will remember the names in the prayer and recognize the hundred deities when in the transitional process.

6. There is one story about this as follows. Once, there was a family in Tibet. Every year, the family would invite monks to their home to recite the Prayer of Natural Liberation for seven days. There was a line in the prayer, “Tso Ri Sermo Da Zhu Gong”, which meant that, within the hundred deities, there was a yellow Gaurima holding a bow and arrow in her hands. Every time the monks recited this particular line, it was always a bit louder than the others. This caught the attention of an old lady in the family. Hearing it year after year, the old lady memorized the verse and often thought about the appearance of this deity, and thus it gradually made a deep impression on her. After she died, in the bardo of meditation when the hundred deities were appearing, when she saw a deity with a yellow body and holding a bow and arrow in her hands, by the power of having heard the Prayer of Natural Liberation yearly she was able to realize immediately, “Oh! This is the deity mentioned in the prayer that the monks chanted at home.” Faith arose with this realization and the old lady was liberated.

7. By recognizing just a single one of the hundred deities, you cannot help but achieve liberation in the bardo. Therefore, from now on, everyone should recite more Bardo Aspiration Prayers and look at images of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities more often. You should cultivate strong faith towards the hundred deities and look at images and thangkas of them over and over again so that you know them by heart. In the Kham region in Tibet, we used to place great emphasis on the bardo teachings. People had many pictures and thangkas of the hundred deities at home, and everyone could recite the Prayer of Natural Liberation, and so on. During the Cultural Revolution, however,

all of these were destroyed and now people are much less likely to pray and so forth as they used to.

8. Therefore, you should look at pictures or thanngas of the hundred deities over and over again and check to see if the images will appear clearly in your mind. If not, look at them again. Then close your eyes and see if you can visualize the images. If not, try again. Take your home town, for example. Every time you think of it, all the images will appear clearly in your mind, such as where the well is or what the neighbor's house looks like, because you have seen them so much in the past. If you can remember the images of the hundred deities clearly in that same way, you will be able to recognize them when they manifest in the transitional process of reality-itself. This is not a joke, or a lie. When you can truly recognize the deities, you can be sure that you will be liberated. So you should regard this matter as the most important thing in this life, and that will be of great benefit to you when you are facing death.

9. Hence these teachings on the six bardos are supreme. Moreover, this is a treatise discovered by the great tertön, or 'treasure revealer,' Karma Lingpa. One of the Five Great Lingpas, Karma Lingpa revealed termas (treasures) hidden in the northern area. The other four Great Lingpas--Sangye Lingpa, Dorje Lingpa, Ratna Lingpa, and Padma Lingpa--revealed termas hidden in the central area, eastern area, southern area, and western area, respectively. Since Karma Lingpa is one of the Five Great Lingpas, the termas revealed by him, including this teaching, are beyond compare, endowed with tremendous merit and inconceivable blessings.

10. This terma revealed by Karma Lingpa is very important. When Guru Rinpoche was about to leave Tibet, the king of Tibet and Guru Rinpoche's disciples prayed earnestly to him, saying, "You have already given us many profound Vajrayana practices. However, we still need a concise teaching that captures the essence of all these teachings." Therefore, Guru Rinpoche distilled the essence of all the teachings, which became the bardo instructions. Since they are the essence of all the Vajrayana teachings, they are truly ultimate.

11. Now let's talk about the transitional process of dreaming. When you fall asleep, the bardo of dreaming will appear. You can see for yourself that you are alert before falling asleep, but fall into unconsciousness as you go to sleep. At that time, your eight consciousnesses are dissolving into the alaya-vijnana, the consciousness of the ground of all. Then you become aware again and the bardo of dharmata appears. Those who are not practitioners will not be able to recognize it. The bardo of dharmata is like a shooting star: it only appears for a very short period of time. Then consciousnesses arise again from the ground of all (alaya). With that, we start to dream. The

transitional processes after death are exactly like the transitional process of dreaming; there is no difference at all. Just like in the bardos after death, in dreams you can see horrible things sometimes and other times dream about things you like or dislike, times of joy or sorrow. This is the transitional process of dreaming.

12. When we die, the bardo of dharmata arises first, followed by the bardo of meditation. After that, horrible sights appear in succession, in exactly the same way as in the bardo of dreaming. There are two types of bardo of meditation. The first is when one practices meditation in this life and various appearances arise. Since these appearances are only experienced by the practitioner, not by others, they are called 'unshared.' The other bardo of meditation is that which follows the bardo of dharmata after death. Again the unshared appearances can only be seen by yourself but not by others, just as when you are dreaming. These are the manifestations of the Sambhogakaya.

13. All the appearances that can be perceived by everyone now are the manifestations of Nirmanakaya.

14. The appearances of the true nature of reality seen by great masters while in samadhi are the manifestation of Dharmakaya.

15. Every moment of our experience is a bardo. Do you think that the present moment is not a bardo? In fact, this itself is a bardo. From time without beginning, we have always been in the bardos, and we are in the natural bardo of this life right now.

16. I explained yesterday that: The ground manifests as (1) appearances through the eight gateways of spontaneous presence, which are like (2) the appearances in the transitional processes. Moreover, (3) the perceptions we experience now are like (4) those in the dreaming state. None of the above truly exists. They are perceptions that have persisted since the ground manifested as appearances through the eight gateways of spontaneous presence long ago, nothing more. Up until now, we all believe all appearances to be true. Those who realize they are all unreal are already liberated; it is because they know none of these four truly exist.

17. Many Dharma masters in India as well as many practitioners in Tibet have already attained liberation. The reason we remain here, not liberated, is that we still believe that everything truly exists. This prevents us from being liberated. We will attain liberation when we understand that everything is not real merely the appearance of substantiality.

18. Moreover, if we can perceive the forty-two peaceful deities and fifty-eight wrathful deities as self-appearing, we will be liberated. But if we believe that the deities exist somewhere else, it will

be very difficult for us to achieve any accomplishment no matter how many mantras we have recited, how many visualizations we have practiced, or how many months or years we have trained. In short, as long as we think that deities are external entities that truly exist, we will rule out any chance of accomplishment in this life. Thus, it is very important to recognize that the deities are only self-appearing. Perceive all sounds to be pure as mantra; all appearances to be pure as deities; and all thoughts to be pure as the display of Buddha's wisdom.

19. There is a line in a verse that we often recite, Nang Drak Rig Sum Lha Ngak Cho Ku Ngang (All appearances, sounds and thoughts are the deity, mantra, and dharmakaya). This is very important and should be the emphasis of your practice. It is also a very prominent prayer in Vajrayana Buddhism. Some people, however, think that this verse is only something they chant before taking a break, which is because practitioners usually recite this four-line prayer before arising from practice sessions. These people do not comprehend the meaning of this verse, which is that even when we are between practice sessions, we cannot lose the crucial point of cultivating the view that all sights, sounds and concepts are the enlightened body, speech, and mind of the deity. Since we are not reciting the practice text when we are between meditation sessions, we chant this verse at the end of the session to remind ourselves of this point. But these days, many people just take this verse to mean that it is time for break without thinking of the meaning of the words, and this has become everyone's habit.

20. As a matter of fact, this prayer was revealed by the great Minling Terchen. When he was about to die, he was very ill and lying in bed. All of a sudden, he stood up holding bell and dorje, strode seven steps towards the east, and spontaneously revealed this four-line prayer. Then he passed away. So these four lines (of which the line mentioned above is the first) are endowed with great blessings. The reason for his seven final steps to the east is that he then reincarnated in the east as the great tertön Kongtrül Yonten Gyatso, in what is now the Kham region of Tibet.

21. If the lecturer explains the bardo teachings in detail and the audience listens attentively, both will benefit from the teachings tremendously. Familiarizing yourself with the bardo teachings will make this life meaningful. Otherwise, obtaining a human life of leisure and endowment is pointless. Thus, please make this precious human life meaningful. Thank you all.

22. All of us should strive hard to fulfill the potential of this precious human life, so that when we die we will have some 'travelling money' to take with us. For example, we can bring with us one hundred thousand recitations of six syllable mantra of Avalokiteshvara, which might be a bit heavy

(Rinpoche chuckles), or one hundred thousand recitations of Guru Rinpoche mantra. In the Kham area, there were people who claimed that they had recited the six syllable mantra of Avalokiteshvara two hundred million times in this lifetime or the mantra of Guru Rinpoche one hundred million times. There were a lot of people like that in Kham long ago. Last year, I went to some places in Nepal which are located at very high altitudes and very remote. These places are not yet influenced by Communism, so a lot of elderly people leave their homes and undertake retreat in caves, reciting Mani mantra and Guru Rinpoche mantra. Among them, many have completed three hundred million Mani mantra recitations and others have done the Guru Rinpoche mantra two hundred million times. But in Kham nowadays, there are not many practitioners like that because of the influence of Communist party. Things are not the same as before. In the past, lots of people had recited the Mani mantra several hundred million times or undertaken Nyungne practice one hundred and eight times. Some had invoked Amitabha's name three or five hundred thousand times. There were a lot of people like that. It takes great effort to undertake the Nyungne practice one hundred and eight times, however, there were a lot of people who had accomplished that. Today in Kham, it is rare to encounter someone who has finished reciting the Mani mantra one hundred million times. Moreover, here in the US, people will think highly of someone who has recited the Guru Rinpoche mantra just one hundred thousand times. If you mention the one hundred sets of Nyungne practice, people think that it is impossible to accomplish that in one single lifetime. I do not know if there is anyone here in the States who has taken up the Nyungne practice; but in Taiwan and other areas, people have started to undertake this practice, which is very good. Be it circumambulation, text recitation, or prostration, in short, we need to engage in virtuous deeds so that when we die we can bring with us the merit accumulated.

23. What happens if you are going to India but you do not have any money? In the same way, it would be very difficult to have none of the 'travelling money' of merit when in the bardo after death and before one's next life. In the bardo state, all the beings gather together, both those with merit and without. Those with merit look relaxed and smiling, whereas those without merit look terrified and miserable. After death, it will mean great agony if you have not accumulated any merit at all. So I pray that you all can be smiling, relaxed and at ease when in the transitional state after death. Please remember this and practice diligently. Thank you. I have nothing more to say.