



FINDING REST *in the*
NATURE *of the* MIND

The Trilogy of Rest, Volume 1



LONGCHENPA

Translated by the Padmakara Translation Group



Buddha Śākyamuni



Guru Padmasambhava



Longchen Rabjam Drimé Özer

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Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind

The Trilogy of Rest, Volume 1

Longchenpa

TRANSLATED BY

The Padmakara Translation Group



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FOREWORD

ALAK ZENKAR RINPOCHE

Supreme among the vast array of pith instructions, Bringing into one epitome
The crucial points without exception of the Tripitaka And the four classes of
Tantra,

These volumes are the summit of a myriad treatises That heal and that protect,
A perfect chariot of teaching clear and unsurpassed, The supreme means whereby
The minds of those who wander in the triple world, Find rest in freedom.

Priceless in this universe,

This scripture is the image of the speech of Longchen, Dharma king from Samyé,
who in times to come Will have the name of the Victorious Merudipa.

It is a beauteous mirror formed of flawless crystal That reveals the sense of the
essential lore Of the three yogas and nine stages of the Mahayana, Passed
down by word of mouth and in the precious treasures, Rich patrimony of the
line of knowledge-holders Of the Ancient Translations.

Your aspiration first arose

Upon the shoulders of the eastern hills And now your translation in a foreign
tongue Shines like the day-creating sun

Assisted by the light of publication's wizardry.

I celebrate its coming,

The sweet friend of the lotus of the Buddha's doctrine.

From the smiling blossom of delight and happiness There falls such honeyed
nectar of rejoicing That, not waiting for the songs of the applauding bees, I
cannot help but pour out my congratulation.

I who have grown old beneath this canopy of joy, This great refulgence of the
sunlight Of the doctrine of the powerful Sage, Cannot but speak my praises
of your wish To be of service to his teaching.

Therefore may this lucid textual explanation, Indeed a health-sustaining herb
For teachings of the Ancient Translation School And source of glorious
sustenance for many beings, Increase a hundred, thousand, millionfold And
be widely spread and propagated.

With excellent aspiration and activity for the Buddha's doctrine in general and
especially for the orally transmitted and treasure teachings of the Ancient
Tradition of the Great Secret, the Padmakara translators have rendered into
English the root texts of the Trilogy of Rest, which are now published together
with their autocommentaries, the spotlessly clear exposition of the mighty
Conqueror Longchen Rabjam. With joy and admiration, I, Thubten Nyima, join
my hands at my heart and offer flowers of rejoicing. Written in the fragrant city
of Chengdu on the twelfth day of the seventh month, in the year 2017.

FOREWORD

JIGME KHYENTSE RINPOCHE

AT THE CONCLUSION of the great autocommentary to his long and beautiful poem *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*, Gyalwa Longchenpa gave the reason for his massive composition. He began by lamenting the fact that the great masters of the past, whose works were clear, comprehensive, and utterly trustworthy, had passed away. Their place had been taken by scholars of incomplete learning and understanding who, through clinging to words and formulas, had failed to penetrate the essential meaning of the teachings. They perceived differences and even contradictions between the views of the sūtras and the tantras of the Mahāyāna—where no such conflicts existed.

It was to correct this misunderstanding that Longchenpa composed his Trilogy of Rest and in particular its first section, *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*, which is an exposition of the stages of the path. Here, the sūtras and tantras are explained progressively—from the preliminary reflections that cause the mind to take an interest in spiritual values, to the view and practice of the Great Perfection—in order to show how the earlier teachings are enlarged and completed by those that follow. Scriptural authority, reasoning, and the essential instructions of the practice lineage are all invoked to demonstrate that the Pāramitāyāna and the Mantrayāna form a single, perfectly integrated vehicle suited to the varying abilities and aspirations of practitioners, and grounded, from beginning to end, in bodhichitta: the wish to attain buddhahood for the sake of others.

The basis of all progress on the path is faith: confidence in the Buddha as a trustworthy guide, in the truth of the Dharma that he expounded, and in the Saṅgha that over the centuries has preserved and practiced the teachings, and transmitted them to us. But if faith in the Three Jewels is the essential foundation, it is only through actually implementing the teachings that we can free ourselves

from the confusion and meaningless sufferings of saṃsāra. This being said, it is obvious that in order to practice the teachings, we need to know what they are. We need to understand them as clearly and as accurately as possible. We need to be certain of their truth.

When the Buddha said that we should not accept his teachings out of blind faith but should examine them and put them to the test of reasoning and experience, he was not just expressing the fearless confidence of someone who had discovered and seen the truth for himself. He was telling us that we too must come to the same realization on the basis of our own efforts. It is we who must attain liberation for ourselves; the Buddha cannot do it for us. He shows us the way; it is for us to follow the path and reap its fruit.

For some people—thanks no doubt to study, reflection, and meditation, and the great accumulation of merit in previous existences—faith and devotion to the teacher and the lineage are able to bring them in this life to the final goal without much need of learning. For most of us, however, the path of faith and devotion is not enough. In addition, we need to receive many teachings, to reflect on them and to understand them as best as we can with our rational intelligence. It is not enough to simply take the teachings on trust, telling ourselves that they must be true because they come from the Buddha, or because the lamas teach them. Neither is it enough to indulge in an equally superstitious belief that the teachings must be true because they happen to be supported by the findings of modern science. No, we must be ready to make the effort to understand the teachings for ourselves, as best we can, following the logical arguments set forth in the great texts, so that in the end we too will arrive at a state of irreversible conviction and will be able to follow the path with unshakeable confidence.

It was with this in mind and in order to educate us in the Dharma that Longchenpa composed the text contained in this book. Like Atiśa's *Lamp for the Path*, Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*, and Jigme Lingpa's *Treasury of Precious Qualities*, Longchenpa's Trilogy of Rest, and especially *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*, is one of the great expositions of gradual teachings in Tibetan literature. It is fortunate that these great texts are becoming available in English translation and I hope that Western students of the Buddha's teachings will profit greatly from them.

TRANSLATORS' INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT VOLUME is a translation of *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind* (*Sems nyid ngal gso*) by Longchen Rabjam, or Longchenpa, as he is more commonly known. It begins a project to translate the entire Trilogy of Rest (*Ngal gso skor gsum*), of which it is the first part. Consequently, before any attempt to introduce this first volume, it seems appropriate to discuss some more general matters that apply to the trilogy as a whole. This concerns most notably the details, insofar as they can be ascertained, of Longchenpa's life and times, and a general presentation of his extant writings.

Longchenpa is celebrated as one of the greatest scholars and masters of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is universally respected as the preeminent exponent of the Great Perfection, or Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*), the highest vehicle of the nine-vehicle system used in the Nyingma tradition as a means of classifying the teachings of the Buddha. In terms of learning and realization, no one since the heroic age of Vimalamitra and Guru Padmasambhava, the abbot Śāntarakṣita and King Trisong Detsen, is said to have equaled the sublime eminence of Longchen Rabjam, the Omniscient King of Dharma.

From the extensive corpus of his collected works, those that have survived are prized not only for their subtlety and erudition, as well as, in many cases, their poetic beauty, but also because they are said to have emanated from the mind of one who, from an early age, had accomplished high realization of the Great Perfection. The extraordinary quality of Longchenpa's works derives, as Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche once remarked, from the fact that they are not the compositions of an ordinary mind, but sprang spontaneously from the state of Longchenpa's

enlightened wisdom, like the songs of realization (Skt. *doha*) of the mahāsiddhas of India. Longchenpa's writings are themselves vehicles of powerful blessings, instruments that, given the right circumstances, may facilitate and increase the spiritual realization of their readers.

This peculiar quality reflects the nature of the Great Perfection teachings themselves. It is generally said that the various levels of Buddhist doctrine, whether these are arranged according to the traditional tripartite scheme of the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma, or as various systems of tenets arranged in an ascending order of subtlety, are all based on the views or philosophical understandings of the nature of phenomena that are specific to them. One speaks therefore of the Vaibhāṣika view, the Sautrāntika view, the Yogācāra view, the Madhyamaka view, the view of the sūtras, the view of the tantras, and so on. These views are keys to the understanding and implementation of the doctrinal system in question. Therefore, it is usually said that when one embarks upon the study and practice of a given teaching in the hope of attaining its result, the establishment of the view is the indispensable first step. For most people, the integration of any given view comes gradually, through the reception of instructions from a qualified source, through careful reflection on them in order to deepen intellectual understanding and remove doubts, and finally through meditation, thanks to which the instructions are perfectly assimilated, and understanding ripens into realization.

In terms of the nine-vehicle system, the progressively sophisticated views of the first eight vehicles, from the Śrāvakayāna up to and including the Anuyoga of the inner tantras, all share a common feature. They are, as philosophical positions, established according to the rational processes of the discursive mind. The teachings are explained, analyzed, and understood by ordinary intellectual methods and through the kind of reasoning that—given intelligence, merit, hard work, and perseverance—is open to every human mind in the ordinary sense of that word. The view thereby established, whether of Sūtra or of Tantra, lays the ground for meditative practice and subsequent conduct in the “postmeditation” situations of daily life.

From the views of the lower eight vehicles, however, that of the Great Perfection, or Atiyoga, stands apart. For in addition to a particular understanding of the nature of phenomena, both mental and extramental, acquired through study and reflection (a feature it shares with the lower views), the true and authentic view of the Great Perfection consists in the direct recognition of the nature of the mind itself. This recognition is, of course, prepared for by the reception of

teachings on the view in the usual way and by assiduous aspirational practice. Nevertheless, the actual view of the Great Perfection to which these teachings relate only indirectly—in the manner of a finger pointing at the moon, to use the traditional image—is not something arrived at simply through the exercise of reason or ordinary intelligence, however well informed or acute that intelligence may be.

The nature of the mind, the pure state of awareness, which in the terminology of the Great Perfection is referred to as *rigpa*, is said to lie outside the range of the discursive intellect. As the very nature of the mind, it is indeed that which makes all intellection possible. It underlies and logically precedes every state of ordinary cognition, and for that very reason it can never itself become the object of such cognition. This is why the authentic view of the Great Perfection, the recognition of the nature of the mind, transcends every kind of theory, philosophical position, or doctrinal tenet. It cannot be described or explained. It cannot be taught.

It can, however, be pointed out and recognized when a qualified master encounters a disciple who, through training and vast reserves of merit, has achieved the necessary level of receptivity. When this occurs, it happens quite naturally in an intimate human relationship where the blessing power of the master's own realization makes contact with the complete openness of the disciple—a state of pure and perfect confidence in the master and the teaching that, for want of a better word in English, has been described as devotion.

This extraordinary event, in which the nature of the mind is pointed out and recognized, may take place in any number of situations that, to an outside observer, might well seem completely ordinary and mundane. There was, for instance, nothing particularly unusual in the appearance of the stars in the evening sky above the hillside where Patrul Rinpoche and his disciple Nyoshul Lungtok were lying. There was nothing out of the ordinary in the sound of the dogs barking down below in the Dzogchen monastery. And yet such was the receptivity and readiness of Nyoshul Lungtok, the fruit of his merit and the purification of his mind stream, that, in that peaceful exchange, when Patrul Rinpoche said, “That is the meditation,” Nyoshul Lungtok understood what his master meant and entered into the same direct vision of the nature of the mind that Patrul Rinpoche was himself experiencing.¹ Not that such introductions are always so serene. Patrul Rinpoche had himself received a very different pointing-out instruction from Do Khyentse, who grabbed him by the hair, threw him to the

ground, and gave him a severe thrashing, insulting him and calling him an “old dog.” But, as Tulku Thondup explains, the end result was the same: “At that moment, Patrul realized the unhindered intrinsic awareness, clear like the cloudless sky.”²

It follows from this that one may without absurdity claim to be a follower and aspiring practitioner of the Great Perfection in the sense of receiving teachings from a qualified master of that tradition and in trying, the best one can, to implement them. Nevertheless, to say that one possesses the *view* of the Great Perfection, and is therefore a genuine and qualified practitioner of that tradition, is to make a very considerable claim—one that, in a traditional setting, few, even among the most erudite and experienced, would ever dream of making. The great twentieth-century master Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the founder of Larung Gar in Golog and in his day one of the greatest living authorities on the writings of Longchenpa, is on record as saying that even the word “Dzogchen” was something that he hardly dared even to pronounce!

The reason for this brief discussion in the present context is that the power of blessing possessed by qualified masters of the Great Perfection to introduce disciples to the nature of the mind is often said to be a particular feature of the writings of Longchenpa—such was the inspirational power that poured from the state of wisdom in which their author is said to have composed them. For example, *The Precious Treasure of the Ultimate Expanse* (*Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod*), a text in which this blessing power is said to be very strongly present, is prized in the Nyingma school as a *thödro* (*thos grol*), a text that liberates merely through the power of its sound. Like the *Bardo Thödrol* (better known to Western readers as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*), it is, among Nyingma practitioners, frequently read aloud in the presence of those who have just died. Similarly, students aspiring to the practice of the Great Perfection are often encouraged simply to read a few verses of this text before settling in meditation.

Given the quality thus ascribed to the writings of Longchenpa, as well as their reputation for profound meaning and subtle expression, it is not surprising that commentaries on them are all too few. And if we add to this the fact that Longchenpa's insights are often expressed not merely in sophisticated verse but, appropriately enough, with the allusive, suggestive power of a natural poet—with what trepidation does one embark upon the almost impossible task of translating them?

HAGIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

Information about the life and achievements of the great Tibetan masters of the past may be culled from two sources. On the one hand, we may have recourse to the traditional biographies which, as their Tibetan name *namthar* indicates,³ are invariably of a hagiographical nature. Alternatively, through the examination of historical evidence, the comparative study of documents and so on, analyzed and coordinated according to the principles of scientific research, one may endeavor to construct as clear a picture as possible of the social, religious, intellectual, and political environment in which the lives of given individuals unfolded and thereby come to an assessment of their achievements in relation to the constraints and opportunities implicit in their contemporary setting.

There are advantages and drawbacks in both these approaches. In the first place, the Tibetan *namthar*, like hagiographies in other religious traditions, are intended to inspire and impress, and in this they often succeed. They are generally filled with stories of heroic accomplishments attended by wonderful, often miraculous, events. Purely historical details, if not actually ignored, are frequently relegated to a secondary, usually supportive, position and are often imprecise and difficult to corroborate. The traditional biographies of Longchenpa are no exception. They are filled with marvels that demonstrate his intelligence, his intrepid perseverance, and his high attainment. His life was marked by visions of deities and by the teachings and prophecies that he received from them. His day-to-day experience seems to have been punctuated on a regular basis by visits to other dimensions and supernatural meetings with *ḍākinīs*, Dharma protectors, and local gods and spirits, who came either to help him in his work or to receive teachings—to venerate, advise, and admonish. The accounts of Longchenpa's life that are at present available in English translation are all strongly colored by this hagiographic character.⁴

Much less evident in these accounts are the historical details of a more mundane nature that are nevertheless liable to strike a Western reader as interesting, if not crucial, elements in the understanding of Longchenpa's life and work. For example, his position in the development of a specifically Nyingma interpretation of Madhyamaka—given his traditional allegiances, his education at Sangphu, and his historical situation (midway between the death of Sakya Paṇḍita and the appearance of Tsongkhapa)—is completely ignored in the traditional biographies. Similarly his political entanglement with Drikung Kunrin and the Tai

Situ Changchub Gyaltzen—a misfortune resulting in an exile that, while marking a period of blessedness for the people of Bhutan (which is, of course, the reason for mentioning it), must have seriously disrupted Longchenpa's life and work—is alluded to in only the briefest and often garbled terms.

Given the essentially inspirational purpose of hagiography—to awaken feelings of devotion and the desire to emulate—it is clear that the effectiveness of such literature depends to an important degree on cultural setting. For this reason, Western readers often find the stories contained in traditional hagiographies to be so far removed from their own understanding and experience of the world that, however much they may be moved and inspired by their poetic beauty, they are less able to accept them as historical fact, and in practice dismiss them. Tibetans, on the other hand, with their very different vision of the world, experience no such difficulty.

By contrast, when, thanks to historical research, important individuals are viewed in their contemporary setting amid the social, political, and religious pressures that affected them, they stand out with much greater clarity and for that reason tend to appear more credible to modern readers. It is nevertheless important to beware of the fact that the materialistic assumptions implicit in modern historical method are inevitably and fundamentally at odds with the worldview of Tibetan Buddhism, which, though ancient, is still very much alive. The out-of-hand and often contemptuous dismissal by Western scholars of important elements of Tibetan religious culture both ancient and modern—the existence of spirit guardians, for example, and their intervention in human affairs, or the concealment and discovery of *terma* (*gter ma*), or Dharma treasures—and the reductionism with which such scholars explain them according to their own often unexamined philosophical assumptions, throw up a barrier that excludes a sympathetic understanding of that culture and greatly impedes the reception of the spiritual values and disciplines that it has to teach. While creating the appearance of objectivity, such scholarship frequently renders its subject alien and places the investigator securely outside the tradition that he or she is attempting to explain. It is worth bearing in mind that a modern reader brought up on Hollywood and Disneyland may well smile at the image of Rāhula and Ekajātī busily preparing Longchenpa's ink and stationery, but for traditional Tibetans, both ancient and modern, such stories are not a laughing matter. They are taken seriously as part of a general worldview that remains for them entirely credible. The existence of spirits and the possibility of interaction with them remains even now a feature of ordinary life, as the Nechung oracle, still an

important institution in the Tibetan exile community, demonstrates.

With these reflections in mind, we will attempt a brief description of Longchenpa's life and times in which we will try to supplement the traditional biographies already available in translation with such additional details as we have been able to glean from the available historical sources.

LONGCHENPA'S LIFE AND TIMES

Longchen Rabjam was born in 1308 in a village in the upper part of the Dra valley in Yuru, a southern district in the central province of Tibet. Nothing is recorded of the social importance of his family save that his father, Lopön Tsensung, a lama of the Nyingma school, was descended from the ancient clan of Rog, which, five hundred years earlier, had supplied one of the group of seven men first selected to take monastic ordination at Samyé from the great abbot Śāntarakṣita. Longchenpa's mother belonged to the clan of Drom and was thus distantly related to Dromtön Gyalwai Jungne, one of the patriarchs of the Kadampa tradition, the foremost disciple of Atiśa (982–1054) and founder, in 1057, of the monastery of Reting.

Longchenpa received his first religious education from his father, who granted him his first tantric empowerments and instructed him also in the rudiments of medicine and astrology. When Longchenpa was nine years old, his mother died; and this tragedy was followed two years later by the death of his father. Thus orphaned, the young boy entered the monastery of Samyé and at the age of twelve received his first ordination from the abbot Sonam Rinchen and the master Lopön Kunga Özer.⁵

Owing to the paucity of documentary evidence, it is difficult to form a clear picture of the state of Samyé in 1320. After the collapse of the empire following the death of Lang Darma in 841, Samyé, like the other royal temples, fell into a ruinous state so that by the time the first monks returned to the central provinces toward the end of the tenth century, it was empty and desolate.⁶ Gradually, however, it was restored. Its ancient library, which had not been pillaged during the period of persecution and abandonment, was repaired; and when Atiśa visited it in 1047, he was impressed by its richness, amazed to find there Sanskrit manuscripts of works that had been lost in India. During the following centuries, the monastery and temple passed through various vicissitudes but, having been

rebuilt by the members of the Kagyu school in the course of the thirteenth century, it would probably have been in reasonable condition by the time Longchenpa went to live there. He proved to be an avid student with an advanced capacity for memorization and, having at his disposal an incomparable collection of books, he soon laid the ground for his future reputation as “the well-read scholar from Samyé (*bsam yas lung mang ba*).”

In 1327, at the age of nineteen, he left for the monastic university of Sangphu Neutog, not far from Lhasa, where he stayed for six years. Sangphu was a place of learning of high renown. Founded in 1073 by Ngok Lekpai Sherab, who had been one of Atiśa’s closest disciples, it was the cradle of Tibetan scholasticism and became, in its heyday, the most illustrious center of learning in the country. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, it had divided into two separate institutions, Lingtö and Lingmé, the first of which Longchenpa entered, during the tenure of Tengönpa and Chöpel Gyaltsen, its fifteenth and sixteenth abbots.⁷

While at Sangphu, Longchenpa imbibed the entire scholastic curriculum. His studies covered the full range of Buddhist tenet systems. This included the Abhidharma, the logico-epistemological tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, the Yogācāra school and the five texts of Maitreya and Asaṅga together with their commentaries, and the texts of Madhyamaka according, we may suppose, to its svātantrika and prāsaṅgika subschools. It should be noticed that, by the Longchenpa’s time, two hundred years had passed since the great svātantrika-prāsaṅgika controversies of the twelfth century. And almost a century had elapsed since Sakya Paṇḍita officially adopted the prāsaṅgika view, combined with the logico-epistemological tradition, as the official position of his school. And since, by the early fourteenth century, Sangphu had fallen largely under the influence of Sakya, it is very likely that Longchenpa studied Madhyamaka principally according to the Sakya view—well before Tsongkhapa’s new interpretation was to cause such a stir at the turn of the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the fact that Longchenpa’s intellectual maturity was strongly influenced by his understanding of the Great Perfection renders his interpretation of Madhyamaka and its relation to Yogācāra a subject of great interest, foreshadowing the position of Mipham Rinpoche five hundred years later.

One can well imagine that the young Longchenpa was a diligent and exemplary student. Thanks moreover to a powerful contemplative gift nurtured from his earliest youth, he was able to combine his intellectual studies with intensive meditative practice, which, it is said, bore fruit even at that early age, in pure

visions of various deities: Mañjuśrī, Sarasvatī, Vajravārāhī, Tārā, and so on.

During his period of studies at Sangphu, Longchenpa took time to seek out and request teachings from masters of different traditions and lineages. This illustrated the liberal and eclectic spirit that characterized the religious and scholarly life of fourteenth-century Tibet. The sectarian animosity and partisan spirit that was to beset the different schools was still a thing of the future. And Longchenpa, like Tsongkhapa his younger contemporary, was able to pursue wide-ranging interests and to satisfy his thirst for knowledge, thus enriching the academic curriculum that he had followed at Sangphu with a wealth of instructions and transmissions, in Sūtra and Tantra, from, it is said, at least twenty different teachers.⁸ It was at this time too that he received from the master Zhönnu Töndrup advanced instruction in the Nyingma tradition on the generation and perfection stage practices of Tantra, together with the mind-class teachings of the Great Perfection.

However rich and distinguished Longchenpa's education may have been, his student days were not without their trials; and they were soured toward the end by the animosity of a group of students from Kham who, through their uncouth and jealous behavior, succeeded in driving him away. As it happened, this setback proved the harbinger of good fortune. Shaking the dust of Sangphu from his feet, he set off with the intention of devoting some time to solitary meditation. A chance meeting with a friendly scholar led to the discovery of an amenable cave. There Longchenpa spent eight months in dark retreat, in the course of which he had a vision of Tārā who, in response to his prayers, promised her protection and crowned him with her own diadem. As the vision passed, Longchenpa entered a profound absorption that lasted for several days. The vision of Tārā, Tulku Thondup remarks, established the interdependent link for his meeting with a master of Heart Essence, or Nyingthig (*snying thig*), the highest teachings of the Great Perfection.⁹

On leaving his retreat, Longchenpa made his way home to Samyé. He did not stay there very long, however, for in 1335 at the age of twenty-seven, and thanks again to the visionary promptings of Tārā, he set off to meet his root guru Zhönnu Gyalpo, the master more commonly known as Rigdzin Kumaradza (1266–1343). At that time, Kumaradza was living in a camp in the highlands of Yartö Khyam in the company of about seventy disciples. Prepared for this encounter by a premonitory dream, he welcomed Longchenpa, whom he recognized as the future holder of his lineage. He entertained him warmly and facilitated his attendance at

his teachings despite the fact that Longchenpa was destitute of even the most basic material resources. Kumaradza's monastic settlement was essentially nomadic and the community was frequently on the move. This posed considerable difficulties for Longchenpa, who in the course of his studies at Samyé and Sangphu had doubtless acquired the regular and peaceful habits of sedentary scholarship. Nevertheless, he persevered, and braving the physical hardships that were a daily feature of life with Kumaradza, he remained with his teacher for about two years. Kumaradza was himself long inured to such austerities. For as a disciple of the great yogi Melong Dorje (1243–1303), he had come to manhood amid the same kind of material hardships that it was now Longchenpa's lot to endure. Kumaradza took Longchenpa as his heart son and transmitted to him the Nyingthig teachings—that is, the Vima Nyingthig—of which he was a lineage holder.

At this point, it may be helpful to review briefly the nature and position of Nyingthig within the nine-vehicle system of the Nyingma school. According to this scheme, there are three sūtra vehicles corresponding to the two Hīnayāna paths of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, together with the Mahāyāna sūtra path of the bodhisattvas. These Sūtra vehicles are further amplified by six vehicles of Tantra, three outer (Kriyā, Caryā, and Yoga) and three inner (Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga). Of the three inner tantras, Mahāyoga and Anuyoga correspond respectively to the generation and perfection stage practices while Atiyoga is the vehicle of the Great Perfection or Dzogchen.

The Great Perfection is divided into three classes, named according to the salient feature of the teachings concerned. The first of these is the “mind class” (*sems sde*), which emphasizes the luminous nature of awareness as the ground from which phenomena manifest. It will be remembered that it was this division of the Great Perfection that Longchenpa had already received from the master Zhönnu Töndrup. The second division of the Great Perfection is the “space class” (*klong sde*), so called because it emphasizes the empty expanse of awareness in which phenomena subside. Finally, the “pith-instruction class” (*man ngag gi sde*) is free from fixation on either the luminosity aspect or the emptiness aspect of awareness. For that reason, it transcends the previous two classes and is thus considered supreme.¹⁰ The pith-instruction class is further divided into four sections: outer, inner, secret, and “most and unsurpassably secret” (*phyi, nang, gsang, yang gsang bla med*). Of these, the fourth and highest section is known as the Heart Essence, or Nyingthig, and it was this that Longchenpa received from Kumaradza.

The history of the arrival and transmission of the Nyingthig teachings in Tibet is a colorful, fascinating, but rather complicated story. In general, they are said to have been brought to the Land of Snow through three sources: the Indian paṇḍita Vimalamitra, Guru Padmasambhava, and the great Tibetan translator Vairotsana. In the context of Longchenpa's spiritual heritage, only the first two need be considered here.

Vimalamitra is said to have been invited to Tibet around the turn of the ninth century by King Trisong Detsen. At Samyé and to a small group of five people, including the king himself and the master Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo, Vimalamitra secretly transmitted the seventeen tantras of Nyingthig, their explanatory commentaries and the associated pith instructions, all of which he had himself received from the master Śrī Siṃha. Following this important event, he hid the four volumes of the Nyingthig pith instructions, written in inks of different colors, in the cliff of Tragmar Gekong near Samyé Chimpu. Before departing for China, Vimalamitra entrusted his teachings to Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo, thereby beginning a lineage of transmission from individual master to individual disciple that was to be maintained for many generations in conditions of the strictest secrecy. Nyang attained the rainbow body¹¹ in 838. By that time, having already passed on these teachings to a trusted disciple, he had also taken the precaution of concealing the texts of the seventeen tantras as well as other texts of Nyingthig, in the temple of Zhai Lhakhang in the valley of Drikung in the province of Uru.

After the concealment of these texts, the secret oral transmission continued for about 140 years through a line of masters, all of whom are said to have attained the rainbow body. At length, it was received by the eleventh-century master Neten Dangma Lhungyal. In response to visionary promptings, Dangma Lhungyal removed the texts of the seventeen tantras from their places of concealment in the Zhai Lhakhang and eventually transmitted them to Chetsun Senge Wangchuk (eleventh–twelfth centuries), who later also recovered the four volumes of pith instructions that Vimalamitra had himself hidden at Trakmar Gekong. Chetsun Senge Wangchuk made copies of these texts and hid them again.¹² This proved a turning point in the teaching transmission. For from that moment onward, the Nyingthig lineage of Vimalamitra, henceforth referred to as the Vima Nyingthig (*Bi ma snying thig*), came to be more openly propagated, coming down at length, through Melong Dorje and Kumaradza, to Longchenpa himself. After staying with Kumaradza for two years, Longchenpa embarked in 1337 on a six-year period of more or less solitary retreat.

In addition to the Vima Nyingthig received from Kumaradza, Longchenpa also inherited, and became the main lineage holder of, the Khandro Nyingthig (*mKha'gro snying thig*), the Heart Essence of the Dākinī, the Great Perfection teachings brought to Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava. Unlike the Vima Nyingthig, which was essentially an orally transmitted lineage, the Khandro Nyingthig was concealed as a terma, or Dharma treasure. The story is told that Trisong Detsen had a daughter, Pemasel, who died in early childhood. In his grief, the king besought Guru Rinpoche, who brought the child back to life. Restoring Pemasel to health, the great Guru transmitted to her the pith instructions for the seventeen tantras belonging to the Nyingthig teachings, which, like Vimalamitra, he had received from Śrī Sīṃha. He did so in the manner of “terma concealment,” placing them—far from the dangers of degeneration and decline—in the deepest levels of the princess’s mind.¹³ He also entrusted his Nyingthig teachings to Yeshe Tsogyal and to a vast multitude of wisdom dākinīs, and concealed them again as an earth treasure in the cave of Danglung Thramo, giving the prophetic authorization that they would eventually be revealed by an incarnation of the princess.¹⁴

In due course, Pemasel was reborn as the master Pema Ledreltsel, who revealed the treasure five hundred years later, toward the end of the thirteenth century. In the incarnational line, it is usually said that Longchenpa was Pema Ledreltsel’s immediate successor. And although, for that reason, it is said that he held the treasure of the Khandro Nyingthig in his own mind, he nevertheless received the transmission of the treasure texts from Pema Ledreltsel’s disciple Gyalse Lekpa Gyaltsen. It remains to be said for the sake of completeness that the seventeen tantras of Nyingthig were also concealed separately by Guru Rinpoche, to be discovered later in Bhutan by Pema Lingpa (1450–1521).¹⁵

Longchenpa began to transmit the Nyingthig teachings in his early thirties. In 1340, at the age of thirty-two, he gave the empowerments of the Vima Nyingthig for the first time at Shugsep in the vicinity of his hermitage at Gangri Thökar. These were followed a year later by the empowerments of the Khandro Nyingthig.

Soon afterward Longchenpa embarked upon an important work of compilation in which the Vima Nyingthig and Khandro Nyingthig are brought together. For the Vima Nyingthig, he composed a supporting text consisting of thirty-five treatises entitled *The Innermost Essence of the Master*, or *Lama Yangtig* (*bLa ma yang tig*), and for the Khandro Nyingthig, he revealed as a mind treasure (*dgongs*

ger) a series of fifty-five treatises of supplementary material called *The Innermost Essence of the Dākinī*, or *Khandro Yangtig* (*mKha' 'gro yang tig*). These four collections of scriptures—again supplemented by a comprehensive commentary called *The Profound and Innermost Essence*, or *Zabmo Yangtig* (*Zab mo yang tig*)—are together referred to as the Four Parts of Nyingthig or *Nyingthig Yabzhi* (*sNying thig ya bzhi*) and constitute one of Longchenpa's most important works.

Temperamentally, Longchenpa was drawn to an eremitic life of study, composition, and meditative retreat. And most of his adult life, while in Tibet, was spent in or near his hermitage at Gangri Thökar. The fame of his scholarship and saintly accomplishments, however, attracted a large following, and he inevitably became a well-known figure throughout the central provinces.

POLITICAL ENTANGLEMENTS AND EXILE

In 1350, at the age of forty-two, Longchenpa had a vision of Vimalamitra, who instructed him to repair the temple of Zhai Lhakhang in the valley of Drikung. This, it will be remembered, was where Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo had concealed the seventeen tantras and other texts of the Vima Nyingthig, later to be discovered by Dagma Lhungyal. The restoration of the temple proved to be a fateful enterprise, for it brought Longchenpa into dangerous proximity with the powerful Drikung monastery and its ambitious minister for civil and military affairs, the *gompa* (*sgom pa*) Kunga Rinchen, or Kunrin for short.¹⁶

The story goes that, conscious of the probable karmic consequences of his political ambitions and ruthless desire for power, Kunrin, who was of course a monk, was made even more apprehensive by a prediction of Guru Rinpoche found in a recently discovered terma. This prophecy seemed to identify Kunrin personally and to predict his infernal destiny unless he be protected of “an emanation of Mañjuśrī coming from the south.”¹⁷ His restless gaze soon alighted on the person of Longchenpa, who was famed for his learning and wisdom and who, in order to repair the Zhai Lhakhang, had indeed come to Drikung from the south. Motivated perhaps more by fear than devotion, Kunrin begged for Longchenpa's protection and, for a time, became his disciple.

With the disintegration of the rule of the Sakya lamas, which eventually broke down in the middle of the fourteenth century, Tibet entered a period of political

and social instability that, aggravated by a series of short-lived and warring hegemonies, would last till the advent of the Fifth Dalai Lama two hundred years later. The basic lineaments of the inevitably complicated story, filled with ruthless intrigue and military violence, are as follows.¹⁸

The appointment (largely nominal) of Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) as the ruler of Tibet by Koden Khan, followed by the favor shown to his nephew Chögyal Phakpa (1235–1280) by Kublai Khan (both khans being grandsons of Genghis Khan), political power in Tibet effectively passed to the hierarchs of the Sakya monastery, which remained paramount for about a hundred years. The position of the Sakyapas was, however, contested from the beginning by the Drikung Kagyu school, whose pretensions were for a time forcibly suppressed by the troops of Kublai, by then the emperor of China. As long as Kublai held power, the preeminent position of the Sakya monastery remained unassailable, but with the death of the emperor in 1294, its political influence began to wane—a process accelerated by problems of dynastic succession within the family of the Sakya lamas, as well as by the corrupt government of venal and incompetent ministers. Amid the mounting disarray at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Changchub Gyaltsen, a young monk of the Phakmodrupa school employed in the Sakya administration as the governor of Nedong, emerged as a capable and incorruptible administrator gifted with skills of political and military leadership. As the Sakya administration collapsed, he found scope to fulfill his own political ambitions; in the teeth of personal hardships, which included periods of imprisonment and torture, he gathered an army of supporters and gradually gained control of the central provinces. In recognition of Changchub Gyaltsen's effective power, and no doubt in the attempt to domesticate the potentially dangerous upstart, the Mongol authorities in Beijing awarded him the title of Tai Situ, or Supreme Preceptor. Complete authority, however, still eluded him and was frustrated by several obstacles, notably the defiance of Drikung, concentrated as this was in the person of Gompa Kunrin.

Whatever restraining effects Longchenpa may have had over his turbulent disciple, events were to prove them superficial and transient. Provoked by the Tai Situ's successes, Kunrin was unable to resist the temptation to reassert, if necessary by military action, the position of his own monastery—an enterprise that was now made possible by the gradual weakening of Mongol influence in Tibet since the death of Kublai. In response, Tai Situ systematically isolated his adversary by neutralizing his supporters, among whom the famous and influential lama from the south, who had recently become Kunrin's guru, was a conspicuous

object.

Hostilities between the two ambitious prelates quickly deteriorated. At length, Kunrin made the fatal mistake of challenging Tai Situ to a showdown, and in the ensuing battle, the Drikung forces were decisively defeated, never to recover. The way was now open for Tai Situ's accession to full political power. Taking advantage of a coup d'état in 1358, in which the ruling Sakya lama was poisoned by one of his ministers, Tai Situ mustered his forces, marched on Sakya, arrested and imprisoned the murderer, deposed the Sakya lama's young successor, and seized the reins of power for himself.

Given the accuracy of the dates supplied in the traditional accounts—admittedly a precarious assumption—and in the attempt to establish a timeline that is in any way plausible, we must conclude that when Longchenpa arrived at the Zhai Lhakhang in 1350, he must have encountered Kunrin almost immediately. Quickly taking the measure of his unruly character and realizing that serious conflict was soon to follow he decided to leave the area right away. Passing quickly through Lhasa, where he narrowly evaded the soldiers sent by Tai Situ to arrest him, he slipped away with a party of disciples and discreetly made his way to Bhutan, arriving there, so folk legend records, riding on a yak.¹⁹

The escape from Tibet marked an important change in Longchenpa's lifestyle. Settling in Bumthang, he relinquished the monastic state, took the lady Kyipala as his consort and with her had two children: a daughter said to have been born in 1351, followed by a son in 1356. In other words, by the year of Tai Situ's full accession in 1358, Longchenpa was already well established far to the south and out of harm's way.

While in Bhutan, Longchenpa is said to have founded a series of small monasteries, the so-called eight "ling temples" in reference to the fact that their names all end in the syllable *ling* (*gling*).²⁰ Of these, the first and most important was Tharpa Ling, which became Longchenpa's principal residence and was the place where he seems to have composed a large number of texts. Longchenpa's stay in Bhutan left an indelible mark in the folk memory of the people. His physical lineage survives there to this day, and the entire region of Bumthang is suffused with the memory of his presence. It is clear too that he loved the place, which he celebrated for its wholesomeness and beauty in a long and richly descriptive poem. "Not like a land of humankind," he said, "this is a paradise transplanted."²¹

After about ten years of residence in Bumthang, and not long before his death,

Longchenpa left his family in Bhutan and returned to the land of his birth. There he was reconciled with Tai Situ and is said to have accepted him as a disciple, imparting to him the Nyingthig teachings.²² He also had time to revisit several places, including the Zhai Lhakhang and Lhasa, giving teachings to vast audiences before retiring to a hermitage in Samyé Chimpu, where he died amid many miraculous signs in 1363.

LONGCHENPA'S WORKS

Tulku Thondup tells us (citing the fourteenth-century biography composed by Chödrak Zangpo) that Longchenpa composed more than 270 treatises.²³ Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, basing himself on the partial catalog composed in Bumthang by Longchenpa himself, raises this figure to the stunning total of 307.²⁴ It is possible that the majority of these texts were quite short and composed during the ten years of exile, only to be lost in a calamitous accident in a river on the way back to Tibet. This is no more than a plausible speculation, but in any case, one cannot but be amazed by such an enormous output, especially given the brevity and the circumstances of Longchenpa's life.

Regarding the works that have survived, Tulku Thondup has provided a useful catalog that lists them in five groups.²⁵ The first of these comprises Longchenpa's most famous collection, the Seven Great Treasures (*mDzod chen bdun*):

- *The Precious Treasure That Is Like a Wish-Fulfilling Jewel (Yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of Pith Instructions (Man ngag rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of the Ultimate Expanse (Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of Tenet Systems (Grub mtha' rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of the Supreme Vehicle (Theg mchog rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of Words and Meanings (Tshig don rin po che'i mdzod)*
- *The Precious Treasure of the Natural State (gNas lugs rin po che'i mdzod)*

All except the last of these texts are mentioned in Longchenpa's catalog, which suggests that at the time that he composed it, *The Precious Treasure of the Natural State* had yet to be written. Moreover, as Gene Smith has pointed out, the remaining six texts are all mentioned separately in the catalog, which suggests that the Seven Great Treasures were not a literary unit of Longchenpa's own devising but only came to be considered as such by later tradition owing to the similarities in the texts' titles. Be that as it may, the Seven Great Treasures taken as whole are certainly to be regarded as one of Longchenpa's supreme masterpieces.

The second category in Tulku Thondup's list is the Trilogy of Rest, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

This is followed, in the third category, by the Trilogy of Natural Freedom (*Rang grol skor gsum*), consisting of three texts: *The Natural Freedom of the Mind Itself* (*Sems nyid rang grol*); *The Natural Freedom of Ultimate Reality* (*Chos nyid rang grol*); and *The Natural Freedom of Equality* (*mNyam nyid rang grol*).

The fourth category comprises the three texts composed or revealed by Longchenpa as part of the Four Parts of Nyingthig. As we have seen previously, these are, first, *The Innermost Essence of the Master*, which is a supplementary and explanatory text for the Vima Nyingthig; second, *The Innermost Essence of the Dākinī*, which is a collection of pith instructions on the Khandro Nyingthig (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*); and third, Longchenpa's detailed general commentary *The Profound and Innermost Essence* or *Zabmo Yangtig*. These texts embody Longchenpa's synthesis of the most and unsurpassably secret section of the pith-instruction class of the Great Perfection teachings transmitted in Tibet by Vimalamitra and Guru Rinpoche.

The fifth and last group of texts listed by Tulku Thondup is the Trilogy on the Dispelling of Darkness (*Mun sel skor gsum*), which consists of commentarial material on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, the main text of Mahāyoga, the first of the three inner classes of Tantra. The three texts are, first, a general outline entitled *Dispelling the Darkness of the Mind* (*sPyi don yid kyi mun sel*); second, a concise summary entitled *Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance* (*bsDus don ma rig mun sel*); and finally, the great *Commentary That Dispels Darkness throughout the Ten Directions* (*'Grel ba phyogs bcu mun sel*), a vast work of over six hundred pages.

It is impossible to establish with any certainty the date of composition of these works or, consequently, the order in which they were written. For this reason, there can be no question of trying to plot Longchenpa's intellectual and scholarly

development, if indeed such a concept is meaningful in the case of a master who seems to have attained prodigious erudition and an unchanging level of spiritual realization at a very young age. On the other hand, the colophons of many of Longchenpa's extant writings give indications of the place, and therefore may suggest the time, of their composition. Longchenpa's contributions to the Four Parts of Nyingthig seem to have been written in the hermitage at Gangri Thökar. The same is true for most of the Seven Treasures, so that one is inclined to think that they were all composed in Tibet before the incident with Kunrin. On the other hand, there exists an oral tradition²⁶ to the effect that the Seven Treasures were all composed during Longchenpa's exile in Bhutan but that they had to be recomposed in Gangri Thökar following the accident in the river mentioned earlier, in which most of his writings were lost. This possibility seems scarcely credible, however, given that Longchenpa returned to Tibet only a few—and in the event, quite busy—years before his death. Given, therefore, that the Seven Treasures were composed before his exile, we are led to conclude that practically all of Longchenpa's existing works, generally regarded as masterpieces of a very high order, were composed while he was still a young man. On the other hand, Tulku Thondup specifies that *The Treasure of the Supreme Vehicle*, Longchenpa's meaning commentary on the seventeen tantras and the 119 pith instructions of the Nyingthig teachings were composed around the time of Rigdzin Kumaradza's death, which occurred when Longchenpa was forty years old.

THE TRILOGY OF REST

It has often been said (for example, by Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche) that Longchenpa generally adopted two methods of discourse in relation to the teachings of the Great Perfection: the extensive, expository method of the paṇḍitas, and the profound and direct method of pith instructions intended for yogis engaged in the practice. The former approach is abundantly exemplified in the Seven Treasures, while the latter is the chosen method for the three quintessential commentaries in the Four Parts of Nyingthig.

These two methods are combined in the Trilogy of Rest. In the manner of a treatise, this great work systematically presents the entire range of Buddhist doctrine, from the teachings of first turning of the wheel of Dharma up to the Great Perfection. At the same time, it includes practical and essential instructions for the implementation of the teachings. Longchenpa himself succinctly defines

the three texts of the trilogy as “treatises of pith instructions.”

Inasmuch as the contents of the trilogy are laid out in a succession of logical steps, one would say that it belongs to the *lamrim*, or “stages of the path,” genre. Longchenpa says in his general outline, *An Ocean of Elegant Explanations*,²⁷ “These three works show unerringly (a) the ground that is the view, (b) the path that is the meditation, and (c) the associated conduct that is their ancillary.” Accordingly, the first part of the trilogy, *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*, is concerned principally with a presentation of the ground or view. The text describes in thirteen chapters all that the practitioner must know in order to embark upon the path. Nevertheless, this text, the first part of the trilogy, is laid out according to an inner logic of its own. And although the view or ground is its main topic, this is supplemented by further material belonging to the teachings on the path and result. In this sense, *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind* may be considered in itself an exposition of the stages of the path, a *lamrim* within a *lamrim*, so to speak.

The text begins with the basic reflections, the so-called four mindchanges, whereby the mind is reoriented away from the meaningless and destructive preoccupations of materialism and worldliness, and begins to yearn for inner freedom and a path of spiritual growth. This lays the foundation for a systematic exposition of the doctrine. The importance of a spiritual teacher and his or her requisite qualities are described. This is followed by instructions on refuge, the four boundless attitudes, and bodhichitta. As we have said, the emphasis is on instruction as the basis of practice, and therefore there is little in the way of purely philosophical explanation. Once the fundamental attitude of the Great Vehicle is introduced, the text immediately continues with an exposition of Tantra: a brief general introduction followed by instructions in the generation and perfection stages. This culminates, in [chapter 10](#), in a detailed and beautiful discussion of the view of the Great Perfection.

The first ten chapters, taken together, thus constitute a presentation of the ground, the foundational view; this is followed, in chapters 11 and 12, by an exposition of the path in terms of meditative training in calm abiding and deep insight (*śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*). Finally, the concluding thirteenth chapter discusses the result of the practice, presented again from the point of view of the Great Perfection.

Once the foundation has been acquired through a correct understanding of the ground or view, the way is open for the full practice of the path. This is the main

topic of the second part of the trilogy, *Finding Rest in Meditation* (*bSam gtan ngal gso*). This text consists of three chapters: The first is a discussion of the places and environments suitable for practice. The second is a description of the characteristics of people who are capable of such practice. Finally, the meditation itself is presented, along with the different methods associated with the concentrations on bliss, luminosity, and no-thought.

The trilogy concludes with instructions designed to guide and inform the practitioner's conduct in the postmeditation period. In *Finding Rest in Illusion* (*sGyu ma ngal gso*), Longchenpa demonstrates, from the point of view of the Great Perfection and with the help of the eight traditional examples of illusoriness, that all experience, together with the subject of such experience, is devoid of intrinsic being. The nature of the ground, path, and result is thus revealed as the state of primordial emptiness.

The Trilogy of Rest consists of three root texts in verse. These are accompanied by extensive autocommentaries in prose: respectively, *The Great Chariot* (*Shing rta chen po*), *The Chariot of Surpassing Purity* (*Shing rta rnam dag*), and *The Chariot of Excellence* (*Shing rta bzang po*). These are further supplemented by brief epitomes that summarize the contents. Again respectively, these are *The Garland of White Lotuses* (*Padma dkar po'i phreng ba*), *The Garland of Blue Lotuses* (*Pun da ri ka'i phreng ba*), and *The Garland of Mandāravā Flowers* (*Manda ra ba'i phreng ba*). These are accompanied by a further three collections of practical instructions: respectively, *The Excellent Path of Enlightenment* (*Byang chub lam bzang*), *The Essential Elixir* (*sNying po bcud bdus*), and *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel* (*Yid bzhin nor bu*).

Finally, the entire collection is rounded off by the general presentation that we have already mentioned: *An Ocean of Elegant Explanations* (*Legs bshad rgya mtsho*). This last text is quite extensive. It begins with a long description of the origin of the Buddhist teachings in the present universe. It continues with a discussion of the difference between the Sūtra and Tantra vehicles and supplies the classic instructions on how the teachings are given and received. The treatise then concludes with a brief presentation of the Trilogy of Rest according to the five-element structure and the fourfold interrelated purpose.²⁸

It is in this final presentation that Longchenpa gives a subtle exegesis of the title of the first volume of his trilogy, in which he takes advantage of an ambiguity in the Tibetan expression (impossible to bring out in English). He explains that the term “mind” (*sems nyid*) may be understood in two senses: first,

as the ordinary mind and its mental factors and, second, as the actual nature of the mind, the state of self-luminous wisdom. If *sems nyid* is understood in the first sense, the title of the book would be *The Mind at Rest*. He comments as follows:

There is a reason for the title *The Mind at Rest*. It is that mind and mental factors, the cause of saṃsāra, are the thoughts that superimpose existence onto the three worlds. They must therefore utterly subside in the ultimate expanse that is free of thought....As the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* tells us,

Pacify completely all discursiveness
And cultivate the mind of bodhichitta.

And it is said in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*,

The mind is stopped, the *kāya* manifests.

Since the discursive mind with its mental factors grows tired and exhausted again and again in saṃsāra, which is by nature but this very mind itself, it must take rest in the place of refreshment where all conceptual movement subsides: the primordial wisdom free of all thoughts, the dharmadhātu, transcendent wisdom. For this reason, I will compose a treatise about finding rest while traveling the path toward the ultimate mode of being of the mind.

If, on the other hand, *sems nyid* is understood in the second sense, the implication would be that Longchenpa's text is an instruction on how to discover, and rest in, the mind's true nature. In that case, a more fitting translation would be *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*. As the author comments,

All thoughts or mental states—the travelers that, turning and turning for a long time in saṃsāra, wear themselves out through their experience of hallucinatory appearance—are settled naturally in the state in which all concepts subside: the nature of the mind, their dwelling place of rest and ease. These exhausted travelers relax naturally in this place of refreshment. Body, speech, and mind are thus allowed to rest in a state of comfort. And this is the entry point

to freedom.

The ambivalence of the Tibetan title of the first volume of the trilogy is reflected in the titles of the other two works. However, whereas “Mind at Rest” and “Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind” are both viable as titles of the first volume, the other two titles are less flexible. For example, *Finding Rest in Meditation* works quite well, whereas *Meditation at Rest* is much less felicitous. For this reason and for the sake of uniformity, we have opted for the formula “Finding Rest...” for all three titles.

FINDING REST IN THE NATURE OF THE MIND

The text in this present volume takes the form, as we have said, of a gradual exposition of the Buddhist doctrine, specifically oriented toward the Great Perfection teachings. As can be seen in the commentarial material supplied in part 2, Longchenpa passes seamlessly through the different levels of Sūtra, Tantra, and the Great Perfection and thus produces a remarkably balanced and unified synthesis. Obviously, the text is not intended for a complete beginner in the sense of someone utterly ignorant of Buddhist teachings. The reader already needs a good grasp of the doctrine as well as sound general knowledge of the many technical terms that appear without explanation in the root verses. The latter are themselves often quite elliptical and are not always elucidated in the autocommentary, which, as a “meaning commentary,” discusses the general sense without entering into an explanation of every word.

The fact that the autocommentary of this text, *The Great Chariot*, has not been completely translated here may occasion some disappointment for the reader. It is true that in a perfect world, a full rendering would indeed have been a happy outcome. It should be realized, however, that *The Great Chariot*, as its name suggests, is an immense volume of over a thousand pages of Tibetan text. This in itself would generate at least three large volumes in English translation. Size itself is not, of course, an insurmountable obstacle, even though a translation of this size would entail years of work. The fact is, however, that Longchenpa was a scholar of enormous erudition, immensely well read. He was possessed moreover of a prodigious memory, which, it will be remembered, he exercised from his early years. This meant that even in solitude, far from any library, the “well-read scholar from Samyé” was able to illustrate his points with many quotations cited

from memory. Wonderful as this is, it often poses insuperable problems for the would-be translator. *The Great Chariot*, for example, is replete with quotations taken from an entire library of sūtras, tantras, and śāstras. Moreover, these citations are sometimes very long and difficult, and their interpretation, if one is not to abandon oneself to sheer guesswork, calls for a detailed knowledge of their own commentarial background, should such a thing exist—a challenge indeed even for the most seasoned of Tibetan scholars. In the face of such difficulties, we have done our best to provide the reader with as much help as possible and attempted to produce what we hope will be a useful, compendious volume. We have supplemented the full translation of the root text, with a number of passages taken from *The Great Chariot*, in which Longchenpa discourses on important topics (the tathāgatagarbha, the universal ground, the status of objects of knowledge in the Yogācāra system, and so on). These passages are assembled in part 2 of the present book. The reader will also find that, on a number of occasions, explanatory endnotes have been culled from the same source. Moreover, even in terms of a general commentary, the reader is not left unsupported and will find in Jigme Lingpa's *Treasury of Precious Qualities* and Kangyur Rinpoche's commentary a wealth of explanatory information that has its roots in Longchenpa's own teachings. Many endnotes direct the reader to relevant passages in those texts

One of the challenging but gratifying aspects of the present text is its aesthetic character. The poetic beauty of many of Longchenpa's writings has often won the appreciation of Tibetan connoisseurs. Literature and poetics, both Sanskrit and Tibetan, were certainly important elements in Longchenpa's formation at Samyé and Sangphu, adding technical skill to a natural gift of poetic feeling. And this was surely a considerable asset given the kind of writing that Longchenpa produced and in which he excelled: expositions of the Great Perfection, a tradition in which language seems so often to be pushed to its limits and strains to capture subtleties and elusive insights that seem to lie at the very limit of the mind's grasp. For Western readers and translators, however, the famed beauty of Longchenpa's language must to a large extent remain a speculative quantity. It is rare for non-native speakers ever to gain complete and unhindered access to the full repertoire—nuance, register, metaphor, allusion, sound, rhythm, and so on—of the poetics of any language. As an adequate rendering of Longchenpa's poetry, this translation certainly makes no claims. But it will have served its purpose if it succeeds in capturing the author's essential meaning and is able to suggest, if only in the manner of a distant prospect, something of the charm of Longchenpa's

writing and its ability to delight and inspire.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This translation project has been a long time coming. It was originally requested by Pema Wangyal Rinpoche sometime in the 1990s, but, with the best will in the world, it was superseded by a host of other projects. However regrettable such a delay may be, we are happy that it could have at last been rectified.

For the numerous occasions that Longchenpa quotes the *Sūtrālarṅkāra* and especially the *Uttaratantra*, we had recourse to the commentaries of Mipham Rinpoche translated by our colleagues Stephen Gethin and John Canti. We are grateful to them for allowing us to see their as yet unpublished manuscripts.

We also wish to record our most sincere thanks to Khenchen Pema Sherab of Namdroling Monastery in Mysore, India, for his endless patience and his precious and indispensable assistance, and to Khenpo Tendzin Norgyé of the same monastery for his help on several occasions. Finally, we would as ever like to express our deep gratitude to our teachers Pema Wangyal Rinpoche and Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche for their continued support and inspiration.

This text was translated by Helena Blankleder and Wulstan Fletcher of the Padmakara Translation Group.

Dordogne
December 31, 2016

PART ONE

FINDING REST IN THE NATURE OF THE MIND

A Teaching of the Great Perfection

IN SANSKRIT

Mahāsandhicittāviśrāntanāma

IN TIBETAN

rDzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso zhes bya ba

PROLOGUE

Homage to Samantabhadra!

Primordial lord,

Vast unbounded ocean of unsounded depth, Filled with qualities of wisdom and
of love, Wish-fulfilling wellspring of the buddhas and their heirs, Who send
forth massing clouds of joy and benefit: To you I bow!

The spotless dharmakāya, luminous and clear, Is the buddha nature of all beings,
Yet through their ignorance and clinging, They wander in the cycle of
existence.

In the wilderness of karma and defilement They stray in weariness.

Today I will bring rest to their exhausted minds.

1. THE FREEDOMS AND ADVANTAGES OF HUMAN BIRTH SO HARD TO FIND

1. My friends, your human form endowed with precious freedoms and advantages
Of all the six migrations is the one most difficult to find.

Like blind men who have chanced upon a treasure of great price, With joy
achieve your benefit and happiness.

2. What are they, then, these freedoms and advantages?

You have not taken birth in hell or else as hungry ghosts, As beasts or as long-
living gods, or else among the wild men of the borderlands.

You do not have perverted views, have not been born with handicaps Or in an age
in which a buddha has not come.

From these eight unfree states you are completely free.

You have been born in human form and in a central land.

Your faculties are whole, your lives unmarred by evil ways, And in the Doctrine
you have confidence:

The five great personal advantages are all complete in you.

A buddha has appeared and set his Teaching forth.

The Doctrine still remains and beings enter it, While others, through compassion,
set it forth for them.

Such are your five advantages of circumstance.

In you the eighteen freedoms and advantages

Are all complete, and therefore here and now Exert yourself wholeheartedly and
win your freedom!

3. If in this life you fail to practice what is to your benefit, In lives to come, you will not even hear of “happy destinies.”

And long in lower realms you’ll turn and turn again, Not knowing what you should and should not do.

Understand that you will stray upon false paths, Drifting in saṃsāra that in time Had no beginning and will have no end.

4. So now, while you are free and independent, With propitious circumstances for the perfect path, Rely upon the two accumulations,

Source of boundless excellence;

Leave the city of existence far behind.

5. If, now that you have found a precious boat, You fail to cross saṃsāra’s shoreless sea,

How will you fare, tossed endlessly

On waves of torment and defilement?

6. So swiftly don the armor of your perseverance.

To still the troubles of your mind and mental factors,²⁹

Climb the upward path of primal wisdom’s stainless clarity And implement unceasingly the ways to your enlightenment.

7. If, having found this pure and precious vessel, Ground of all prosperity and joy,

You fail to catch therein the cool rain of the Dharma’s nectar, You will go to ruin in the torments of saṃsāra, nothing more!

8. From massing clouds of benefit and joy, of glorious great bliss, A plenteous rain, primordial wisdom’s cooling stream, Falls down upon the ground of freedoms and advantages, The limpid minds of wandering beings.

Practice Dharma therefore with a joyful heart.

9. As the Teacher of both gods and humankind has said, A turtle could, by strange chance, place its neck Inside a yoke adrift upon the ocean’s waves.

A human life is yet more difficult to find!

What need is there to speak of precious human life endowed With freedoms and advantages?

I beseech you then, from this day forth, exert yourself.

10. Three kinds of human life may be attained: Mere, superior, or that which is most precious.

Those who have the first, not knowing right from wrong, Do evil deeds. And though their faculties are whole, They're only human in the commonly accepted sense.

They may be born within a central land,
And yet they act like savage borderers.

11. Then there are those, not entering the Doctrine, Whose actions are a mixture of both good and ill.

Thinking of this life alone,

They're utterly distracted by their busy occupations.

Rough, untamed, they cast away all thought of lives to come; They do not strive for freedom.

Though the Dharma they may hear,
Their state is not supreme but mediocre.

To some slight good they may at times incline; More often their minds' sight is veiled by negativity.

They have the semblance of practitioners,

And yet what good do they achieve

For others or themselves?

Whether they assume the guise of monks or laity, They are a little higher
Than the beings in the lower realms.

And so the Conqueror described them as "superior."

12. Beings who are utterly sublime are vessels for the stainless Dharma.

Through learning and reflection they attain its essence.

They discipline themselves, and others they establish in the virtuous life.

Their perfection, like the peak of a mountain, is unshakable.

their practice, like the king of mountains, is unshakable.
They are the ensigns of the Sage's victory.
Householders or, better,
Those who have gone forth to homelessness,
The Teacher has declared them both to have a precious human form.

13. Therefore, you who are within the Dharma, Bend your ears to Dharma of the
high and perfect ones, That, following this Dharma, you might practice well.
Cleave constantly to Dharma;
All that is not Dharma cast aside.
Accomplishing the Dharma's sense,
Remain within the Dharma.
Soon to cross the ocean of existence,
May you swiftly reach the land of peace
And pass beyond all sorrow.

14. If those who are now human fail to practice virtue, They are fools and stupid,
nothing else.
They are like those who come home
Empty-handed from an isle of jewels:
They do but render meaningless
Their freedoms and advantages.
Constantly make effort therefore
In the Dharma that brings peace.

15. The Dharma is dependent on the mind; The mind depends on freedoms and
advantages: All arise dependently.
So now, when cause and many circumstances meet, Subdue your mind! This is
the Dharma's essence.³⁰

16. In all your endless stream of births That lay beneath the threat of death,
Pain and loss poured down on you like rain.
This was the result of mental wandering,

Whereby advantages and freedoms were made meaningless.

All qualities of high rebirth and final excellence Derive from thinking on how hard it is

To gain these freedoms and advantages.

So strive in this reflection day and night.

Do not relax but take great joy in it.

17. To see the Buddha in this life is meaningful, To hear the Dharma and to practice it is also meaningful.

This meaningful existence and the fruitful one to follow Arise from the attainment of a form endowed with freedoms and advantages.

Reflect on this with great joy, constantly.

18. In the midst of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattva heirs, Our Lord, the first of beings in this world endowed with godly realms, Declared that the immortal nectar of enlightenment Derives from the supremely precious human form.

Extolling thus its freedoms and advantages, He praised this form more highly than the body of a god.

Rejoice therefore in your humanity!

19. The ground of primal wisdom

Where the truth beyond all concepts is beheld Is reached more easily by humans than by gods.

The essence also of the deep path of the Vajrayāna Is more easily attained by those who find a human form.

The basis of the Dharma of both great and lesser vehicles Is said to be supremely noble— This human state endowed with freedoms and advantages.

20. Just like a beggar who has chanced upon a treasure of great price, Reflect with joy upon your freedoms and advantages.

In doubt and apprehension that you might be dreaming, Implement the sacred Dharma— Source of happiness and benefit in this and future lives!

21. Through the nectar of this perfect and inspiring instruction, May the futile

21. Through the nectar of this perfect and inspiring instruction, may the futile wanderings of all beings be completely stilled.

May they go to forest solitudes,

And, weary of their gross and wild defilements, May their minds today find rest.

2. IMPERMANENCE

1. So now you have your freedom, hard to find, And yet its time is passing; it is subject to decay.

Look closely; see its hollowness like bubbling foam.

It is not worthy of your trust!

Think night and day upon the utter certainty of death.

2. This body is the ground of pain and every mental sorrow, A plenteous wellspring of defiled affliction.

And yet you garland it with flowers,

Adorning it with robes and jewels.

But though you tend and wait on it

With many a tasty gift of food and drink,

At last it will not stay; it will decay and leave you.

You cherish now the future food

Of jackal, fox, and graveyard bird!

Don't think of it as something permanent and clean, But implement the holy teaching from this moment on.

3. Brahmā, Śiva, Indra, great and powerful gods, Enjoy the greatest wealth in all the three dimensions of the world.

They blaze with glory through their merit and renown, Yet in the contest with the Lord of Death

They have no victory.

Because they have achieved samādhi, they can live for aeons, Yet when their

karma is used up, their hour of death arrives.

Devas and asuras, rishis, those with magic power, The rulers and the ruled—
unnumbered are their births, And not a single one without the fear of death!

4. This lifetime passes like the weeping clouds Where dance the lightning
garlands of the Lord of Death, And from them, day and night, there falls
An endless rain to bathe the shoots
That grow in the three levels of existence.

5. The world and its inhabitants will pass.
The universe is formed and then destroyed
By seven fires, a flood, and then the scattering wind.³¹
The all-encircling sea, the continents,
And even mighty Sumeru compounded of four jewels, All girded by the rings of
lesser peaks—all this will pass.
The time will come when all will have dissolved Into a single space.
Remember this and practice Dharma from your heart.

6. The Guide and Guardian of the world, Surrounded by a throng of the
pratyekabuddhas, śrāvakas, And all the bodhisattva offspring of the Lord, Is
like the peerless, hare-marked moon aloft in limpid skies, Amid a host of
starry constellations.

Clear, resplendent, radiant he shines,
And yet he is impermanent:
He demonstrates his passing to the state beyond all pain.
And see how the unbounded sun
Of his most precious Doctrine sets
And disappears as the generations pass.
Coreless like the plaintain tree,
This form of human flesh,
This mere illusion of a dwelling place,
How can it not decay and be destroyed?

7. Death therefore is sure; Uncertain is its when and where and how.

This life is ever dwindling; no increment is possible.

Many are death's circumstances;

Those that make life possible are few.

You have so little time to live!

Rein in your projects for the future—

Better far to strive in Dharma from this very instant!

8. This shelter built of the four elements, Endowed with mind adorned with its
inhabitants— The thoughts that move—

Arises through conditions.

Thus it is compounded.

Being so, it is destructible.

Like a village crumbling down, it will not last.

Be swift to practice holy Dharma!

9. You're momentary, ephemeral,

Aflutter like a flame caught in a gale.

When powerful dangers to your life descend, You won't last long; it's certain you
will die.

So practice holy Dharma right away.

10. Servants and possessions, friends both close and dear, Your youth, your
strength, your beauty, your good family— You'll lose them all; you must go
forth alone.

But actions white and black, not left behind, will shadow you.

Other than the Dharma, there's no other refuge at that time.

Why then do you not pass your time in diligence?

11. Think now about the past and future peoples of the world.

Of former generations countless beings have already passed, And most of those
who now are on this earth Within a century's time will surely be no more.

For those who follow after, it will be the same.

Look how they pass! The old and young have all an equal destiny.
From them you are no different in your nature.
Remember that your death is certain; practice Dharma!

12. Throughout the triple world, from hell until the summit of the world, There is
no place of safety from the Deadly Lord.
Everything is passing, changing, essenceless.
Nothing can be trusted; all is turning like a chariot wheel.
Especially this human state is plagued by many perils.
Disease and evil forces are the source of numerous ills.
Fire and sword, vast chasms, poisons, savage beasts, And kings and robbers,
enemies and thieves, And all the rest destroy prosperity and life.

13. And even without harms, the lives of beings slip by, Changing every second's
instant, night and day.
They drift toward the kingdom of the Lord of Death Like rivers running to the
sea
And like the round orb of the sun
That sets behind the western hills.

14. If food and all the good amenities of life May be, like actual poisons, cause of
pain, How could goodness and perfection not be quenched by real adversity?
There is nothing that cannot become the cause of death.
And since its place and cause and time are all uncertain, Rid yourself of all the
futile and deceptive things pertaining to this life.
Sincerely practice Dharma:
This will help you in the moment of your death.

15. So now that you have found the boat of freedoms and advantages That's fitted
with the rudder of a master's teaching, If now you do not strive to cross the
stream of sorrow, There is no self-betrayal more terrible than this!

16. Now you have attained a precious vessel, Free of every defect, perfect, lauded
by the Buddha.

If you do not store in it the riches of the twofold aim for self and others, You will
but bind yourself within the prisons of saṃsāra.

17. Alas, it is like giving teachings to a stone!

Most people in this world—

To think of them brings sorrow welling up!

They do not comprehend when taught,

And explanation brings no understanding.

Tomorrow death awaits them, but they think they'll live forever.

Saṃsāra does not sadden them,

And of the will for freedom they have not the slightest trace.

If they have knowledge, they are arrogant.

If they have some understanding, it is all distorted.

They are borne away by busyness and pastimes And are deluged by the rain of
their defilement.

When might I be of help to them?

18. But you who wish to cross the ocean of your faults Accomplishing the
marvelous qualities of excellence, In this very moment think about death's
certainty.

Meditate at all times, day and night, on your impermanence.

Cultivate repeatedly an attitude of sadness at saṃsāra, And be determined to be
free from it.

19. By this means you'll implement the Teaching, Useful, beneficial, for the
present and for future lives.

You will strive in practice with a strong endeavor, In your mind abandoning this
life,

And bring to nothing the delusion of self-clinging.

All good qualities, in brief, will be achieved.

The cause of highest freedom and the halting of all defects Is to think about
impermanence,

Reducing projects for the future.

It is indeed the root of all the Dharma

It is indeed the root of all the Dharma.

20. The minds of beings are wearied by defilement and distraction, By clinging to phenomena they think are permanent.

Through this helpful teaching, deep and pleasing to the ear, Resounding from the drum of Dharma clouds, May their minds today find rest.

3. THE SUFFERINGS OF SAṂSĀRA

1. Everything occurring in the three worlds of saṁsāra is impermanent.

Change is everywhere. Great suffering abounds:

By sufferings of pain itself, of change, and suffering in the making,³²

The beings in the six realms are completely overwhelmed.

2. As though burned in a fire or caught by savage men, Or by wild beasts or else
imprisoned in a tyrant's jail, Beings suffer torment in a seamless continuity.

There's no escape for them, and sorrow grows to think of it.

3. Pleasure to find and pain to flee is all that they desire, Yet sorrows do they
chase in cause and fruit.

They're like moths caught in candlelight;

They crave and cling to objects of their wanting And are thus beguiled.

Like deer, like bees, like fish, like elephants, By sound, by scent, by taste, by
touch are beings caught, Deceived by the five objects of desire.

See how they have no happiness but only suffering.

4. Gods and demigods, the denizens of hell, The famished spirits, humankind,
and beasts— The six realms follow one by one in endless pain, As though
attached to one great waterwheel.

5. All living beings in the tally of their lives, Assuming roles of friendship,
enmity, indifference, Have given help or harm, brought happiness or pain
For times past numbering.

Fathers into mothers, mothers into sisters are transformed, And sisters into sons

1. BROTHERS INTO BROTHERS, BROTHERS INTO SISTERS ARE TRANSFORMED, 2. AND SISTERS INTO SONS.

There is no certainty in kinship,
No count of friends that into enemies have turned.

6. If you think about the stream of karma in the world, A sorrow greater than
mere sadness will come welling up.

The bodies of your insect lives,
All swept together in a heap,
Would tower over Meru with its four sides made of jewels; More than the four
oceans are the tears that you have wept.
The mighty streams that flow down to the margin of the world Are no match for
the molten bronze, the pus, the blood, the filth You drank in realms of hell
or in the preta worlds.

And all the motes of dust found in the universe
Are no match for the severed heads and limbs
That other beings, many as the sky is vast,
Have lost pursuing their desires.

7. When you were born in other forms—
As beasts or demons, yakṣas, nāgas, and the like— Countless were the joys and
sorrows that you had.

As Brahmā or as Indra you were graced
With the samādhis and absorptions of no form;
You gained the glory and perfection of great rulers of mankind And walked on
pavements made of seven precious stones.
But then you fell into the lower realms,
And great was the torment that you suffered.

8. Those there are who in this present life Have high and pleasing status, wealth
untold,

But dying, they must suffer helpless poverty And be the slaves of slaves.
Their wealth was but a dream that vanished when they woke.
All experience passes: such is the suffering of change.
To think about it deeply brings great sadness welling up.

O beings! You who live in the three cities of existence!
Do not crave the pleasures of saṃsāra;
Accomplish your enlightenment!

9. To body, speech, and mind there correspond The desire, the form, and
formless realms.

In these three cities: manifest, half-manifest, unmanifest, Beings are tormented
by three kinds of suffering: Of pain, of change, and suffering in the making.
With respect to objects of the senses,
The unfolding of the mind, the intellect, and consciousness³³
Produces an unceasing cycle of both pain and pleasure.

10. The consciousness of the universal ground, The intellect, the five sense
consciousnesses

Unfold successively in gradual steps.

From this derives the causal process

Leading to the sorrows of existence.

The root is ignorance: the deluded pairing

Of the apprehender and the apprehended,

Which, through habit, hardens

Into objects, senses, and perceiving mind.

Thus from clinging to an “I” and “mine” saṃsāra is contrived.³⁴

11. The nature of the mind is dharmakāya,

The changeless actual nature.

Because of ignorance and clinging,

And through the habit of *imputed nature*, The nature of the mind mistakenly
appears

As the *impure dependent nature*.

Self and other, mind and object, dual appearances— Are all perceived as separate
entities.

From this there come unbidden countless sufferings.

But when the changeless nature of the mind is understood, Through meditation on

the *unmistaken actual nature*, The fields of *pure dependent nature* are attained, Where one finds respite from the city of *saṃsāra*.³⁵

12. Alas for the pains of those who tread
With weariness the pathways of existence—
Saṃsāra, vast and shoreless, hard indeed to measure!
Wherever they are born, beings find no happiness at all— Instead, the fruits
unbearable of their nonvirtuous ways.
Their perceptions are all wrong:
The various experiences of the six migrations
Are like the visions of a dream.
They appear and yet are nonexistent.
Beings fail to understand this; thus their pains are boundless.
Listen, for a while,
According to the scriptures, I will speak of them.

13. In the Reviving Hell, upon a ground of burning iron, Beings meet and fight
with weapons to the death.
And then there comes a voice that cries, “Come back to life!”
And they must suffer once again.
Know that this they undergo until their karma’s spent.

14. To calculate their life span, fifty human years Are as one day in the divine
realm of the four Great Kings.
One month is thirty of these days; twelve months make up one year.
Five hundred of these years
Is as one day in the Reviving Hell.
And here the days are added one by one until
Five hundred years have passed—
The time of pain these beings must endure.
The span of life is thus computed,
So the sūtra stipulates,
As ten million human years

Multiplied by one hundred, two and sixty thousand.

15. In Black Line Hell are beings cut apart with burning saws.
Joined together they're again made whole
And once again they are dismembered:
Great are the pains they undergo.
In the Heaven of the Thirty-Three,
One day is equal to a hundred human years.
And in that heaven, a thousand years
Is but a single day in Black Line Hell,
Whose denizens must live a thousand years.
This corresponds, the Teacher said,
To one million, two hundred six and ninety thousand years and twelve— All
multiplied again by ten million human years.

16. Between cliffs and mountains shaped like horses, Camels, tigers, lions, and
the rest,
The beings in the Crushing Hell are smashed to dust.
And when the mountains separate,
They come to life just as before
But then are pulverized with clubs in valleys made of steel.
Their bodies are completely crushed;
Their blood flows down in streams.
Two hundred human years are as one day
In the heaven of the *yāma* gods called Free of Conflict, Two thousand of whose
years, so it is said,
Are counted as one day spent in the Crushing Hell, Where beings endure two
thousand of their years.
This comes to ten million times
Three hundred, eight and sixty thousand human years.

17. In the hell called Screaming, the beings wail and cry As in the blazing fires
they burn.

They suffer, boiled in molten steel.

Four hundred human years are as one day

In the heaven called the Joyous, where

Four thousand years are as one day in Screaming Hell, Where beings are tortured
for four thousand years.

One hundred and eighty trillion human years are thus computed, And to this are
superadded nine hundred, four and forty billion years.

18. In Great Screaming, beings are roasted in a blazing fire, In houses made of
incandescent iron,

Where they are bludgeoned by the Lord of Death.

Eight hundred human years are as one day

In the celestial realm Delight in Magical Creations, Eight thousand of whose
years are as one day

In the Great Screaming Hell, where beings must suffer For eight thousand of
their years, which is, in human terms, Three quadrillion, five hundred, two
and fifty trillion, Six hundred and sixty billion years.

19. In the Hell of Heat, in houses made of burning iron, Beings have brains and
bodies torn and smashed

By spikes and hammers. They burn inside and out With tongues of blazing fire.

One thousand and six hundred human years

Are equal to a day spent in the heaven called

Mastery of Others' Emanations, where sixteen thousand years Are equal to a
single day spent in the Hell of Heat, Where beings must live for sixteen
thousand of their years.

This means eighty-four million and one trillion and Six thousand five hundred
and thirty human years, All multiplied again ten millionfold.

20. In Great Heat, beings are trapped in buildings, Double-walled, all made of
blazing iron.

There they are impaled on tridents with prongs

That pierce through their heads and shoulders.

They're wrapped in blankets made of burning metal, Boiled in molten copper.

And in this torment they must live
For half an intermediate kalpa,
Which in human terms exceeds all counting.
One such kalpa is made up of four small kalpas: Formation, and duration,
destruction, and the void.
One great kalpa is made up of eighty intermediate kalpas.³⁶

21. In the Hell of Torment Unsurpassed,
Beings are trapped in buildings made of blazing metal.
Other than their cries and screams,
There's no way to distinguish them
From the all-engulfing blaze.
Their vital strength is in the middle of the fire As if adhering to the heart of
blazing flame.
This they must endure for one intermediate kalpa.
And since there is no greater suffering than this, It is described as Torment
Unsurpassed without reprieve.

22. The fiery heat and corresponding pains In each of these hell realms, in order
given,
Grow seven times more intense.
And beings have to suffer it until their karma's spent.

23. The beings who endure the lesser hells Are isolated or else live in groups both
great and small.
They live in various places: mountains, trees, the sky, rocks, fire, or water, Where
they are tormented by a corresponding pain, And thus these are described as
lesser hells.

24. But they are wrong who think that this reflects A brevity of life or smallness
of the gatherings.
For it is said that one who, born in scorpion form Embedded in a rock, lived long,
While in the lesser hells five hundred beings,
In the form of śrāvaka

IN THE FORM OF STAVAKAS,

Fought and struck each other with weapons

At the hour of their meals.

25. The sixteen neighboring hells

Are found around the rim of Torment Unsurpassed.

First the trench of burning embers, then the swamp of rotting corpses, The plain
of razors, then the fordless stream of burning ash: A group of four in all the
four directions.

26. When of Torment Unsurpassed the doors appear to open, Beings escape and
rush toward what seems a shady trench.

But then they sink up to their knees in fiery embers.

They cross. Their flesh is burned; their white bones show.

And then they're healed to suffer all again.

27. They hurry then to what appears a cooling marsh, But there they sink into a
stinking swamp of rotting dead, Where worms with jaws of gold or steel or
copper bite them.

28. And then they see a pleasant plain,

But as they run there, burning razors

Slice their flesh in pieces.

They hasten into pleasant-seeming woods

But are destroyed in groves of sword blades

That lash and flail in winds their deeds have wrought.

29. And then, upon the summit of a pleasant hill, They see the former object of
their passion calling them.

And as they hasten there, sharp metal scalpels cut them; Flesh and blood drips
down.

And when they reach the summit, vultures mash their brains.

They then think that their lovers call them from below.

As they descend, the upward-turning scalpels wound them yet again.

Then, when they have come down,
Those men or women take them in their fiery arms And with their sharpened
fangs cause dreadful pain.
They're then devoured by packs of dogs and wolves.

30. They see a cool and flowing stream and run there in delight.
In they leap, but sink up to their waists
In fiery ash that burns their flesh and bones.
Upon the banks they see the sentries of the Lord of Death.
This pain they must endure for many a thousand years.

31. Who would not be terrified by hellish torment such as this?
In such existences the pain is past all measuring.
Therefore know and understand!
Find the ways, I beg you, to escape from it!

32. There are eight cold hells where beings are tormented.
In glaciers and dark places of great freezing cold, Beings are lashed by swirling
snowstorms.
They are covered with blisters, bursting blisters.
Their teeth are chattering in the cold;
They cry and they lament.
Their flesh splits open like utpala flowers,
Then like lotuses and then great lotuses,
And in the wounds are worms with jaws of burning iron That burrow in their
flesh, consuming it.
And thus they live until their karma is exhausted.

33. Regarding the life span in these infernal states, Imagine a large basket filled
with sesame,
In all two hundred bushels.
The length of life of beings in the Hell of Blisters Is the time required to empty
the container

Taking but a single grain once every hundred years.
In each successive hell the span of life
Increases twentyfold.

34. Therefore, you, endowed with mind,
In order to obtain complete and utter freedom
From the hellish worlds
Cultivate a strength and diligence of mind!

35. There are pretas living in the depths³⁷
And pretas that can move through space.
Those that live below are vast in size.
Their arms and legs are small and thin, their stomachs cavernous.
Their throats are narrow, their mouths like needle-eyes.
They find no food or drink: great thirst and hunger torment them.
When they see wholesome flowers, plants, and trees, They dry before their eyes.
Repulsive is their dwelling place, and vomit is their only food.
And even when from far they have a glimpse of food and drink, It seems as
 though it's under guard, forbidden them.
Pretas that have inner defects
Have blazing conflagrations in their stomachs;
Smoke and flames come from their mouths.
Through defects that are shared by all their kind, Pretas are distressed and poor;
 they're fearful and assailed.
Protectorless, they suffer in wild and frightful places.

36. Pretas that can move through space are spirits, Yakṣas, rakṣasas, the *tṣen* and
 gyalpo spirits, and more.
They have miraculous powers by virtue of their karma And can move from place
 to place without obstruction.
They produce all kinds of harm.
They cause disease and steal the radiance of beings, Shortening their lives.
Regarding their own length of life,

One human month is as a day for them
And therefore in the worlds of Yama, Lord of Death, They are tormented for five
hundred of their own, Or fifteen thousand human, years.

37. Seeing with sadness how such beings are, All those who wish to free
themselves

Will cast away all predilection for samsaric life, And with determined resolution
They will practice holy Dharma leading them to peace.

38. Animals that live down in the depths

Teem everywhere in all the four great oceans.

They prey on one another, and their suffering is endless.

They dwell in the dark oceans that divide the continents.

They are tormented by the heat and cold,

By hunger, thirst, and fear of predators.

There are animals also that live scattered and dispersed, Like birds and beasts that
live in lands where humans dwell.

By hunters they are harmed and live in danger from each other.

Horses, oxen, camels, donkeys, goats, and so forth Are reduced to slavery.

They're beaten and must suffer endlessly,

And for their meat and fur and bones they are condemned to death.

Their very nature is unbounded suffering.

For half the day and night, the nāgas may find happiness, But sorrow in the other
half.

Their morning's joy transforms into an afternoon of pain.

Rains of hot sand fall upon the habitats of some.

Some are lonely, friendless, tortured by their poverty.

Mostly they have small intelligence and live in fear of the garuḍas.

A great variety of suffering afflicts them, and their life span is not fixed.

Some live but a day, while some like Takṣaka, their king, Have lives that last for
one entire kalpa.

39. Think of this, O you who wish for freedom From the state of animals.

To gain your happiness and benefit,
Set out upon the perfect path
That leads to high rebirth and ultimate good.
Day and night, exert yourself in virtue.

40. Even in the case of human beings,
Happiness has no real chance.
Beings suffer torment, mental anguish, conflicts, and the rest.
One suffering has not yet gone
Before another overtakes it.
The suffering of change
Is like consuming food that's mixed with poison.
Mistaken modes of nourishment and dress that bring disease
Contrive our future pain— Suffering in the making is thereby exemplified.
To these three kinds of suffering are eight more added: Birth and aging, sickness,
death;
Meeting with adversities
And losing what is pleasant,
To be deprived of what one wants,
To have continuous suffering in one's aggregates— All these are sources of an
endless sorrow;
From all of them there comes unbounded woe.

41. Nescient consciousness, the wind-mind, gathers
In the parents' essences and,
step by step,
In seven weeks time, a body takes its shape.
From round to long, to oblong shape, "egg-like,"
"Round and flat," "fish-shaped," "like a tortoise"— Thus its form evolves.
The tiniest discomfort that the mother feels,
Of hunger, thirst, of heat or cold,
Afflicts the embryo with bitter pain.
Cramped in narrow, foul, and fetid dark,
It must suffer torments many and unbearable.

From the seventh week and till the twenty-sixth, The sense organs take shape,
With limbs, and hair, and other parts.

From then until the sixth and thirtieth week,
The body grows in strength, its size increases, And at length it quickens in the
womb.

Then through the tightly fettered structure of the mother's bones, The baby is
brought forth.

Its body is upended by the action of the karmic wind And, close to death, it must
endure a pain

Like that felt in the Crushing Hell.

And once it has been born,

All contact for the baby is like being flayed alive.

When washed it feels like razors slicing through a boil.

42. The sorrows of old age indeed are very hard to bear.

Your youth is gone, your body, now repulsive in the eyes of all, Is powerless to
stand or stoop but needs a stick supporting it; Its heat declines and food is
indigestible.

Your strength is gone,

It's hard for you to move around, to walk or stand.

You wrench your joints in failing to attain your goal.

Your faculties decline.

With dim and bleary eyes, you do not see.

Sounds and words you do not hear, and tastes and smells escape you.

Dull and muffled is your sense of touch.

Your memory is but a blur.

You sink into a slumber of confusion.

You take no joy in things wherein you find but little good, And food and other
pleasures now repel.

Your life force ebbs away, and death hangs over you— Your mind is agitated
now with fear and dread.

You have no strength of patience, like a child, Unable to put up with hardship.

And quickly you are gone,

A flame that went out when the oil was spent.

43. The sufferings of illness are extremely hard to bear.
The body's constitution changes, bringing torment to the mind.
The objects of the senses give no joy.
Instead there comes the anguish of the fear of death.
You weep with sorrows more than you can bear.

44. Even greater torment is the bitterness of death.
The moment comes for your last meal,
The last clothes that you wear, the last words that you speak.
You lie on your last bed and leave behind
Your life, your body, relatives and friends,
Your servants and retainers, all that you possess.
Alone you go in fear you know not where.

45. Then there is the suffering of meeting with adversity: The anguish caused by
fear, by injury and dreadful situations.
Sorrow, weeping, and distress derive
From losing those you love and cherish.
You suffer as you long for them, remembering their qualities.
And then there is the pain of being deprived of what you want.
The failure to attain your goals brings anguish to your mind.
And desperate in your poverty, You're like a preta hungering for food and drink.

46. Form, feelings, and perceptions,
Conditioning factors, consciousness:
These are the five skandhas that perpetuate saṃsāra.
Because they are defiled, the teachings say,
They are the place of all our suffering,
Its source, its basis, its receptacle.³⁸

47. Everything therefore within this human world Is suffering, in form of cause

or fruit.

Thus there's no real happiness.

To free yourself, reflect upon the perfect Dharma.

This, I urge you, is the means of liberation from saṃsāra.

48. And for asuras too, contentment has no chance.

They are caught up in enmity and pointless strife.

Their envy of the glory of the gods is unendurable; They suffer countless pains, I
tell you, in their wars.

Therefore practice Dharma that with all speed

Sets beings free in states of peace and happiness.

49. Even in the spheres of the desire-realm gods Boundless suffering is found.

At death they fall down

From the drunken haze of carefree pleasure.

Their garlands fade

And on their thrones they find no ease.

Abandoned by their friends, they fear their future destiny: For seven of their
days, their state is unendurable.

50. In the Pure and other heavens of the realm of form, The gods rest in samādhi.

When their former karma is exhausted,

Down they fall to lower states.

Thus they are tormented by the suffering of change.

In the formless realms, the gods that are in calm abiding Undergo the exhaustion
of their karma

And assume their next existence.

They have suffering in the making.

And therefore, even though you gain high status in saṃsāra, You should not rely
on it.

Achieve your liberation therefore, you who are so fortunate!

All those who are attached to pleasures of saṃsāra Are tortured by their craving

As though they foundered in a trench of fire.

51. Your liberation thus depends on you.
The Teacher of both gods and humankind
Has shown to us the means.
No one else can save you through their sudden intervention, Just as no one can
prevent your dreams
When you are dazed in sleep.
If this indeed were possible,
The blissful buddhas and their offspring
Would indeed have emptied all saṃsāra
With the rays of their compassion.
Therefore you must don the armor of your diligence: The time has come—exert
yourself ascending freedom's path.

52. You must reflect that sinful beings like yourself, Who have not been the
object of the healing action Of unnumbered buddhas of the past,
Must wander in the wilderlands:
The pathways of existence.
And if, as in the past, you fail to make an effort, You will suffer in the six realms
of saṃsāra
Time and time again.

53. The sorrows of saṃsāra are like space unbounded, Like fire they are
unbearable,
As various as the objects that appear.
Simply to submit to them, O mind, is abject and unfitting.
How can the compassion of the buddhas
Enter those bereft of conscience, care, or sense of decency?
Enlightened action, working skillfully, is called forth, it is said, By the good
karmic state of those who might be trained.
Admit therefore your faults,
And from your heart reflect upon the sorrows of existence.
To free yourself and others from saṃsāra,

Set out and climb the perfect path that leads to peace.

54. If now you cannot bear the least discomfort, How can you withstand the
dreadful sorrows of existence?

If when it's explained you are not moved to sadness, Your heart inert like iron or
a piece of stone, It's clear you have no mind at all!

55. The aggregates that harbor all the sorrows Of saṃsāra so unbearable
Are sources of defilements, root and branch, of every kind.

What people with intelligence would let their cravings grow?

Act swiftly! Triumph over your existence in saṃsāra!

56. May the Dharma feast, the source of happiness, Sustain with joy all those
who dwell

In the three cities of existence.

Exhausted by so many sorrows,

May their minds today find rest.

4. THE KARMIC LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

1. Existential states both high and low

With all their joys and sorrows

Come, the Sage has said, from acts accomplished in the past.

Actions that compound saṃsāra are of two kinds, white and black.

They have the nature of the virtues and nonvirtues, ten and ten.

2. Their basis is the undetermined universal ground,³⁹

Mirrorlike, devoid of all cognition,

Upon which lies a consciousness.

This consciousness is limpid,

And yet objects it does not discern.

It creates a ground for manifesting.

It is like a clear, untarnished mirror.

Thence emerge the five sense consciousnesses

Whereby objects, form and other things,

Are grasped without conception.

They are like images reflected in a glass.

But then cognitions follow,

Dividing apprehender from the apprehended.

And thus continually there's apprehension and nonapprehension,

Conceptualization and nonconceptualization.

These cognitions are defiled mind and the mental consciousness.

3. Virtue and nonvirtue that derive From coarse thoughts of attachment— Of these is the desire realm made,
Based upon the universal ground of the habitual tendencies.
Without discernment, clear appearance makes the realm of form, While the formless realm is based
Upon the habitual state that is completely blank.⁴⁰
Saṃsāra is at all times based upon the twofold adventitious veil.

4. When the mind rests open, blank,
Utterly without the apprehension of appearing objects, This is the moment of the universal ground.
Then, when there is a clear appearance
To which there is no grasping,
This is the consciousness of the universal ground.
It is bright and clear and motionless.
When, through the duality of apprehender-apprehended With the wanting and rejection of the objects of the five sense doors, The seven “gatherings” perceive sense objects generally, One speaks of seven consciousnesses.⁴¹
Through strong habituation to them,
Our body, speech, and mind go erring
Into the three worlds, compounding sorrow.

5. Paramount in the desire realm
Are the seven consciousnesses,
While in the realm of form,
It is consciousness of the universal ground,
And in the formless realm,
It is the universal ground bereft of all cognition.
It should be understood that,
While in each realm one of these predominates,
The other two are latent as its retinue.

6. Thus, when beings in the desire realm fall asleep, The five sense

consciousnesses, step by step,
Dissolve into the mental consciousness.
As this subsides into the universal ground,
There is a state that is completely blank,
An absence of appearing objects.
This dissolves into the dharmadhātu
That transcends conceptual elaboration.
Thence unfolding, there again arises
From the consciousness of the universal ground
A single mental consciousness: the dreaming mind.
This causes the appearance of fictive things without existence, Which are wanted
or rejected.
Through further evolution, as one wakes from sleep, The six sense
consciousnesses,
In engagement with their objects,
Then give rise to karmic action.
And thus this sequence manifests
Continuously, day and night.⁴²

7. On the different levels of the realm of form,⁴³
The minds of beings are in the four samādhis,
Remaining in the consciousness of the universal ground.
From this a subtle consciousness may at times arise Whereby objects are
detected.
But the mind will mostly rest in stillness
Through the habit gained of concentration.

8. On the different levels of the formless realm,⁴⁴
The mind is in the state of universal ground.
In Boundless Space and the remaining three,
It stays one-pointedly in calm abiding.
The mind's continua, supported by the four "name aggregates"— Extremely
subtle feeling and perception.

Conditioning factors, consciousness—

Do not awake from single-pointed calm abiding
For an entire kalpa
And plant no seeds of virtue and discernment.

9. The resting of the mind in the samādhis
And absorptions without form
Is the result of former deeds.

When these come to exhaustion,

The mind must transmigrate.

Now since this mind is indeterminate,

Because it's in a state of ignorance,

It's ever and again productive

Of misguided karmic sequences, in cause and fruit,
In the samsaric world.

Therefore free yourself from all such states of mind.

10. Therefore the desire-realm mind,

Through that to which it has grown used,

Supplies the cause of rebirth, high or low,

And indeed of liberation.

11. By day, the seven consciousnesses dominate.

The other two,⁴⁵ the same in nature, are their retinue.

This means that, in the case of visual consciousness
That apprehends a form,

The aspect of its thought-free clarity

Is the universal ground consciousness,

While the aspect of no-thought

Is the universal ground itself.

It should be understood that,

For the six remaining consciousnesses,

It is just the same.

12. Respectively, in times of deep sleep, dream, and waking
Are, first, the
universal ground;

Then, second, the universal ground consciousness Together with the mental consciousness;

Then, third, the six sense consciousnesses.

Therefore, these three periods are successively referred to As the times of one; of two and one;

And of all that have a single nature.⁴⁶

13. Based upon the mind,

All actions have their roots in ignorance

Concomitant with craving, hatred, and confusion.

From this are generated actions white and black, Which in their turn compound saṃsāra.

14. Nonvirtue makes one fall

From high to low samsaric states.

When differentiated it is tenfold,

Classified as three of body, four of speech, and three of mind.

15. The act of killing is to put to death A living being, intentionally, without mistaking the identity.

And similar to this are all aggressive actions, Beating, striking, and so on, whereby beings are assaulted.

The act of taking what has not been given

Is to steal another's property, and similar to this Is the acquisition through deceit of others' goods.

Sexual misconduct is to have relations

With one who is committed to another, and similar to this Are all improper modes of intercourse.

16. Lying means to utter falsehood which, When understood, effects a change in someone else's mind.

And similar to this is speaking truth in order to deceive.

Divisive speech is saying things that bring estrangement, And like this is repeating others' words to create discord.

Worthless chatter is to talk about unwholesome texts and fooleries, And this includes light, careless conversation Unrelated to the Dharma.

Harsh speech is violent words that pierce the heart, And similar to this is sweet talk that brings misery to others.

17. Covetousness is not to tolerate the wealth of others And the wish to have it for oneself,

And like this is to want another's glory: erudition and the like.

Malice is to hate and wish harm to another,

And similar to this is angrily refusing to give help.

Wrong view is to believe in permanence or nihilism And to disbelieve the karmic law.

Similar is every kind of false ascription and denial.

18. According to their object,

And one's evil motive, attitude, and conduct,

The ten nonvirtues bring forth four effects:

Fully ripened, similar to cause,

Proliferating, and conditioning.

19. The ten nonvirtues small in their intensity Will ripen fully in the sorrows of the realm of animals.

Those of moderate intensity will ripen fully

In the sorrows of the pretas.

Those of great intensity will bring about the pains of hell.

20. There are two effects resembling their cause.

The first is to be born with the proclivity

To do again what one has done.

This is said to be the *active consequence resembling its cause*.

And then, although a higher birth may be achieved, One's life is short and dogged by many ills.

One has no wealth, and what one has

Is shared in common with one's enemies.
One's spouse is unattractive and becomes an enemy.
Much abused, one is deceived by others.
The servants and associates are unruly and recalcitrant.
All one hears are jarring sounds that tend to words of argument.
What one says has little weight, and one has no self-confidence.
One has no contentment and one's wants increase.
One does not seek out what is beneficial,
And others are a source of harm.
One's views are wrong and likely one is tricked.
For each one of the ten nonvirtues,
These results, the teachings say, are, two by two: *The passive consequence
resembling its cause.*

21. The conditioning effect of actions ripens as the outer world.

In the present situation of impure dependent nature, The consequence of killing is
to take one's birth In poor, unprosperous lands.

Healing plants (their leaves and fruits and flowers), All food and drink have little
strength,

Are indigestible and dangerous to one's life.

The consequence of theft is to be born

In regions where the harvests do not ripen,

In lands a-prey to famine, hail, and frost.

The consequence of sexual misconduct

Is a habitat that's swampy, fouled with excrement and urine, A birthplace that is
fetid with the stench of refuse and impurity, A cramped place, dreadful and
depressing.

The consequence of lying is to find oneself

In regions that are frightening and unfavorable, Where prosperity is wavering and
one is tricked by others.

Divisive speech is cause of stark and inhospitable Environments of cliffs, ravines,
and precipices Where traveling is hard.

The consequence of harsh speech is to be born

In barren, stony places filled with thorns and blasted trees, And where the ground
is dusty, filled with refuse, Unhealthy, saline regions where the crops grow
poor and rough.

Idle chatter is the cause of birth

In regions where the crops give no ripe fruit, Where seasons are disordered,
In places that, unsure, are liable to change.

The consequence of covetousness is birth

In regions where plants produce more husk than grain, Where one witnesses the
passing of a time of plenty.

The consequence of ill will is to be born in places Where the fruits and harvests
have a hot and bitter taste, In places marked by natural and abundant harms
— From kings and robbers, savages, and snakes.

To hold wrong views provokes as consequence

A birth in lands that have no mines of precious gems, Where healing trees and
plants

And flowers and fruits are scarce,

And where, deprived of all assistance,

One is friendless and protectorless.

22. The proliferating fruit of action

Means that evil actions once completed

Will provoke a disproportionate degree of suffering.

23. If briefly told, the ten nonvirtues are like poison That, when taken slightly,
moderately, or to great extent, Produces an immense degree of pain.

I beg you, strive to spurn them as the enemies they are.

24. The ten good actions that propel one to the higher realms Consist in virtuously
and consciously

Abandoning the ten nonvirtues.

Reject all killing, stealing, sexual misconduct; Avoid all lying and divisive
calumny;

Do not indulge in idle chatter, harsh words, covetousness; And throw far away

from you ill will and wrong views.

25. These actions, when of less intensity, result in human birth.

When of moderate strength, in birth among desire-realm gods.

Actions of a great intensity are linked with the samādhis
And the formless concentrations. They bring attainment
Of the bliss of the two higher worlds.

Virtuous actions have likewise their four effects, And by examples contrary to
those just now supplied, You will realize that the fruits of the ten virtues
Are the higher realms.

26. The ten good actions that give rise to happiness Drive beings into higher
destinies.

The ten nonvirtues, by their nature,

Precipitate a fall into an evil birth.

And so, to practice good, rejecting evil,

Is the path of worldly virtue.

It is, the Sage has said, the vehicle of gods and humankind.

Preparing happy destinies in lives to come,

It is regarded as the excellent support for liberation.

Wandering beings, you who are well favored,

Take your stand on it!

27. The supreme virtue that gives rise to liberation Drives saṃsāra far away. It
strives for peace

And utterly transcends the actions white and black Whereby, within the wheel of
life,

The high and lower states are all compounded.

The stainless causes, such as virtues that give rise to liberation, Comprise the ten
virtuous actions, the samādhis And the formless concentrations,

The six perfections, and the rest—

All that is contained in the five paths.

Moreover, when one realizes the no-self of both persons and phenomena, Then,
through virtue that conjoins both skillful means and wisdom, While dwelling

neither in existence nor in peace, One works for beings' good
And gains the boundless state of buddhahood.
This yogic virtue thus goes far beyond the world.

28. While the gathering of merit is conceptual, The gathering of wisdom is not so.
Conjoined, they purify the twofold veil
And manifest the twofold kāya.
They are the sphere of meditation and postmeditation.
They are, in common beings, stained
But are unstained in Noble Ones.
By their successive practice, liberation is obtained.

29. Buddha-potential is the basis
Of the virtue that gives rise to liberation.
Luminosity is the character of the mind.
It is the stainless element:
The *potential naturally present*,
Whose appearing aspect is the twofold kāya.
It has been described by nine comparisons.
The nature of compassion, present from the first, Is *the potential that may be developed*,
So the Sugata has said.⁴⁷
Its root is primal wisdom, luminous, self-knowing, And it is virtue, being free of
the three poisons.

30. When these two potentials wake,
Two bodhichittas are engendered perfectly.
Compassion is made manifest,
The gathering of merit on the relative level.
This is associated with the vase empowerment And the two that follow,
And the generation stage that purifies.
To understand the empty nature
Is the gathering of ultimate primordial wisdom.
It is related to the fourth empowerment of the word And the perfection stage the

It is related to the fourth empowerment of the word and the perfection stage, the mahāmudrā.

By means of proper meditation
And the growth of these two stages,
Defilements are transformed into primordial wisdom.
Through ever-growing virtue thus
The veils upon the buddha-element are cleansed away.
And thus is seen the spotless sunlight
Of the dharmakāya and the rūpakāya.

31. The ten virtues, the samādhis, and the formless concentrations— The most
excellent things this world affords
Make up the gathering of merit.
That which goes beyond the world,
The utter absence of conception,
Constitutes the gathering of highest wisdom.
When these fields of meditation and postmeditation Are practiced
simultaneously, together and in union, Every excellence is gained.

32. And as with virtue that compounds existence in saṃsāra, That which
compounds peace
Has likewise been described as action.
And yet, because this peace transcends existence, It is free from all such action.

33. The ten virtues whereby the path is followed Have four fruits: fully ripened,
Similar to cause, conditioning, proliferating.

34. Through practice of ten virtues with intensity Small, moderate, or great,
A birth among the gods and humankind
Is, in the immediate term, attained
And, finally, the good that is definitive.

35. The consequence resembling the cause
Is, actively, a natural proclivity to virtue:

Passively, it is enjoyment of long life and vast possessions And a loyal,
harmonious spouse.

One is not scorned, and friends return one's love; One's words are trusted,
pleasant to the ears of everyone.

One is contented, loving, and has wholesome views.

36. The conditioning effect of virtue

Is to be born in perfect circumstances,

Prosperous and wonderful.

Food and drink and medicine

Are easy to digest and great in healing strength.

One's habitat is unpolluted, and its herbs are sweetly fragrant.

It is free from danger and from harm,

And one is not deceived by others.

It is a sweet environment, where pleasant people live, Where harvests ripen in due
season with abundant fruit.

It is a smooth terrain adorned by meres and cooling lakes, Where flowers and
fruits are perfect and abundant.

It is a region where great increase in prosperity is seen, Where things like
medicines and grains

Are supreme in their taste and quantity,

Their sources excellent and plentiful,

A place secure and safe on every side.

37. Through the proliferating consequence, Virtue is productive of yet further
virtue.

Every good desire comes to fulfillment.

38. Wealth, moreover, comes from generosity; Discipline results in happiness;

Beauty is the fruit of patience;

Diligence brings glorious qualities.

A peaceful mind results from concentration;

And through wisdom, freedom is achieved.

39. Beauty comes to those who love,
Help comes to those who have compassion,
Perfect riches are the fruits of sympathetic joy, While purity of mind comes
from impartiality.
In short, the excellent results
Of the two gatherings of merit and of wisdom
Are the temporary gaining of the higher realms And the ultimate attainment of
definitive good.
This then is the sublime path,
The chariot way of the Great Vehicle
Which brings us to the excellence
Of the Victorious Ones past, present, and to come.

40. Thus the actions that produce saṃsāra and nirvāṇa Are based upon the mind;
and mind itself is luminosity.
The mind resembles space wherein is found
No agent and no act.
All acts arise dependently.
This is what the two truths mean.

41. Pure from the beginning, not existing yet appearing, Our actions are like
artists: all is their creation.
And always do they follow us; they're like our body's shadow.
Like our body's ease and pain,
They cannot be transferred to others.
Hard to reverse, they're like the flowing water of a stream, And, like a king, they
raise beings high or bring them low.
Their range is vast like the abyss of space.
They do not change their color, light or dark, But are like the two lotuses, the
white and blue.

42. Actions, when examined, are without intrinsic being.

Yet they make, as in a dream, all kinds of joy and sorrow.
They are not real existing things, although the mind believes them so.
And yet the causal process is infallible.
Such is the deep nature of arising through dependence.
Not existent, yet not inexistent, neither is it both.
Howsoever is the deed so will its fruition be.
This is the domain of the two wisdoms,
Which behold the nature and the multiplicity of things.
It has been well explained by the Omniscient.

43. Those who scorn the law of karmic cause and fruit
Are students of the nihilistic view outside the Dharma.
They rely upon the thought that all is void;
They fall in the extreme of nothingness
And go from low to lower states.
They have embarked upon an evil path
And from the evil destinies will have no freedom, Casting happy states of being
far away.

44. “The law of karmic cause and fruit,
Compassion and the gathering of merit—
All this is but provisional teaching fit for children: Enlightenment will not be
gained thereby.
Great yogis should remain without intentioned action.
They should meditate upon reality that is like space.
Such is the definitive instruction.”
The view of those who speak like this
Is of all views the most nihilist:
They have embraced the lowest of all paths.
How strange this is!
They want a fruit but have annulled its cause.

45. If reality is but a space-like void,

What need is there to meditate?

And if it is not so, then even if one meditates Such efforts are to no avail.

If meditation on mere voidness leads to liberation, Even those with minds
completely blank

Attain enlightenment!

But since those people have asserted meditation, Cause and its result they thus
establish!

Throw far away such faulty paths as these!

46. The true, authentic path asserts

The arising in dependence of both cause and fruit, The natural union of skillful
means and wisdom.

Through the causality of nonexistent but appearing acts, Through meditation on
the nonexistent but appearing path, The fruit is gained, appearing and yet
nonexistent; And for the sake of nonexistent but appearing beings,
Enlightened acts, appearing and yet nonexistent, manifest.

Such is pure causality's profound interdependence.

This is the essential pith

Of all the sūtra texts whose meaning is definitive And indeed of all the tantras.

Through the joining of the two accumulations,

The generation and perfection stages,

Perfect buddhahood is swiftly gained.

47. Thus all the causal processes

Whereby saṃsāra is contrived should be abandoned, And all the acts that are the
cause of liberation Should be earnestly performed.

High position in saṃsāra

And the final excellence of buddhahood Will speedily be gained.

48. May the rain of Dharma, cooling and delightful, Cause the two accumulations
to expand

Within the field of beings' minds;

Exhausted by the karma and defilements of saṃsāra, May their minds today find

rest.

5. THE SPIRITUAL MASTER

1. This excellent, unerring path of karmic cause and fruit Is found when one depends upon a holy being.

From spiritual masters also come the three enlightenments Accomplished in the three times

By the buddhas and their bodhisattva heirs

And by the śrāvakas and the pratyekabuddhas.

Moreover, the achievement of saṃsāra's upper realms And every happiness indeed derives

From following a sublime master.

Thus you should keep company with holy beings.

2. Like vines that wrap themselves round sandal trees, People who keep company with holy ones

Become, in their turn, holy.

And like kusha grass left in a fetid marsh, People who keep company with evil beings

Will in their turn be evil.

So keep the company of holy beings

And from bad teachers strive to keep your distance.

3. What is the outer bearing, you may ask, Of these sublime and holy ones?

Because they are the guides of all the world, With everyone they are in harmony.

But since they are beyond the world,

From all they are completely different.

In all the actions of their body, speech, and mind, Everyone they utterly surpass.

4. In body, they are peaceful and relaxed, Their conduct pure and free of fault.

Skilled they are in clearing doubts.

Their speech is pure and sweet to hear.

Their minds are utterly serene,

A treasure of omniscient primal wisdom.

Unlimited they are in spiritual qualities,

And great in learning and compassion.

Vast their wisdom is; their ways and realization are like space.

Boundless are their works,

And every link with them is meaningful.

Abandoning all weariness,

And filled with love, they labor constantly.

Rely on them, for they lead beings on an upward path.

5. Especially within the Secret Mantra, True masters have these attributes:

They have received empowerment;

Their samaya and their vows are pure.

They understand the meaning of the tantras; They have crossed the ocean of the pith instructions.

Of the stages of approach, accomplishment, activation, And enlightened action they have mastery.

Of the view and meditation, conduct and result They have experience and realization— They have achieved the signs of warmth.

They have great love, are skilled in means, And bring disciples to maturity and freedom.

The blessings of their lineage in massing clouds Have not dispersed.

Rely then on such glorious teachers, learned and accomplished.

6. Their qualities are boundless; Yet, if we praise but partly

These great friends of beings,

They are like mighty ships

That bear across the ocean of existence.
They are the peerless guides
Of those who enter on the path.
They are like wish-fulfilling jewels
That dissipate recession and decline.
They are like streams of nectar
That extinguish fires of karma and defilement.
They are like perfect clouds of rain
That soothe with showers of teaching.
They're like the gods' great drum
That thrills all beings with joy.
They are like great physicians
That cure the ills of the three poisons.
They are great shining lamps
That dissipate the dark of ignorance.
They're like the mighty tree of miracles,
The source of bliss for everyone.
They're like the perfect precious vase
That satisfies unprompted every wish.
They are like suns of intense love
With rays of light unbounded.
They are like moons that soothe all torment, Shining their white light of bliss and
benefit.

7. Their vast expanse of mind is like the stainless sky.
Their concentration, luminous and clear,
Is like the planets and the stars
That shine with their own light,
Their love and wisdom are as boundless as the sea.
The powerful surge of their compassion
Is like a mighty river in its course.
No distraction moves them; They're like glorious snowcapped peaks.

Uttara Parva

Utterly unwavering,
They're like Sumeru, king of mountains.
They dwell within the world unstained
Like lotuses that grow in muddy pools.
They have impartial love for beings
As though they were their fathers or their mothers.
Unending are their qualities;
They are like precious treasure mines.
And, like the mighty Conqueror,
They are the guides for all the world.

8. Such teachers are the glorious lords of Dharma.
No matter where they are, they are the peers of all the buddhas.
Through seeing them or hearing them,
Remembering or touching them, saṃsāra is undone.
Tremendous is the charge of their great works, And they are like the mighty earth
supporting every being.

9. Enlightened masters, the fourth Jewel, Are herukas in the maṇḍala, powerful
and glorious.
They labor in this age of dregs
For beings difficult to teach,
For whom they thus surpass all buddhas.
Vajra masters are the root of all accomplishment.
Attend such masters purely and with honesty In thought and word and deed,
Revering them above your head.

10. These masters bar the way to lower realms; To higher destinies they build a
stair,
And they bring benefit and bliss in this and future lives.
They teach the perfect truth and bless the minds of beings And place them in this
life
Upon the path of ripening and freedom.

Therefore with a constant, firm, unchanging faith, Follow them at all times
tirelessly.

11. To bring defilements to an end

And to be free from harms, results of evil deeds, To be delivered from the dread
of birth and death, And gain spontaneously the twofold goal,

To cross the ocean of existence—

For this you must rely upon a teacher,

Like the sick on their physician

And the people on their king,

Like travelers upon their escort,

Merchant sailors on their captain,

And like those who cross the water on their ferryman.

12. Consider thus your teacher as a doctor And his teaching as a medicine.

Regard yourself as sick and take

Your practice as your therapy,

The gaining of both happiness and peace

As cure from your disease.

Likewise, in ways similar to these,

Attend upon your teacher

With the four pure attitudes.

13. But disciples with an evil karmic share Are the ground of every fault.

They are bereft of faith;

They have no sense of shame or decency;

Small is their compassion.

Their character and family, their conduct and their destiny Are bad. Their minds,
behavior and defilements— The five poisons—all are very gross.

Confusing right with wrong and virtue with nonvirtue, They distort the precepts.

They do not keep the vows and the samayas

And have no methods of redress.

Weak in their intelligence, they are dull and difficult to please.

Their anger and their violent speech are fully grown.
With five erroneous attitudes, they pursue the teacher.
For them the teacher is a musk deer and his doctrine musk.
They regard themselves as hunters;
Their practice is to shoot assiduous arrows, And they think the fruit thus gained
Is something to be sold to others.
Because they do not keep samaya,
Suffering is all they get, in this and future lives.

14. Some become disciples
Rashly and without investigation.
First, they praise the master's qualities, But later they decry them.
Some do both and are deceitful hypocrites.
They defame the teacher's entourage
Through sly insinuation.
The fruit of such behavior is the Hell of Torment Unsurpassed.

15. Fortunate disciples have great faith and wisdom.
Careful, mindful, vigilant, they strive with diligence.
They do as they are told; they keep their vows and pledges.
They control themselves in thought and word and deed.
Great is their compassion and their altruistic mind.
They are spacious in their attitudes and always joyful, Generous, and pure in their
perceptions.
They are steadfast and have great devotion.

16. Disciples such as these are ever mindful Of their teachers' qualities.
They never think that they have defects,
And if perchance they see them, They will take them for good qualities.
Sincerely they tell themselves, "The master has no defects— This is just my own
perception."
They thus confess their error and,
Resolving to refrain from it,

They implement the antidotes.

17. All the teacher does not like should be avoided.

Strive instead to please him by all means

And never disobey what he commands.

Regarding as himself all those around him whom he cherishes, Never take his
entourage as your disciples.

Request instead both teachings and empowerments.

18. In the presence of the teacher,

Hold in check your body, speech, and mind.

Don't stretch out your legs or sit in vajra posture.

Do not turn your back or have a somber look, And do not crease your face with
frowns.

19. Don't speak out of turn, and do not lie or slander others.

Don't discuss another person's faults

Or speak unpleasantly and harshly.

Avoid all careless and unseemly talk.

20. Do not covet what the teacher owns, And wish no harm or malice

To himself or to his entourage.

In the various deeds and conduct of the teacher See no error, no hypocrisy.

Do not think his deeds are wrong

Or even slightly untoward:

All such false, mistaken views should be rejected.

21. When the teacher has a wrathful look, Reflect that it is surely your own fault.

Make confession and restrain yourself.

Meditate upon the teacher; seeing him above your head, Make fervent prayers to
him.

By pleasing him you swiftly gain accomplishment.

22. When you see the teacher, rise and bow to him.
When he wishes to be seated, bring to him a seat With all the needed comforts,
And with folded hands and pleasant speech extol him.
When he leaves, stand up
And like a servant tend on him.

23. Be at all times mindful, careful, vigilant, Respectful, humble, full of awe.
In the teacher's presence be restrained—
Just like a newly wedded bride—
In body, speech, and mind.
Be without distraction, agitation, or vain ostentation.
Respect him in a manner free from partiality, Without a wish for fame or
personal advantage, Free from all hypocrisy and all deceit,
Without duplicity or biased exclusivity.

24. Offer to the teacher wealth, if you possess it.
Serve him with respect and reverence
In your body, speech, and mind.
And please him with your practice,
Abandoning this life's concerns.

25. When others denigrate your teacher, You should stop them.
If you are unable, think only of his excellence.
Block your ears and with compassion help the slanderers.
But do not stay with them or chat with them on easy terms.

26. To act like this brings benefit in all your future lives.
You will encounter holy beings and hear the supreme Dharma.
Grounds and paths of realization,
The power of dhāraṇī⁴⁸ and of concentration— All this wealth of excellence will
be completely yours, And to beings you will bring a feast of happiness and
peace.

27. Keep good company with sublime masters; Evil, sinful teachers, utterly avoid.
They are without the qualities explained above And are disordered in their vows
and their samaya.

Their faults are numerous and grave.

Small they are in love, compassion, wisdom, erudition, Great in lazy indolence, in
ignorance and pride, In petulance and spite.

Their defilements, all five poisons, are extremely rough.

Their care is only for this present life;

Concern for future lives they cast away.

This tribe of charlatans may seem to teach the Dharma, And yet it is not so.

Such teachers are like heaps of refuse.

Even if they have great followings,

Keep far away from them.

Their faithful followers they lead

On false paths to the lower realms.

If you desire the path to freedom,

Never count on them.

28. Links with evil friends should also be forsaken.

As long as you stay in their company,

To that extent your dark side will develop And your virtue will diminish.

Defilements will fall down on you like rain.

Bad friends destroy your happy destinies

And are a stairway down to lower realms.

Holy beings they slander; they are enemies of virtue.

Evil beings they praise, and darkness is their friend.

They praise the wicked ways of those who are like them.

At all times do they draw you onto paths to lower destinies.

With eyes of wisdom you should cast them far away.

29. By avoiding evil teachers and bad company, You will gain good qualities

And will be happy in this life and those to come.

Your virtue will increase and you will tread The profound path of liberation

Your virtue will increase and you will avoid the profound pain of rebirth.

Evil beings you will never see

But only your protectors:

Blissful buddhas and their retinue of bodhisattva children, Who hold you in their minds and bless you.

You will have a happy death and go to higher realms.

All these and other qualities

Beyond imagining you will possess.

30. Always keep the company of good and virtuous friends, For thanks to them your virtue will increase; Your sins and your defilements will diminish, And your faults will disappear.

You will pass beyond saṃsāra

And gain high birth and final goodness.

This life will pass in happiness;

Your later lives will bear good fruit.

All your actions will be wholesome;

You will be the guide of gods and humankind.

31. By keeping company with spiritual masters and good friends, You will increase in virtue and have joy as the result.

In saṃsāra you will have no fear And gain unbounded benefit and bliss.

You will achieve the endless riches

Of the twofold goal of beings.

These friends and masters are the emanations Of the buddhas, our enlightened guides,

Appearing in this age of decadence.

Therefore, till the essence of enlightenment is gained, Rely on holy beings.

32. Doing this, you will perceive impartially All things as pure.

You will have perfect love, compassion, bodhichitta.

Your spiritual experience and your realization Will develop more and more.

Your work for beings will be boundless;

Your aspirations will be all fulfilled

In accordance with the Dharma.

33. How then should you meditate upon your teacher?

How should you address your prayers to him?

At all times to fulfill the two accumulations And to remove your obscurations,
Meditate by day on your root teacher up above your head And meditate on him
by night within your heart, Never parted from your yidam and the ḍākinī.

He is adorned with all the major

And the minor marks of buddhahood,

Surrounded by the masters of the lineage,

The ḍākas and the ḍākinīs.

In your mind make offerings to him

And pray for the attainment of your goal.

34. Pronounce the syllable om

Before the Sanskrit version of your teacher's name With, afterward, the syllables
ah and hung.

Then pronounce the syllables befitting the desired activity.⁴⁹

35. If you wish to purge all illnesses, All evil spirits, sins and obscurations,

Your visualization should be white

And shining with white rays of light,

Whereby adversity is pacified

And the accomplishment achieved.

If you wish to undertake the action of increasing Life or reputation, property, and
so forth, Visualize rays of yellow light that cause

A rain of all that you desire.

For the act of magnetizing that attracts and gathers, The rays of light are red and
visualized with hooks.

For ferocious action that destroys

All evil forces, obstacles, and all the rest, See everything as dark blue,

Emanating weapons and a wheel of fire

Endowed with spokes a thousandfold

Endowed with spokes a-thousandfold,
Destroying all adversity.

36. A thousand billion universes
Quake and tremble, shake and throb
To the recited mantra's sound.
Perform activities as when you implement
The supreme generation stage.
At the end, dissolve the visualization step by step, And relax just for a moment in
the state of emptiness.
Then dedicate this virtue to enlightenment.
According to each one of these activities, Indications of accomplishment appear.
Such is the profound path, ocean of great bliss.

37. Especially for the action of outwitting death and illness, Obstacles, and all
demonic forces,
Visualize your teacher in the space before you, Seated on a lotus plant
surmounted by a mighty throne Upheld by fearless lions.
Radiantly he smiles, not separate from the buddhas, Surrounded by the teachers
of his lineage, And bodhisattvas and ḍākinīs.
Below him are the guests of your compassion, Beings of the six realms to whom
you owe a karmic debt.
They are the beings in saṃsāra:
Your fathers and your mothers, past, present, and to come.

38. Your mind appearing as the letter hung Emerges from the summit of your
head.
It takes a ḍāka's form who brandishes
A skull cup and a knife that's razor-sharp.
He cuts around your brow,
Removes the upper section of your skull,
Which then he places on a hearth made of three other skulls.
He fills the skull cup with your body:
Bones and flesh and blood.

A nectar rain falls down,
And from below the flames blaze up.
Equal in dimensions to a thousand billion worlds, The skull cup brims with
nectar.

39. Imagine then that from your mind there emanates A countless host of ḍākas
who all together at the same time Distribute the nectar from the skull.

The “nirvanic guests” are pleased,
And, completing your accumulations,
You attain accomplishment.

The “samsaric guests” are also satisfied:
Your debts to them that have accrued
From time without beginning are discharged.

Especially, all harmful demons are appeased, And all the troubles they provoke
are pacified.

Think that they are all content,
That rays of light shine from the guests
And, touching you, remove all evil forces, Obstacles, and illnesses
And ransom you from death.

Consider that accomplishment is gained.

40. Knowing then that all is empty,
That all is but your state of mind;
And knowing that your mind is empty too,
Remain within the dharmadhātu
In the state of even meditation.
Then make the dedication
Knowing everything to be illusory.

41. By this means all adversity is pacified And the two great accumulations are
perfected.

The two kinds of obscuration are both purified.

Measureless will be the blessings you receive. And realization will take birth

within your mind.

No longer clinging to your “self,”

You will strongly wish to leave saṃsāra.

You will live from day to day, quite free from cares.

Your wishes will come true, and all existence Will arise as your own teacher.

There will be no pain at your life’s end;

The luminosity arising at the time of death Will be accomplished,

Or you will come to freedom in the intermediate state.

The twofold goal you will achieve and every excellence.

For all these reasons therefore,

Strongly meditate upon your teacher.

42. “It is better,” it is said, “To meditate upon a teacher for a single instant Than to undertake the generation stage for an entire kalpa.”

The basis of all glorious spiritual wealth, Your teacher is replete with sublime qualities: Massing clouds of benefit and bliss

Whence perfect nectar rains down on the triple world.

If this is what you want, rely upon a master Who is faithful and compassionate.

43. To pacify the torment of your mind’s defilement, To which you have grown used from time without beginning, Be like Sudhana and Sadāprarudita: seek the Dharma!⁵⁰

Banish all fatigue! Rely upon a spiritual master!

44. May this profitable music of the thousand strings Of Indra’s harp drop down like nectar on the ears Of fortunate beings awearied by their wrong and wayward paths.

May their minds today find rest.

6. REFUGE

1. Relying thus upon a spiritual master,
Train by stages on the path of liberation.
Refuge is the sure foundation of all paths.

Beings of small scope dread the lower states; The two of medium scope are
frightened by existence in saṃsāra; While those of great scope see saṃsāra's
pain in all its aspects And cannot bear that other beings suffer.

What they fear is their own peace and happiness.

They thus embark upon the Great Way of the Buddha's heirs.

And so there are three kinds of being who take refuge; There are three
approaches: ordinary, supreme, and unsurpassed.

2. The length of time that beings go for refuge Depends upon their attitude.
Those of small capacity Take refuge till they gain the fruit of happiness in
their next life.

The two of middle scope take refuge in the immediate term For their present life
and ultimately till they gain The fruit of the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha
paths.

Those of supreme scope take refuge permanently Until they gain enlightenment,
Until they gain primordial wisdom,
Measureless and inconceivable.

3. There are two kinds of refuge.

First, the common, causal refuge,

Then uncommon or resultant refuge.

They are pledges that respectively relate

They are pledges that respectively relate
To cause and fruit.

They are so defined according to the difference That distinguishes the causal
vehicle

(Which sees the fruit as something in the future), From the Vajrayāna, where the
fruit is gained immediately, Within the present moment— For one’s mind
itself is the result.

The “resultant refuge” spoken of
Within the causal vehicle of exposition
Resembles that of Vajrayāna

Only in its name. For it is part of causal refuge.⁵¹

4. The object of the causal refuge is the Triple Gem.

The Buddha is the supreme nirmāṇakāya

Adorned with all the major and the minor marks.

The Dharma is twofold.

First of all, the spotless Dharma of transmission Is the teachings of the different
vehicles of sūtra and of tantra And the sacred scriptures that appear in
written form.

5. The scriptures of the sūtras have twelve branches: The sūtras, the poetic
summaries,

Predictions, and didactic verse,

Discourses delivered with a special purpose, Life stories, and histories,

Specific declarations, lengthy expositions,

Tales of Buddha’s previous lives,

And topics of specific knowledge,

Together with profound unprecedented teachings.

6. Grouped within the tantras

Are the tantras of austerity: Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga.

Then there are the father, mother, nondual tantras, Which relate to skillful
methods, to wisdom, And to their inseparability— These three great yogas
are the inner tantras.

All these teachings and their scriptures
Are the Dharma of transmission.

7. The Dharma of realization comprises grounds and paths, The generation and
perfection stages,
The power of dhāraṇī,
And the concentrations with the essence of primordial wisdom.
Boundless are the ways of skillful means
That have the nature of compassion.

8. Perfect Joy, the Immaculate, the Luminous, The Radiant, the Hard to Keep,
the Clearly Manifest, The Far Progressed, and the Immovable,
The Perfect Intellect, and Cloud of Dharma:
These are the ten grounds belonging to the path of learning.
Universal Light, the eleventh,
Is the ground of the nirmāṇakāya
Mentioned in the causal vehicle.
In the Vajrayāna, many presentations of the grounds— Twelve or more—are
posited,
According to the way their qualities are classified.⁵²

9. The sacred Dharma, deep domain of mind, A sun of flawless light,
Is the five paths: accumulation, joining,
Seeing, meditation, no more learning;
And the generation and perfection stages and the rest.

10. Śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, grouped in their four pairs,⁵³
And bodhisattvas who reside upon the grounds Constitute the outer Saṅgha.
The ḍākas and ḍākinīs and the adepts of the Secret Mantra⁵⁴
Are said to be the inner Saṅgha.

11. These then are the objects of your concentration: Visualize them in the sky
before you.

Especially consider that your teacher
Is a buddha and thus the chief of refuges.
Make offerings to them: material, mental, secret.
Then in company with every being,
Join your palms respectfully and say:
“In my Teacher, in the Buddha, Dharma, and the Saṅgha, I take refuge for the
sake of others till enlightenment is gained.”
Repeat this many times and from the bottom of your heart.

12. The refuge objects show their pleasure, radiating light, Which purifies the
veils obscuring the three doors Of others and yourself.
Thus consider that accomplishment is gained.
By this means the gathering of merit is achieved; The rūpakāya is accomplished.

13. The final and resultant refuge is the dharmakāya.
It is the essence of the Buddha, Dharma, and Assembly; It is the ultimate divinity,
the luminosity of your own mind Free from all conceptual construction.

14. The way to take this refuge is as follows: After taking causal refuge,
Consider everything to be your mind.
In truth the one who thus takes refuge
And the refuge taken are not two.
Rest in meditative evenness within this state of nonduality.
If you think the object of your refuge and your mind Are separate, then your
refuge is not ultimate.
Resultant refuge is beyond all hope and expectation.

15. Thus the gathering of wisdom is perfected; Thus the dharmakāya is achieved.
Subsequently see all things as dream visions and illusions.
Then dedicate your merit.

16. Each kind of refuge has its precepts.
In the case of causal refuge,

At the cost of life or realm, or for sake of some reward, You must not forsake the teacher and the Triple Gem.

When you have taken refuge in a teacher,
You must not deceive him, worthy as he is of reverence.
Holy beings should be neither criticized nor denigrated.
Taking refuge in the Buddha,
You should not worship worldly gods.
Taking refuge in the Dharma,
You should do no harm to living beings.
Taking refuge in the Saṅgha,
You should not consort with those of extreme views.
And with devotion you should also venerate
The forms that represent your teacher,
The images of Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha,
Calling them to mind by day and night,
At all times taking refuge.

17. According to the precepts of resultant refuge, You should train at all times
In the equality of all phenomena.

You should not think in terms of good or bad, Taking or rejecting that which is of
great or lesser worth.

You should not trust your mind's elaborations, But cleanse them in the natural
state of ultimate reality.

All should be experienced as a maṇḍala spontaneous and perfect.

18. Refuge is relinquished, in a sense, When the time for taking it is passed,⁵⁵
But it is indeed abandoned through wrong view.

Through the spoiling of the precepts

You will fall to lower states.

Therefore, rule yourself with care and mindfulness, Adopting and rejecting as
you should.

19. All other refuges deceive.

Perceiving this, you should have faith
In Buddha, most compassionate.
Thus you will be guarded, free from fear,
In all the sequence of your lifetimes.
What greater source of benefit and happiness exists?

20. Within the ground of pure, devoted mind, Well sprinkled with the rain of
merit and of wisdom, The shoots will prosper of the pure expanse of
ultimate reality⁵⁶
And ripen as the perfect crop of buddhahood.

21. Those who, having taken refuge,
Have the virtuous ways of Dharma
Are replete with moral conscience and respect for others.
They are circumspect and mindful, with a host of other qualities.
Accompanied by clouds of dhāraṇī,⁵⁷
The sun of wisdom rises in their minds.
Even in their dreams, they see the objects of their refuge And never part from
them.
They remember their past lives
And are of a good family adorned with wealth.

22. All beings take delight in them; they gain the twofold goal.
And they themselves at last become the refuge of all beings.
Of everyone they are the friends and helpers, Holders of the riches of the triple
kāya.

23. If the excellence of taking refuge were to have a form, It would far exceed
the confines of the sky.
Unbounded are its merits.
Taking refuge is the ground and base of every good.
Who among the wise would not rely on it?

24. Refuge is the friend

Of all who leave behind their faults and journey on to peace.

Bow down your head with faith a hundredfold And go for refuge to the supreme
guides

Who in the three worlds are a field of merit, Are wish-fulfilling trees

And sources of both benefit and happiness.

25. Through this proclamation

Of the supreme and greatly blissful qualities of refuge, May every being properly
assume

The conduct of sublime and holy ones.

Exhausted through relying

Upon evil objects, vile and false,

May their minds today find rest.

7. THE FOUR UNBOUNDED ATTITUDES

1. Those who thus have taken refuge

Spread upon the ground of *love*

The flowers of *compassion*,

Which in the cooling shade of *joy*

Are moistened with pure waters of *impartiality*.

They train their minds that through them they may be Of benefit to wandering
beings.

2. If love, compassion, joy, impartiality Are not connected with the path to
liberation, They are the four divine abidings, causes of saṃsāra.⁵⁸

But if they are connected with the path that leads to peace, They lead beyond the
ocean of existence.

Thus they are the four unbounded attitudes.

3. They focus on the whole infinity of beings As well as on the ultimate condition
of phenomena.

Thus they have a twofold all-embracing form: They are both referential and
nonreferential.

4. The four divine abidings are limited in scope.

The beings they envisage are but few.

In their focus and their form they are impure And, being partial, are the cause
Of the celestial world of Brahmā.

But the four unbounded attitudes are free of partiality: They are directed at the

state of liberation.

Let those who have compassion train in them.

5. Those who are not happy, those worn down by sorrow, Those who have both
happiness and wealth, And those who love the close and hate the far— Such
are the respective fields

Of love and of compassion,

Of sympathetic joy, and of impartiality.

The forms of these four attitudes are thus the wish That happiness be gained, that
sorrow be removed, That joy should not be lost,

That one should be of wholesome and impartial mind.

6. In the meditation on them there is no fixed order.

Beginners on the other hand

Should start with training in impartiality.

Once they realize the equality of beings who are close and far, They should
proceed to meditate upon the other three.

7. With all beings as its focus, the meditation's form Consists of this
consideration:

“O mind, you are attached to father, mother, friends.

Your enemies you hate, and in this way you are defective.

Wandering in endless and beginningless saṃsāra, As father, mother, friend, these
enemies of yours Once brought you benefit.

Will you now return their kindness with malevolence?

And these, your present friends, were once your harmful foes.

The suffering they brought to you is with you even now.

How does it then make sense to do them good in recompense?

And all the others in between

Have been both friend and enemy.

They may have helped, they may have harmed: No point is there in hatred or
attachment.”

8. Therefore, at the outset, Place your loved ones in the midposition of neutrality
And set aside attachment.

And for your enemies, as though they too were neutral, Rid yourself of hatred.
Have no “near and far.”

Then eliminate your ignorance

Of regarding beings neutrally as neither good nor bad.

Train yourself in what will free you from saṃsāra: The intention to remove
impartially

The afflictions that torment all wandering beings.

9. In wanting to be happy and to flee their pains, All beings are the same.

And yet in their confusion they contrive The causes of their suffering.

Alas! May all afflictions of unhappy beings And all their evil tendencies subside.

May they have an evenness of mind.

May all embodied beings,

Tormented by strong craving and aversion, Be freed from hatred and desire

And have minds for which

The near and far are equalized.

Thinking thus, first meditate upon a single being, Then on two, then three.

Beginning with the beings of one region, Proceed then to one continent and then
all four.

Then meditate on the entire universe—

Increasing it a thousand times, then multiplied again A second thousand times,
and then a third.

10. The sign of your success will be that self and other, Friend and foe are
equalized.

In conclusion, think that all the objects Of this impartial attitude devoid of
clinging— All are but the mind,

And that the nature of the mind is similar to space.

Then with a mind completely free of concepts, Rest within the ultimate
condition, empty and unborn.

As a sign of your success, the realization Of what is deep and peaceful will arise
in you.

in you.

The fruit will be a mind that's free from "near and far."

The fundamental nature of all things

Will be spontaneously accomplished.

11. When thus your mind is even with regard to all, Then just as you would wish
That your own mother meet with happiness, Think the same for all embodied
beings.

All living beings thus become the object of your love, The form of which consists
In wanting, in the immediate term,

That beings have the happiness of gods and humankind, And ultimately that they
reach the bliss of buddhahood.

Beginning with a single being,

Train yourself to embrace all

Until the very confines of the ten directions.

12. As a sign of your proficiency, You will have supreme and all-embracing love,
More than any mother for her only child.

Finally, great love that is beyond all clinging Is to rest within the state

Where all are seen as equal.

It is the sign of love and emptiness united.

You will be purified by such a training, And just the sight of you will bring
delight to beings.

13. When you have embraced all beings with love, Then just as in your mind you
cannot bear To contemplate the sorrows of your father or your mother, Be
likewise with the sufferings of wandering beings And generate compassion.

Your loving parents in your former lives Did evil deeds on your behalf,

For which they suffer heat and cold,

Hunger, thirst, and servitude and slaughter.

They founder in the great, tumultuous floods Of birth, age, sickness, death—

Worn out by all their different sorrows.

14. They are destitute of tamed and peaceful minds That yearn for freedom.

They have no virtuous friends to show them the true path.

And so—alas for them—

They wander in saṃsāra endlessly.

Are you able to forsake them, you who see them thus?

Instead, think rather from the center of your heart
And from the marrow of your bones:

“My body, all that I possess,

All the virtue gathered in the triple time— May it, in this very instant,

Banish all the pains that beings have!”

15. The sign of your success is said to be The inability to bear that beings suffer.
Subsequently you should evenly remain In a compassion free of all conceptual reference.

Of this the sign is emptiness—

Emptiness united with compassion.

The fruit of such a training is a mind that’s free of malice, A mind that does no harm,
a wholesome mind, A mind that will accomplish primal purity itself.

16. Softened by compassion, train yourself to take delight When others find their own respective joys.

The object of your focus will be beings who are happy, The form your attitude will take will be to think, “What joy! These beings have no need of me To bring them to the state of happiness!

For, best of all, they found it for themselves!

From this day till they gain enlightenment, May they never lose their joy and comfort!”

Begin with one, then train yourself until You have included every being.

17. The sign of your proficiency will be That, being joyful, you will have no envious jealousy.

Later, when you concentrate on joy,

You will be free of all conceptual reference.

Naturally you will be at peace

With this in the heart, you will be at peace

with bliss in body, speech, and mind.

As fruit you will have joy and steady wealth.

18. Once you have grown used to them, Begin with love and meditate upon them
turn by turn.

By this means fixation on the four of them Will, stage by stage, be halted.

If, when you meditate on love,

This causes you to cleave to everyone As though they were your cherished
friends, This is halted by compassion

Focusing on suffering in its cause and fruit.

If compassion is deficient and fixated on an object, Depression will be halted by
nonreferential joy.

If through joy the mind is troubled,

Taking pleasure in distraction,

Meditate on great impartiality

Detached from what is near or far.

And when impartiality becomes indifference, Meditate on love as you have done
before, And on the rest successively.

Easily, in such a way,

Stability and mastery are gained.

19. Those who have grown firm in such a training Meditate upon the attitudes
In direct, indirect, alternate, or in any order.

Thus their realization of the four unbounded attitudes Will grow and will be
fresh.

It will become most firm and then extremely firm.

20. This practice will give rise to four results.

The fully ripened fruit is high birth and the final excellence.

In the desire realm one will gain

The body of a god or human being

And strive for others' benefit.

The fruits resembling the cause

Are, actively, continued practice of the same. And, passively, a happiness and

Are, actively, continued practice of the same, And, passively, a happiness and freedom from adversity.

Thanks to the conditioning result,

One will be born in pleasant, wholesome, happy places, Where people live in harmony, adorned with wealth.

Thanks to the proliferating consequence, These four attitudes will grow in strength.

The riches of the two aims (for oneself and others) Will be gained spontaneously.

21. By love is anger driven out; The saṃbhogakāya and mirrorlike wisdom Are completely gained.

The saṃbhogakāya is adorned

With all the marks, both great and small, of buddhahood.

By compassion clinging love is banished; The dharmakāya and the all-discerning wisdom Are achieved.

The dharmakāya is endowed

With strengths, distinctive qualities, and so forth.⁵⁹

Sympathetic joy removes all jealousy; The nirmāṇakāya and the sublime wisdom All-accomplishing are gained.

The nirmāṇakāya is manifold with various forms.

Its enlightened action is spontaneously accomplished.

Impartiality removes both pride and ignorance.

The svābhāvikakāya is made manifest together with The wisdom of equality, the wisdom of the dharmadhātu.

The svābhāvikakāya is the dharmatā

Beyond conceptual construction.

22. Therefore love, compassion, joy, impartiality Are of unbounded excellence, and highly praised By the unequalled Teacher of both gods and humankind.

Any path that lacks them is mistaken.

They err who have recourse to other teachers.

Embraced by the four boundless attitudes, The path leads on to spotless liberation.

It is the way that all the buddhas tread, Earlier and later, past, present, and to

come.

23. The causal vehicle declares

That, just like seeds producing shoots, Skillful means and wisdom bring forth the
two kāyas.

The resultant vehicle declares

That the two kāyas are made manifest

When the twofold veil that hides them is removed.

As means to this, they both rely

Upon the path of limitless compassion.

In truth, with both the vehicles, the causal and resultant, The practice is in
harmony. It is the same.

It's emptiness enlivened with compassion.

24. The sūtras have moreover said That purity without beginning⁶⁰

Rests primordially in beings like an uncreated seed.

The Mantrayāna likewise says that, from the first, All beings possess the triple
kāya, veiled though this may be By adventitious veils that are to be removed.

In brief, the learned and accomplished all describe The outer and the inner paths,
Respectively of sūtra and of mantra,

As one thing and the same.

Therefore, in the footsteps of the buddhas' holy children, Strive with effort in the
four unbounded attitudes.

25. May these good words that lead to peace Still all the turbulence of wandering
beings' minds.

Exhausted by pursuing wrong, mistaken, and inferior paths, May their minds
today find rest.

8. CULTIVATING THE ATTITUDE OF MIND ORIENTED TOWARD ENLIGHTENMENT

1. When you are well practiced
In the four unbounded attitudes,
Meditate upon the twofold bodhichitta, root of all the Dharma.
For this will bring you freedom from defilement,
And save you from the ocean of existence.
Bodhichitta drives away all fear, all pain, and every evil deed; It vanquishes both
karma and the sources of your suffering; And from the circle of existence
will bring beings into peace.
2. Even when this attitude of courage
Is not manifest and active,⁶¹
Compassion's virtuous stream develops more and more, And skillful means and
wisdom are united— Even in the state of meditative equipoise.
All one's acts of word and deed are meaningful,
And one becomes the object of respect
For the very gods and all the world besides.
3. Small are the fruits of other virtues, and they wear away.
But virtue joined with such a precious state of mind Increases and will never be
exhausted— Like crystal water flowing down into the sea,
And like abundant harvests grown in fertile soil.

4. It is the root or seed of every excellence; Its nature is compassion.
Many are its fruits of happiness, even in saṃsāra, And of supreme enlightenment
it is the cause— Enlightenment, which is of peaceful nature.
Strive therefore to generate this good and precious mind.

5. It is the perfect wish-fulfilling vase
Increasing all good fortune.
It is the source of bliss,
The supreme remedy that cures the ills of beings.
It is the sun of primal wisdom
And the moon that soothes all torment.
Like the sky it is immaculate;
Its qualities are like the starry host.
It is an ever-flowing spring of benefit and joy.

6. Beyond imagination are its merits,
Boundless like the massing clouds.
Like the buddhas' wondrous qualities,
And like the dharmadhātu, they are infinitely vast.

7. Bodhichitta is the wish to gain
Sublime enlightenment for countless beings' sake.
It is of two kinds: intentional and active.
Intention is the wish and action the pursuit
Of this attainment.
It is like the wish to go and actually setting out.

8. Bodhichitta in intention has, so it is said, The nature of the four unbounded
attitudes.
Active bodhichitta is the six transcendent virtues.

9. If, when motivated by one's own advantage, One worships for many a million
kalpas

All the buddhas who pervade the whole of endless space, The merit gained does
not compare
With but the smallest fragment of the merit made
Through bodhichitta in intention.

10. For it is said that if one has, but for a single instant, The wish and thought to
take away
The slightest pain and suffering of beings,
One will be free from evil destinies
And taste unbounded bliss of gods and humankind.

11. Even greater are the benefits of active bodhichitta; Indeed they are unlimited.
For this means actual engagement.
One instant of the practice of this supreme mind
Is said to equal the accumulations, both of wisdom and of merit, Gathered over
many kalpas.

12. For as the teachings say
Regarding the perfection of the two accumulations: Whether it may be completed
In three immeasurable kalpas and so forth⁶²— Whether it is swift or slow to
come,
Or whether freedom may be gained within a single life: All this depends upon
one's strength of mind.
And when conjoined with supreme methods,
Supreme diligence, and supreme wisdom,
The mind is at its strongest and is unsurpassed.

13. This bodhichitta has the essence of compassion— A wish-fulfilling tree that
carries
The great load of beings in this world.
It has not appeared before,
Not even in the realm of Brahmā.⁶³
Not occurring for one's own sake, not even in one's dreams, How could it be

conceived of or occur for others' sake?
Thus one should rejoice. For, previously unknown,
This bodhichitta has now come to birth.

14. Now, from a virtuous friend does it arise As rain that falls down from a wish-
fulfilling jewel To satisfy all wants.

A master such as this is excellent in qualities
And is free of any fault.

His fortunate disciples he inspires

By teaching on the evils of saṃsāra

And on the benefits of freedom (a teaching that is virtuous In its beginning, its
abiding, and its ending)

And by his endless praise of bodhichitta.

15. In a clean and pleasant place adorned with offerings, Prepare by setting up an
image of the Buddha

Together with the other necessary articles.

And then imagine, in the space in front of you,

The buddhas and the bodhisattvas

Like great banks of cloud that fill the sky.

For it is said that through the stainless strength of one's own mind, And the
compassion of the sovereigns of love and wisdom, All will be according to
one's wish.

Then invite them with a flower in your joined hands Requesting them to take
their seat.

Make offerings of baths, adornments, raiment, and the rest.

16. Then like a lotus bud appearing in a lovely pool And opening with the rising
of the sun,

Make a gesture with your two hands joined above your head.

With melodious praises, with countless emanated forms, Bow down to them
devotedly.

17. As many as may be the drops of water in the sea, Or atoms in earth and in the
king of mountains,

Merits such as this cannot be found in all the triple world.

Thanks to such prostration,

For as many times as there are atoms in the earth, Down to the strong foundation
of the universe,

You will become a Cakravartin king,

And finally you will attain

The state of supreme peace.

18. Presented in reality and imagined in your mind, Make offerings in vast and
unsurpassed array:

Flowers, incense, lamps, and food and drink,

Canopies and pennants floating in the air,

Parasols and melody,

Victory banners, yak-tail fans, drums, and all the rest.

And with your body, pleasures, and possessions

Make offerings to the buddhas,

The rare and supreme Teachers of all beings,

Together with their bodhisattva children.

19. With beautiful mansions of the gods

Adorned with trceries of jewels,

With dance and song, melodious airs,

And gently falling rain of tuneful praise,

With marvelous ornaments a hundredfold

Make offerings to them.

20. With jeweled mountains, woods, and lotus lakes, The lovely haunts of goose
and gliding swan,

With fragrant healing plants and wish-fulfilling trees Weighed down with fruit
and flowers— With all these make your offerings to them.

21. With lilies of the night that harbor Bees among their thousand moving petals,
And with lovely blossoms of the utpala that open wide Beneath the rays of the
unclouded sun and moon,
Make offerings to them.

22. With fragrant breezes wafted
By the opened buds of cooling sandal trees,
With pleasant caves and cliffs and wholesome vales, And cooling streams and
lakes,
Make offerings to them.

23. The hare-marked moon, all white on autumn nights, Encircled by a garland of
fixed stars,
Together with the day-star with its burning trellis of a thousand lights: With these
adornments of the world's four continents, Make offerings to them.

24. All the riches of delightful things
In surrounding regions and encircling mountains,
All a hundred-millionfold,
And all the buddhafiels located in the ten directions, As numerous as drops of
water in the ocean— Take them all in your imagination,
And to the mighty buddhas and their offspring offer them.

25. The perfect vase, the wishing-tree, and the abundant cow; The seven
attributes of sovereignty,⁶⁴
The eight auspicious substances,⁶⁵
And the seven subsidiary precious objects⁶⁶— With all these in prodigious
quantity,
Make offerings to the holy and compassionate field of worship.

26. With concentrated mind make yet more offerings Outer, inner, secret, and in
vast and endless clouds That fill the whole of space.
With beautiful clouds of blossom,
Exquisite bright pavilions

exquisite bright pavilions,

With massing clouds of incense, healing nectar,

Great quantities of splendid lamps, of food, and melody, With choruses of praise
with tunes of infinite variety, Make offerings to them.

27. Endless are these clouds of mind-imagined offerings.

Now add to them the offering clouds spread forth

By various goddesses of offering

Of charm, of garlands, and of precious song and dance.

May all the buddhas and their bodhisattva heirs be pleased.

28. Evil actions and defilements,

All the wrongs that you have done

Through habits gained from time without beginning— Confess them all and
cleansed them,

For they are causes of your wandering in existence.

29. Let the boundless mass of merit

That wandering beings gather

Be your constant object of rejoicing.

And to liberate all beings, leaving none aside,

Request the buddhas and their heirs

To turn the wheel of Dharma unsurpassed.

30. And till the ocean of saṃsāra has been emptied, Pray that they will stay
forever

And not pass beyond all sorrow.

Through the merit of this prayer,

Request that you and every being

Come, all without exception, to the state of buddhahood.

31. Just as when a sheet of cloth is cleansed and later dyed, Its colors will be
bright and clear,

likewise when the mind is cleansed

LIKewise WHEN THE MIND IS CLEANSed

Through such a preparation,
The supreme attitude is clearly born.
The wholesome strength accruing
From this prayer in seven branches
Is unlimited and, like the dharmadhātu,
Permeates the vast abyss of space.

32. Take refuge three times in the Triple Gem Of Buddha, Dharma, and Supreme
Assembly,

And then proclaim:

“O Protectors, you and all your offspring, think of me!

Just as all the buddhas of the past, together with their heirs, Have brought forth
the awakened mind,

And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas lived and trained, Likewise, for the
benefit of beings,

I will bring to birth the awakened mind,

And in those precepts I will live and train myself.

I will carry over those who have not fully crossed, And liberate all those who are
not free,

I will bring relief to those not yet relieved:⁶⁷

All beings will I place in buddhahood.”

33. Thrice by day and thrice by night,
Strive thus to cultivate the twofold bodhichitta.

Engender with the first enunciation

Bodhichitta in intention,

Then with the second, active bodhichitta.

And with the third one make the two both pure and firm.

34. “From this day forward, I will be
The ground of sustenance for every being.
I assume the name of bodhisattva,

Heir and offspring of the Conqueror.
And in saṃsāra fearlessly,
I will secure the good of wandering beings.
Constantly, with diligence, I will bring them only benefit And thus make
 meaningful this human life of mine.”

35. In the earth of such a pure and virtuous mind, The shoots of twofold
 bodhichitta
Are perfectly engendered.
Strive by every means to hold them,
Keep them pure, and make them grow.

36. “All the sufferings of beings I will take upon myself; My happiness I give to
 them to bring them joy.
Until they gain enlightenment, may they never lose such bliss.”
With such thoughts train yourself, and turn by turn, Give them all your happiness,
 their sorrows take upon yourself.
These are the precepts of bodhichitta in intention.
Likewise train in the four boundless attitudes.
Eradicate whatever acts against them;
Place a guard upon your mind.
The precepts, then, of active bodhichitta
Are the practice of the six transcendent virtues.
Strive therein, removing all opposing forces.
At all times, mindfully, with watchful introspection, And with attentive care
 remove your negativities
And gather stores of merit ocean-vast.

37. Train in the two bodhichittas without spoiling them.
Beginning with wrong view,
There are the deeds that constitute the downfalls of a king.⁶⁸
Beginning with the laying waste of towns,
There are the five deeds that are downfalls of a minister.⁶⁹

Eight downfalls are then linked with common people;⁷⁰
Then there are the two that all may perpetrate.⁷¹
All together, therefore, there are twenty downfalls.
These evils and attendant faults should all be known.⁷²
To keep oneself from all these things,
To be without these downfalls and these faults,
To train oneself in all concordant virtue:
All of these, it should be understood,
Are precepts of the bodhisattvas.

38. Four black actions are, in brief, to be rejected; Four white actions should be carefully adopted.

To deceive those worthy of respect,
To cause regret for what is not to be regretted,
To speak to holy beings with surly and unpleasant words, And to play others false
with cunning and duplicity— These are the four black actions that should be rejected.

39. To follow holy beings and extol their qualities, Inciting others to authentic virtue,

To take the bodhisattvas as true buddhas,
And with a noble and superior attitude
To bring about the happiness and benefit of beings— These are the four white actions that should be adopted.

40. Regarding then the precepts of those bodhisattvas, For whom the good of others is of greater import than their own, The seven nonvirtues of both deed and word are— If performed for others' good—allowed.

For they are virtuous in fact.

By contrast, the three sins of mind can never be permitted.

Virtues practiced for one's own sake

As the means to gaining one's own happiness and peace Are downfalls for the bodhisattvas, Buddha's heirs, Whereas the Conqueror has clearly said

“...”

That all "nonvirtues" done for others' benefit
Are things to be performed.

41. Of bodhisattvas there exist three kinds.

Those who seek to free themselves

And, having done so, other beings,

Are *bodhisattvas in the manner of a king*; Those who wish to free themselves and
others

In a single stroke are *bodhisattvas*

In the manner of a ferryman;

While those who seek their own peace

Only after others have been freed

Are *bodhisattvas in the manner of a shepherd*.

The first attain their freedom after thirty-three Immeasurable kalpas, the second
after seven,

And the third when three have run their course.

This distinction, so the sūtras have declared,

Reflects the different power of these bodhisattvas.

42. The children of the Buddha

Train themselves in every field

And chiefly in the six transcendent virtues.

43. When bodhisattvas see the wretched poverty of beings, They give them
countless things:

Food and clothing, horses, carts, and elephants.

Greater giving is the gift of their own sons and daughters.

And the greatest generosity is the gift

Of their own body: donating head or eyes or other parts.

They bring help to beings with material assistance And with the gift of Dharma.

Destroying their attachments,

They produce the wealth of others.

44. Superior discipline harnesses the mind stream, Bringing peace and virtue to the mind.

Through wisdom is the twofold goal perfected.

Avoiding evil, doing good,

And working for the benefit of beings: These three disciplines are kept by bodhisattvas at all times.

Householders maintain the vows of upāsaka and upavāsa⁷³

And train in bodhichitta in intention and in action.

For those who have gone forth to homelessness

There are the vows of bhikṣu, and of śrāmaṇera,⁷⁴

And the vows of female novices,⁷⁵

And, furthermore, the trainings of the twofold bodhichitta.

Thus is discipline maintained.

45. Three kinds of patience must the bodhisattvas practice: Making light of various harms and pains from outside or within; Endurance, through compassion and reflection on the teachings; And patience that is “objectless,” that is, concerning emptiness.

46. There is no greater negativity than angry hate.

With patience no austerity or merit can compare.

Therefore strive persistently and by every means

To practice patience and to quench

The blazing conflagration of your angry hate.

47. Countless are the hostile causes of your injuries.

You cannot shift them all, save one or two.

And yet by taming of your mind alone,

All those harms are likewise tamed.

Earnestly maintain therefore

Your mind-subduing discipline.

48. It's thanks to all your injuries

That patience you will perfectly achieve.
From all such hurts, compassion, love,
And other qualities are also born.
Your enemies are thus your friends
Who, like your teachers, help you to enlightenment.
Patiently rely on them with joy and with respect.

49. Your injuries do not arise without your being present.
The two, like cry and echo, are connected.
You once did harm, now harm has come to you:
The fruit of your past actions and attendant circumstance.
That it should befall you is entirely fitting.
It is the means whereby past action is exhausted.
So just forbear and tame your mind by every means.

50. When unwanted things befall you,
Rid yourself of your displeasure.
For if there is a remedy,
What need is there for it?
And if no change is possible,
What point is there in useless irritation?
Therefore simply bear with all that may befall you.

51. When examined, there is only space-like emptiness.⁷⁶
There's no happiness or sadness and no loss or gain.
There is neither good nor bad—
What use is there in such dualistic grasping?
Strive to bring all things into the state of evenness.

52. For one who takes delight in virtuous deeds, A joy that is of diligence the
very essence,
Endless virtues gather like the clouds,
Like bees that throng a bed of fragrant lotuses

Like bees that among a sea of fragrant lotuses.

53. Three kinds of laziness

Are contraries of diligence:

An inclination to unwholesome ways,

Discouragement, and self-contempt.

These prevent accomplishment of virtue

And are source of every fault:

All excellence declines; decay sets in.

54. The diligent are praised by all the world.

The diligent achieve their every wish.

The diligent increase their store of excellence.

The diligent will pass beyond all sorrow.

55. Perfectly abide by all the lofty virtues of the world
And by that path that leads
beyond the world— That is, by virtues both defiled and undefiled.

Strive with effort to abandon all nonvirtue,

To accomplish only good.

Increasingly exert yourself and go from strength to strength.

Work tirelessly until enlightenment is gained.

56. Those who wish for concentration

Must leave aside distraction and all busy entertainments.

The pleasure that you take in things is like the autumn clouds: By nature it is
transient, unstable like a lightning flash.

Possessions do not stay; they are like castles in the clouds.

Never put your trust in them; abandon them

And quickly go to peaceful forest groves.

57. Desires are the parents of all ruin:

The search for wealth, the gathering and preserving
Are themselves a source of
suffering.

Arrogance, avidity, greed, and selfishness increase

ARROGANCE, AVIDITY, GREED, AND SELFISHNESS INCREASE.

Cravings lead you to the lower realms

And bar the way to happy states.

So lessen your desires and cultivate contentment.

58. In proportion to the number of its wounds The body is traversed by suffering.

In proportion to the quantity of wealth

So much suffering there is and even more.

Unbounded happiness keeps company with few possessions: Victim of but small
aggression,

You have no fear of enemies and thieves; Praised by all, you dwell upon the noble
path;

Little do you have to do, small labor is there for your mind.

Train constantly therefore to have but few desires.

59. Consorting with the childish⁷⁷

Is the source of boundless defects.

Evil actions grow and sin will naturally defile you.

Virtue withers; strife and the afflictions grow.

They are ungrateful and are difficult to please.

Borne away by busy entertainments,

Much of their behavior is devoid of sense.

Like fire, like snakes, like packs of predators—

Such are childish folk; run far away from them!

60. Until you gain stability of mind,

You are completely led astray by outer things.

Joyfully remain therefore in forest solitudes.

Until, amid the sounds of tearful sorrow,

Four men bear away your corpse,

Seek to live in peaceful solitude,

And vanquish the distractions of your mind and body.

61. In the forests, streams are pure,
And flowers and fruits are many.
Many cliffs and caves there are
And dwellings made of stone.
The trees bow low and in their shadow
Flocks of birds and beasts disport themselves,
And buzzing bees adorn the flowers on the riverbanks.

62. In such pleasant solitudes, sweetened with the scent Of wholesome plants and
frankincense,
Growth in concentration comes quite naturally.
In every season, places such as these
Are lovely like a lake of lotuses.
As fiery summer yields to autumn,
Autumn then to winter, winter then to spring,
There comes a knowledge of impermanence
And sadness with the world.

63. Seeing then the bones that lie about the charnel grounds, You will know that
your own body
Is the same in nature:
It will fall apart, disintegrate.
And with the understanding
That there is no essence in compounded things,
All pleasure in saṃsāra will desert you.
Released from strife and from defilement
Your mind will always be in peace and bliss
And apt to wholesome ways.

64. Such forest dwellings have been praised by all the buddhas.
To take but seven steps toward such solitudes
With a mind revolted with saṃsāra
Has such merit that its tiniest part

Exceeds comparison with all the offerings made
To all the buddhas many as the grains of sand
That in the Ganges lie, and for as many aeons.
Live therefore in peaceful forest groves.

65. With crossed legs take your seat in such a place.
Remain with concentrated mind,
Not stirring from the state of meditative equipoise.
Thus you will accomplish various concentrations:
The one that gives delight to childish beings,
Then the concentration clearly discerning,
And finally the sublime concentration of the Tathāgatas.
The names of these three concentrations
Should be understood. The first concerns
The four samādhis and four formless concentrations⁷⁸
Pursued by those who have not entered on the Buddhist path.
The second is the concentration of the ones who have so entered.
The third denotes the concentration of the noble ones.
These concentrations take away the states of mind That are engrossed in objects
of desire
And certainly result in perfect knowledge,
Preternatural cognition, and all the samādhis.
Of the powers of vision they give mastery,
The power to work wonders,
And a perfect mastery of mind.⁷⁹

66. There are three kinds of wisdom:
Of hearing, of reflection, and of meditation.
This wisdom brings deep insight that destroys defilement.
It is the understanding of phenomena
And the nature of phenomena,
By which means you travel from the city of saṃsāra To nirvāṇa's peace.

67. Appearances are primordially unborn.
They are like reflections.
They are without intrinsic being
But appear in all their various forms.
When you understand their natural purity,
The fact that they arise dependently,
You swiftly reach the supreme state:
Nirvāṇa that abides in no extreme.

68. Possessing wisdom, one is freed through skillful means, Just as poison is
extracted with a mantric spell.
Without such wisdom, skillful means enslaves,
As though the remedy itself changed into something That provokes disease, a
source of pain.
Therefore cultivate that wisdom Whereby the nature of phenomena is realized.

69. As you implement the six transcendent virtues, You should understand that
you yourself
Are like a magic apparition:
Do not reify the three spheres:
Virtue's subject, object, action!
And with the twofold gathering,
You will swiftly gain the peace of buddhahood.

70. May the rain borne by the clouds of goodly virtue Bring abundant harvests in
the minds of beings now cleansed!
Exhausted and reduced by all the defects of saṃsāra, May their minds today find
rest.

9. THE GENERATION AND PERFECTION STAGES AND THEIR UNION

1. When your mind is set upon supreme enlightenment, Embrace the generation and perfection stages

Of the outer and the inner Secret Mantra.

2. This has many methods and is free of hardship.

Though the goal is just the same,⁸⁰

In means of application it is not unskilled.

It is designed for those of very high capacity.

Four Tantra classes have been taught:

Action, Conduct, Yoga, and the Unsurpassed.

3. These classes correspond

To time, or caste, or level of capacity.

The tantras are set forth according to

The Age Endowed with All Perfection,

The Age of Three, the Age of Two,

And finally the Age of Strife;

They are set forth for castes of priests, of merchants, Kings, and then the lowest class, the menials.

They're set forth, too, according to capacity: Dull, medium, sharp, and very sharp.⁸¹

Ritual cleansing and ablution

Are mostly taught by Action Tantra

Are mostly taught by Action Tantra.

Bodily and verbal conduct, mental meditation— All in equal measure is the teaching of the Conduct Tantra.

The Yoga Tantra teaches chiefly meditation,
With bodily and verbal conduct taught as its ancillaries.

The Great Yoga Tantra is devoid
Of all intended acts of body, speech, and mind.

It's free from subject-object dualism
And is the supreme training on the luminous nature of the mind.
It is set forth for those who do not care for cleanliness.

4. The Action, Conduct, Yoga Tantras

Are the “tantras of austerity.”

In Sanskrit they are known as Kriyā, Upa, Yoga.

They constitute the outer tantras,

In which one does not meditate upon

The father-mother deities in union,

One makes no use of five meats and five nectars,⁸²

And ritual cleanliness is practiced.

5. The Highest Yoga Tantras are divided threefold: Father, Mother, and the unsurpassed Nondual.

Respectively they chiefly teach

The generation and perfection stages

And their nondual union.

They are also known as Mahā, Anu, Ati.

Here the deities appear in union

And particular samaya substances are used.

Between the pure and impure no difference is observed, For all is said to be of
but a single taste:

The display of a single maṇḍala.⁸³

6. When practicing the Kriyā Tantra,

The deity is higher; you take a lower place.

The mode is that of lord and subject,

And thus accomplishment is gained.

In Caryā Tantra,⁸⁴ you regard The deity and yourself as equal: Yourself as the samayasattva

And the deity in front as the jñānasattva.

In this mode, of friend with friend,

Accomplishment is gained.

In the main practice of the Yoga Tantra,

No difference divides the deity from yourself.

Yet in the preparation and conclusion phases, You must adopt a dualistic mode:

Invite the deity and ask it to depart.

When, like water into water poured,

The deity and yourself become nondual,

Accomplishment is gained.

7. In Mahāyoga, emphasis is placed

On skillful means:

The stage of generation and the winds.⁸⁵

In Anuyoga emphasis is placed

On wisdom: the perfection stage

Together with the essence-drops.

In Atiyoga, everything is nondual;

Emphasis is placed on primal wisdom.

In all these three, the practice is performed Within the knowledge that phenomena

Are all primordially equal.

8. Yourself and every being are from the outset Perfectly enlightened.

Therefore bring to mind that aggregates,

The elements, the sources, and so forth

Are but a single maṇḍala⁸⁶

And meditate on the two stages

And meditate on the two stages.

9. According to four ways of taking birth, There are four ways to meditate.
To purify the tendency for egg birth, As the preamble, start by taking refuge,
Generating bodhichitta, and performing
A short generation stage (invite the field of merit And make offerings).
Then meditate upon their lack of real existence, Thus gathering the two
accumulations.

Subsequently meditate on the extended
Generation and perfection stages.

Just as there is, first, an egg, from which a chick is born, Meditate successively
upon
The generation and perfection stages,
First in short and then extended form.⁸⁷

10. To purify the tendency to take birth in a womb, Meditate successively, in
detail,

First on refuge, then on bodhichitta,

Then upon the seed letter that from emptiness appears.

From this there comes the implement that then transforms Into the body of the
deity projecting rays of light.

This way of meditating is not, as previously, Preceded by brief generation and
perfection stages.

It is like the way the embryo develops in the womb When, through the interaction
Of the wind-mind and the essence-drops both white and red, There comes a
spherical mass,

Which lengthens and solidifies

And passes through the other stages

Till the body is completely formed

And then emerges from the womb.⁸⁸

11. To purify the tendency for taking birth From warmth and moisture,

Take refuge, cultivate the mind of bodhichitta, And simply say the name whereby

The deity appears from emptiness.
Then implement the generation and perfection stages.
Just as a body born from gathering of warmth and moisture Is easily produced
and born,
There is no need for complicated meditation
On syllables and implements.⁸⁹

12. To purify the tendency to take miraculous birth, Instantly and clearly meditate
Upon the generation and perfection stages.
And since miraculous birth occurs
Within a single instant,
There's no need to meditate successively
On generation and perfection stages
Starting with the deity's name.⁹⁰

13. Although of these four ways to meditate, You should practice most the one
relating
To the womb birth you have taken,
Meditate upon them all to purify the tendencies To other ways of being born.
As a beginner, more precisely, you should start According to birth from an egg.
And when you have acquired some slight stability, Proceed to meditate according
to birth from a womb.
Then, gaining great stability, you should concentrate According to the way of
birth through warmth and moisture.
Finally, when thanks to intense training,
Excellent stability has been accomplished,
In a single instant meditate upon the deity, Thus conforming to miraculous birth.

14. The perfection stage is twofold:
Accompanied, or unaccompanied, by visual forms.
When the visualization of the generation stage Dissolves like clouds dispersing in
the sky, You should remain within the state of emptiness Devoid of visual
forms.

Thereby the generation stage, it should be understood, Is perfected and completed.

But in the very moment that appearances occur, Their nature is beyond conceptual construction.

Meditating on this undistractedly

Is the perfection stage with visual form.

Assisted by the practice without visual forms, Beginners halt their clinging to the generation stage.

This is the antidote to clinging

To phenomena as real.

Assisted by the practice using visual forms, Those who have stability in meditation

Halt their clinging to the perfection stage.

This is the antidote to clinging

To the reality of emptiness.⁹¹

15. Hereafter all appearances—

The generation stage, or skillful means,

And the mind that's free from clinging:

The perfection stage or wisdom—

All become at all times indivisible.

16. Therefore, clinging to the true existence of appearances Is halted by the generation stage,

While thoughts that cling to them as being illusions Are dispelled in the perfection stage.

When there is no further clinging

To the true existence of appearances and emptiness, The generation and perfection stages

Are inseparable and pure.

17. This, then, is the final vehicle, the Vajrayāna Whereby those of high capacity achieve

Enlightenment in but a single life

Enlightenment in but a single life.

And afterward, wherever there are beings

To be trained in all the worlds,

Their enlightened deeds, in all their great variety, Spontaneously unfold.

This then is the short and hidden path of great profundity Of all the holders of the
vajra, all past numbering.

It is a path adopted by the fortunate

Who wish for liberation in this very life.

18. On the basis of the practice

Of whichever Tantra class to which you tend

Is perfect buddhahood achieved.

First you must receive transmission of the blessings, Permission for the practice,
Empowerment, and so forth,

According as each scripture stipulates.

These will bring the mind to ripeness.⁹²

19. Especially, the path of the Great Yoga, Secret and supreme, consists

In four empowerments, which ripen,

And generation and perfection stages, which bring freedom.

By the vase, the secret, the wisdom,

And the word empowerments

Are purified respectively the body, speech, and mind, And all habitual tendencies

And all accomplishments are granted.

The gathering of merit is completed

Through the first three, while the fourth

Completes the gathering of wisdom.

The veils deriving from defilement

And the cognitive conceptual veils

Are also cleansed.

Therefore you should take the four maturing empowerments And train in both
the generation and perfection stages, Whereby freedom is bestowed.⁹³

20. When all the four empowerments are received complete And the samaya
pledge you now possess,⁹⁴

Wishing then to implement

The wisdom of the nondual Atiyoga,⁹⁵

21. Sit cross-legged upon a pleasant seat And, taking refuge, cultivate the attitude
of bodhichitta.

Then, from within the state

Devoid of all conceptual construction,

Wherein phenomena are empty, without self,

There appears the syllable hung.

From this and all around—

Above, below, in all the four points

And their intermediate directions—

There emanates a vast protective wheel

On whose ten spokes are standing

Ten ferocious deities.⁹⁶

22. Outside and within,

In one great mass of blazing fire

Is the great maṇḍala of glorious Samantabhadra.

The palace is four-square.

It has four doors, each furnished with four cornices.

Its walls, five-layered, are surmounted by a ledge And are surrounded by a plinth
on which

The goddesses of the sense pleasures are dancing.

Beautiful with traceries and pendent strings of jewels, It has a covered terrace and
a balustrade,

Its dome surmounted with a jewel and vajra.

In the center of this maṇḍala,

Encircled by eight charnel grounds, Are thrones upheld by lions, horses,
peacocks, Elephants, and shang-shang birds.

23. And here on lotuses and disks of sun and moon, Are the buddhas of five families in union with their consorts.

Likewise there are bodhisattvas,

Male and female, eight of each.

At the four doors are eight father-mother guardians.

These, together with six Munis, all in their respective stations, Variously hued, are perfectly equipped

With their respective ornaments and implements.

The rays of light that stream from them

Are limitless and fill the whole of space.⁹⁷

24. In the heart of the main deity,

Is Samantabhadra joined in union with his consort.

They are the maṇḍala's foundation,⁹⁸

Adorned by the major and the minor marks of buddhahood.

He is, like space, unstained;

Dark blue, he sits cross-legged.

Imagine him the size of your own thumb

And seated in a sphere of light.

From him lights radiate and purify

Phenomenal existence:

The universe and its inhabitants.

All becomes completely pure,

The sphere of male and female deities.⁹⁹

25. Recite the three seed syllables

And those of the five families.¹⁰⁰

Although resounding, they are empty

Like an unborn echo.

Rest then in the state of suchness uncontrived.

26. Primordially, your mind is of the nature of the deity.

Your body is its maṇḍala, your speech its secret mantra.
Beyond exertion, all is perfect:
The condition of sublime, primordial wisdom.
The samaya-and the jñānasattvas are inseparable: There is no invocation of the
latter
And no merging with it;
There is no need to ask the deity to depart.
There is no good or bad, no taking or rejecting.
This primordial maṇḍala has always dwelt within you.
Remember this and know it as your true condition.
You are not creating something that was not already there.¹⁰¹

27. In conclusion—if you are attached to it— Dissolve the visualization
gradually.
And free of all fixation, rest without conception.
If you have no clinging to the visualization, Remain within the understanding
That everything is but illusion,
Like the moon reflected on the water.
Dedicate your merit to all beings.

28. In your day-to-day activities
Take everything as an illusion, clear yet empty.
Appearances and sounds are deities and mantra.
Thoughts and memories are primal wisdom.
At every instant, recognize them thus without distraction.

29. Keep your samaya pure, both root and branch.¹⁰²
The five and twenty branch samayas are five groups of five: The things that
should be known,
The things not to be spurned, the things to be performed, The things to be
accepted,
And the things on which to meditate.
In brief, there are three root samayas:

Those of body, speech, and mind.
Train yourself in them, maintaining a pure mind.

30. At the full moon and the new moon,
And on the eighth and twenty-ninth days of the month, As well as on the tenth
days of the waxing and the waning moon, By day, by night respectively,¹⁰³
Labor in the practice of approach and of accomplishment, Confessing and
restoring, offering the sacred feast.

31. Persistently observe the deep and crucial points Pertaining to the yoga of the
wind-mind, channels, essence-drops, And make of it the very essence of
your practice.

Meditate upon the paths of bliss,
Of luminosity and no-thought, and their union.
Thus you will become a vajra holder
And a perfect buddha in this very life.¹⁰⁴

32. Thus through this supremely secret
Essence unsurpassed,¹⁰⁵

May every being dwell within the city
Of the glorious Heruka.

Exhausted in saṃsāra through their karma and defilement, May their minds today
find rest.

10. THE VIEW THAT DWELLS IN NEITHER OF THE TWO EXTREMES, THE WISDOM WHEREBY THE NATURE OF THE GROUND IS REALIZED

1. The practitioner who thus unites
The generation and perfection stages
Gains entry to the unborn, empty nature of phenomena.
2. Now all phenomenal existence,
All the things of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
Are from the outset without self
And are beyond conceptual construction.
Through ignorantly clinging to them,
Beings wander in existence.
Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, various joys and sorrows, Do indeed occur. Yet in the very
moment of arising, They are empty in their nature.
Know that they are like illusions.
Know they are like dreams.
3. Though all the things appearing outwardly Occur within the mind, they are not
the mind itself, But neither are they something other than the mind.
Although by force of habit there may seem to be Duality of apprehender-
apprehended,
In the moment it occurs, This duality has no reality.
It is like a face and its reflection in a mirror.¹⁰⁶

4. Although a face appears upon the surface of the mirror, It is not there. And yet
no other thing

Has cast its form upon the glass.

While not being there, its likeness there appears And is perceived as different
from the mirror.

Know that manifold phenomena are all like this.

5. If left unexamined, things are quite convincing, But when they are investigated,
they become elusive.

When thoroughly examined, they transcend

All speech, all thought, all formulation.

Whether as existing or as not existing,

There's no finding them.

Neither are they beyond, nor are they not beyond, The ontological extremes.

6. It is in the manner of illusion

That their arising and their dwelling

And their ceasing all appear.

But from the very instant they occur,

This same arising and the rest have no intrinsic being.

They are like the water of a mirage

Or the moon reflected in a pool.¹⁰⁷

7. In particular, the six impure migrations Appear but have no true existence.

They are deceptive forms, the products of habitual tendencies, Like falling hairs
that those with visual ailments see.

And just as those who wish to be restored

Must purify their phlegm,

In just the same way, those who wish to dissipate illusion Must clear away the
cataracts of ignorance.

8. The antidote for this is self-cognizing primal wisdom.

By this means you come to clear conviction

Of the empty nature of saṃsāra and its habits.
And you know with certainty
That what is empty does appear.
You understand the nonduality
Of appearance and emptiness,
And thus you know the sense of the two truths.
By dispelling both extremes and striving for the middle way, You come to
freedom in the sky-like state,
Abiding neither in existence nor in peace.
This is ultimate reality sublime and quintessential: The fundamental nature of the
Natural Great Perfection.

9. Appearance in itself does neither good nor harm, But clinging to appearance
binds you in existence.

Thus there is no need to search through manifold appearances.

Just cut the root of mind that clings to them.¹⁰⁸

10. The mind does seem to be and yet lacks real existence.

When searched for, it's not found;

When looked for, it's not seen.

No color does it have, no shape; it cannot be identified.

Not outside or within; throughout the triple time, It is not born, it does not cease.

And it is not located anywhere on this side or on that.

Groundless, rootless, it is not a thing.

There is no pointing to it: mind is inconceivable.

11. The past mind cannot be observed;

The mind yet to be born is nowhere to be found; The present mind does not
remain:

In all the times, the mind is just the same.

Do not let the mind search for the mind. Just let it be.

12. Thoughts, negating or affirming,

Are themselves the objects of the momentary consciousness.
In their very moment of appearing,
They are not outside nor indeed within—
The object sought, perversely, is the subject seeking— In searching for itself,
there's never any finding.

13. Primordially unborn and uncontrived, It does not dwell, it does not cease.
The mind itself, throughout the triple time, Has neither ground nor root: it is a
state of emptiness.

But being the foundation for unobstructed manifold arising, It appears
unceasingly.

Yet it is not a thing endowed with features; Thus it has no permanent existence,
Yet to its arising there's no end.

Therefore it is not a nihilistic emptiness.

Neither is it both of these nor is it neither: There is no describing it.

It does not exist as this or that;

In no way therefore can it be identified.

Its nature should be understood

As pure primordially.

14. It is not there when you examine it; It is not there when you do not examine it.
It has no other nature.

In the primordial essence of the mind,

You can find no good or bad,

No taking or rejecting, and no hope or fear.

What use is there therefore

In checking and investigating it?

Do not seek it anxiously in the three times.

15. The mind is stirred up by ideas, which are like chaff.

It is agitated by distractions, which are like the gusting wind.

Thus there is no access to this nature.

But if you rest correctly in the pure accomplished mind Beyond arriving and

departing,
Whence there's nothing to remove,
To which there's nothing to be added;
If you rest in primal wisdom
All-creating, free from stain,
You will behold this nature as it is.

16. What use to you now are the various tenet systems?
What use to you these thoughts, these words, these propositions?
The ultimate does not exist nor is it nonexistent.
It has no center or circumference.
It cannot be divided into vehicles.
It is like space, immaculate, unlimited, and unconfined.
To say that it exists or else does not exist Is to be deluded.
How can you explain what lies beyond expression?
In such a pointless exploit there is nothing but fatigue.

17. It would be like imagining a shining pleasure grove Aloft, suspended, in the
middle of the sky, Adorned with flowers and fruits, cascading waterfalls—
And disputing all its categories
With their concordant and discordant classes.

18. The nature of the mind unstained and pure Is never seen by stained
manipulation and contrivance.
What use here are the generation and perfection stages?
Meditation and clear concentration Do no more than spoil it!

19. In the mind itself,
The nature that is pure primordially,
There are no obscurations and no antidotes thereto.
There's nothing to remove and nothing to acquire.
So leave aside conceptual targets.
There's no inside, there's no outside;

There's no object apprehended and no subject apprehending.
Therefore give up clinging.
You cannot recognize this nature saying "this."
So pare away all your assumptions.
There is no attaining it, and there's no nonattaining it.
Abandon therefore hope and fear.

20. Within awareness, never stirring from the ground, All arisings due to various
conditions
Naturally subside as soon as they appear,
Like ripples on the water.
They are one with dharmakāya.

21. When I watch the thoughts as they arise, The watcher vanishes.
I search for it but nowhere is it found.
Neither is the searcher seen—
There is just a freedom from conceptual elaboration.
There's no agent; there's no object of its action.

22. I have come to the primordial state, Which is like space, immaculate.
There is no going back, and where might I now go?
I have reached the place of the exhaustion of phenomena.
No more coming [to saṃsāra] can there be.
And where I am now none can see.¹⁰⁹

23. Knowing this, I want for nothing else.
Whoever comes to freedom
Has, like me, cut through delusion.
Now I have no further questions;
The ground and root of mind are gone.
There is no goal, no clinging;
There's no ascertaining; there's no "it is this."

Instead, there is an all-embracing evenness, Openness, relaxedness, equality.
Now that I have realized it, I sing my song.
Stainless rays of light have thus shone out¹¹⁰
And revealing it, have now departed.

24. Watch, my friends, the objects that appear.
All are unoriginate, all equal in their emptiness— Just as various things reflected
in a glass Are one and all the same, the mirror's single sheen.

25. Watch the consciousness discerning these appearances.
The mind is like the sky, beyond assertion and negation.
And just as in the sky the clouds take shape and then dissolve, With no change to
the sky, which stays forever pure, The nature of the mind is likewise always
pure; It is primordially enlightened,
Uncreated, naturally present, ultimate reality.

26. The object and the mind itself are not two things.
They're one in primal purity.
Therein, adopting and rejecting are not two.
There's no one-sided affirmation or denial.
All appearance is devoid of true existence; All arising is by nature empty.
Everything is equal and beyond all reference.

27. Objects of the senses Are appearances, various and uncertain,
And likewise mind itself cannot be pointed at.
It is the great state free of all extremes.
Know this as the Natural Great Perfection.

28. For so it is regarding everything— Phenomenal existence, nirvāṇa, and
saṃsāra: Past phenomena are no more seen;
In this they are all equal.
Future things have not been born;
In this they are all equal.

Present things do not endure;
In this they are all equal.
Timeless are the three times,
Destitute of all foundation.
In this they are all equal.
All things from the outset are perfect equality.

29. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, all phenomenal existence, Are images reflected in the
mind.

The nature of the mind
Is the great space of dharmadhātu—
And space throughout the three times
Is immutable by very nature.
This unchanging nature is primordial nirvāṇa: The enlightened state within the
ground—Samantabhadra.

30. Appearances and emptiness are not divided.

Such is the primordial state of things,
Which, neither one nor many, cannot be conceived And lie beyond the reach of
thought.

Neither to one side nor to the other do they fall; In this they are all equal.

They are equal in appearance,
Equal in their emptiness, Equal in their truth, and equal in their falsity, Equal in
existence,

Equal in their nonexistence,
And equal in transcending every limit.

All is one expanse of primal purity.¹¹¹

31. All mental imputations are by nature empty.

All names are adventitious labels.

Specific features are but superimpositions.

There's no dividing truth from falsity.

The object and the mind are unrelated;

They do not stain or qualify each other.
There is no knower and there is no known.¹¹²

32. In just the same way as a face's form Appears within a looking glass,
The aspects of a thing arise
Within sensorial consciousness.
Through taking them as real
Both craving and aversion come,
Delusions of saṃsāra.
Investigate more closely:
The mind has not gone out toward the thing, And neither does the aspect of the
thing
Arise within the mind.
They're not two separate "things,"
For both are destitute of real existence.¹¹³

33. All things are one—the same—
In lacking an intrinsic being.
All cognitions are the same:
Not one of them is graspable.
Phenomena and mind are not two entities:
They are one in their primordial purity.
For investigation and analysis there is no need, For from the outset, all is one, a
state of openness and freedom.

34. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not two;
They're one within the mind's expanse—
As all the rivers in the sea are one.
All things are of an equal taste
And in their inborn nature, all are one.
The change and flux of the four elements
Are one within the space where they occur.
Asseverations and negations—all are one

Within the space of emptiness.

All things that arise subside all by themselves; In this they are not different

But are one in purity—

Just like all the ripples in a single stream.

Those who realize this are wise indeed.

35. Manifold phenomena

Ungraspable in their identity

Are but reflected images

Not different in their nature.

This play, which in itself

Is neither good nor bad,

Is not to be accepted nor to be rejected.

Do not grasp at it with dualistic mind

But rest at ease.

36. Perceptions, which are without certainty, Arise regarding objects of the
senses, which themselves cannot be pointed out.

Awareness that forbears to cling to them

Is one vast open state of letting go.

It is the fundamental nature

Of the Natural Great Perfection.

37. Therefore all phenomena Are equal in their nature.

Be convinced of this, and without clinging

Settle in a state beyond the ordinary mind.

Exhausted by imposing chains of partiality

Upon awareness free from partiality,

May your mind today find rest.

11. THE PATH: STAINLESS MEDITATIVE CONCENTRATION

1. When the equality of things is seen,
To rest correctly in this nature is of great importance.
2. Meditation is explained to beings
According to their level of ability.
Those of highest capability
Gain freedom through the realization of the fundamental nature.
They behold this nature in a manner that is free From both a subject and an
object of the meditation.
Phenomenal appearance becomes for them
The ground's free openness.
Their minds are spared from all exertion.
Awareness free from biased leaning
Flows like an unceasing stream.
3. There is no pause in meditation.
No difference "in or out of session" can be recognized.
All is free and open, Samantabhadra's field,
And free of measure and description—
The self-arisen ground, the vast expanse.
For those who from the outset stay
Within this state of suchness,

There's no deviation, there's no place where they might deviate.
There is no exertion, no progressing,
No attaining and no nonattaining.
This they know with certainty And, free from expectation of results,
Are perfect buddhas in that very instant.
A yoga such as this is but an infinite expanse.

4. Those of moderate and basic scope
Must strive in meditation.
They must train by various means
Until their ego-clinging sinks into the ultimate expanse.
If this is now explained in greater detail,
Beings are led into saṃsāra
By injurious discursive thought.
That this might now subside,
These beings must engage in concentrative methods.
The vast expanse of wisdom free from all extremes Will finally appear.
Defilement is suppressed by calm abiding;
It is uprooted by deep insight.¹¹⁴

5. For those of highest scope, injurious discursiveness Arises as the dharmakāya.
For them there is no good or bad;
They do not need to train in antidotes.
Those of moderate scope must meditate upon the limpid state Wherein both calm
abiding and deep insight are united— Discursiveness, both good and bad,
Dissolves within the ultimate expanse—
The realization of this union rises similar to space.
Those of basic scope strive first in calm abiding Whereby they easily achieve
stability in concentration.
Then they grow accustomed to deep insight all discerning Whereby all outer
things and inner states of mind Arise as the nature, free and open, of the
ground.
Thus it is important to discern the scope of beings.

6. Now the meditation will be taught For those who are of moderate ability.
It is as when the water is disturbed by waves: The stars reflected there are
indistinct and trembling.
So too, when the untamed mind is troubled and excited, Immersed in every kind
of mental agitation,
Primordial wisdom, clear and limpid, nature of the mind, Together with the
starlike powers of vision
And of preternatural cognition,¹¹⁵ fail to manifest.
Therefore it is of the greatest moment
That the mind rest evenly, one-pointed and unmoving.

7. With one's body in the seven-point posture, Stable like Sumeru, king of
mountains,
With the sense powers left untrammelled
Like a pool in which the stars are mirrored,
One should settle without sleepiness or agitation, Free from all conceptual
elaboration,
In the nature of the mind,
Luminous and empty like the limpid sky.

8. This is the primordial state,
The one and single nature:
The dharmakāya where the apprehending subject
And the apprehended object are not found
And where an unstained luminosity
Arises like the essence of the sun.
No center does it have, no limit:
Blissful, clear, and free from thought.

9. Emptiness, appearance: they are but a single thing, Transcending the
alternatives of being and nonbeing.
Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not considered different.
The knower and the known have but a single nature.

Beyond equality and non-equality, the dharmatā is seen.

10. This is the vision of the sublime truth, The cause of primal wisdom.
And later, seeing suchness,
The mind's eye will gain perfection
Of the dharmakāya of the Conquerors.
Therefore, let the fortunate at all times stay In meditative evenness.

11. The nature of the mind is without origin.
It is a state of purity, just like the sky,
Wherein, dissolving like the clouds,
The mental factors are not found.
With undistracted minds, from concepts free,
Let those of middle scope remain in even meditation, In this unaltered primal
state of suchness.

12. And like an ocean calm and limpid clear, Let them be waveless, free of the
turbidity
Of subject-object apprehension.
And in a sky-like state both luminous and empty, Let them rest unclouded by
discursive thought, Not falling into one side or the other.

13. Not accepting, not rejecting,
Free from hope or fear,
Let them rest unmoving, firm,
Like Sumeru, the king of mountains.
Let them rest within a state that,
Like a mirror, is both pure and clear,
Wherein appearing things
Reflect without impediment.

14. Let them rest quite naturally
In the state of primal openness and freedom

That is like a rainbow, pure and clear,
Free from sinking and disturbance.
Like archers undistracted,
Let them, free from mental movement,
Rest in primal wisdom uncontrived.
Let them rest with no more hope and fear,
Like those who know they have achieved their goal.

15. This is a concentration pure intrinsically, The union of calm abiding and deep insight.

Remaining in the unborn state is calm abiding; Deep insight is to rest in clarity and emptiness Without discursiveness.

Calm abiding and deep insight are not separate, Joined without division in their single nature.

16. And now the mind is seen:

Profound and peaceful, free of all mentation, Neither word nor concept can express it.

This primal wisdom—completely nonconceptual—of “light”

Is called the luminous wisdom that has gone beyond.¹¹⁶

17. Through seeing it, the mind becomes

Completely peaceful.

For everything occurring outside or within

There is but slight engagement

Whether of adopting or rejecting.

There rises from the state of emptiness

Compassion that is utterly impartial.

One acts with virtue for oneself and everyone, Exhorting others to the same.

One takes delight in solitude,

Abandoning distraction and all busy occupation.

All conduct, even in one’s dreams, is virtuous: One is well upon the path to freedom.

18. Then through increased habituation, Primal wisdom, luminosity of mind,
grow greater than before.

One understands that things as they appear

Are but illusions and the stuff of dreams.

Within the state of nonduality, they all are of one taste.

One sees that they are neither born nor unborn.

And primal wisdom of “increase of light”

Is gained completely free of thought,

Enhanced by joy in meditative concentration.

19. Now both mind and body

Are much purer than before.

Through skillful means and wisdom

Stainless understanding dawns.

Through clairvoyance and compassion

One brings benefit to others.

For saṃsāra one experiences a sorrowful revulsion And is decided to abandon it.

One understands that things are dreamlike

Even as one dreams of them.

One’s body has no lice or parasites,

And one remains in concentration,

Free from sinking and excitement, day and night.

Those who are like this come swiftly to the path of noble beings.

20. Subsequently, through increased familiarity, There comes a concentration
greater than the one preceding, And the sun of realization rises never seen
before.

Equality, the single nature of all things, is seen, And thence one is possessed of
stainless powers of vision And of preternatural cognition.

Countless buddhafi elds are seen:

Hundreds, thousands, millions strong.

The stainless primal wisdom of the noble ones Is manifestly gained: the wisdom
of “light’s culmination.”

21. Through its increase, growing ever more sublime, Unnumbered
concentrations and qualities ensue.

Whether in the presence or the absence of conception, Ultimate reality remains
the same— In which are found vast clouds of dhāraṇīs

And stainless primal wisdom.

Then the states of meditation and nonmeditation mingle, And one is constantly in
meditative equipoise, Manifesting emanations past imagining.

One may enter boundless buddhafi elds

And enjoy the vision of primordial wisdom.¹¹⁷

22. The channels¹¹⁸ being purified, The wind-mind is endowed with supreme
qualities.

Now primordial wisdom is extremely vast and pure And thus is called “light’s
utter culmination.”

By such means does the noble path attain completion And enlightenment is
swiftly reached.

Such is the vehicle of the essence of clear light By means of which the fortunate
Accomplish the result of freedom in this very life.

23. Those of least capacity should practice thus: They should train in calm
abiding and deep insight separately.

When both are stable they should practice them Inseparably in union,
And train in countless meditative methods.

24. They should start by cultivating calm abiding.

They should take their seat in solitude

And count their breaths both in and out,

Their breath being visualized in various colors.

And in this way for several days,

They should tame their thoughts.

25. Then let them meditate on love And on the other three unbounded attitudes,
On twofold bodhichitta, focusing thereafter

On some wholesome object—
An imagined deity, the drawing of a deity,
A scripture, and so forth—
Let them rest in meditation
One-pointedly, without distraction.

26. Settled in this way the mind is rendered serviceable.
It does not stray to other things
But rests upon its object.
Resting there, it stays in meditative equipoise.
Body, speech, and mind are filled with bliss, And calm abiding, focused and
unmoving, is achieved.

27. Training in deep insight follows.
All things appearing outwardly in both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa Are like illusions and
the stuff of dreams;
They're like reflections, apparitions,
Echoes, cities in the clouds,
Tricks of sight, mirages: all without reality.
Appearing, they are empty by their nature.

28. Everything resembles space, without intrinsic being.
Thus practitioners should stay in meditative equipoise Free from all conception,
in the unborn nature.
They will understand that outer things are without self And that the object that is
there appearing
And the object apprehended in the mind
Are both without existence.

29. Then the mind should be examined thus: “You, O mind, without reality and
yet immersed in thought, Busy with accepting or rejecting objects of the
senses, With truth and falsehood; sorrow, joy, indifference.
And yet, there's no identifying you!
At first whence do you come?

At first, whence do you come .

And now, where are you found?

And finally, where do you go?

What is your color and your shape?"

When the mind is scrutinized with such reflections, Here is what is found.

30. At first, the mind is empty of a cause for its arising.

Then it is empty of a dwelling place,

And at the last, it's empty of cessation.

It has no shape or color;

There's no grasping or identifying it.

The former mental state has ceased,

The one to come is not yet born,

And in the present, mind has no abiding, outside or within.

Those who thus investigate will understand

That mind exceeds conceptual construction

And is similar to space.

31. Then they should lay aside reflection As to what the mind is like,

And rest, as if reposing from fatigue.

They should not think of anything—

Investigation laid aside—

Reposing in the state

Where everything is even and beyond duality.

32. By this means, they'll understand:

The person that's attached to "I" is without self; The clinging mind has no
intrinsic being.

Then primal wisdom uncontrived appears,

In which are joined both calm abiding and deep insight— Where mind and what
appears to it are not two separate things But are like water and the moon
therein reflected.

33. Dividing them, one is deluded in saṃsāra.
Understanding that they are not two,
One journeys into peace beyond all sorrow.
Therefore one should train like this in nonduality.
The unborn nature of phenomena is but the nature of the mind.
The nature of the mind is pure and without stain.
One should rest without conceptual constructs In empty luminosity unstained.

34. The troubles of defilement
Will thereby be completely pacified,
And in great primordial wisdom, free of concepts, one will stay.
Knowledge, preternatural cognition, concentration will be gained.
The nonduality of known and knower will be understood, With freedom from
extremes seen as the middle way.

35. Then no object is observed
Within the space-like mind
Of which the nature is devoid of thought elaboration.
And in that state where there is neither meditator Nor something to be meditated
on,
There is no doer, nothing to be done.
This primordial condition is the stainlessness Of pure enlightenment.

36. There is no outer object found,
And what appears is like a trick of sight,
The image of the moon on water.
No apprehending subject does one find:
There's no conceptual movement,
No falling to this side or to the other.
The mind and what appears to it Are not two separate things;
There is but the state of wisdom that has gone beyond.
Profound and peaceful, free from thought,
Luminous and uncompounded:

Ultimate reality, like nectar, is assimilated.

37. Free of clinging, concentration on the vast expanse
Is a great ship that crosses
to the other shore
Of the ocean of the triple world.

There, upon the blissful ground,

The mind is an unbroken blissful stream.

It has attained the state of Natural Great Perfection.

38. Through the stillness of the mind

(Calm abiding, nature of the empty dharmakāya), And through its luminosity

(Deep insight, nature of appearance of the rūpakāya), The two accumulations,
skillful means and wisdom, The generation and perfection stages, are
achieved.¹¹⁹

Deep insight brings to birth the wisdom of realization, And in this wisdom, calm
abiding causes one to rest.

39. When the mind is not at all immersed
In the apprehender or the apprehended,
In things and nonthings,

It's then that in the ultimate expanse

From primal wisdom never parted,

The mind and mental factors utterly subside

And are no more.¹²⁰

40. When in the mind's nature, pure from the beginning, Adventitious thoughts
are purified,

Nine absorptions,¹²¹ miraculous power, And preternatural cognition are achieved.

Countless kinds of concentration, clouds of dhāraṇīs, Are likewise gained
spontaneously.

41. From the mind in the desire realm,

Focused in a single point

There comes the first samādhi

With a concentration qualified by joy and bliss, And by twofold discernment,

gross and subtle.

From this there comes the second,
With a concentration qualified likewise
By joy and bliss and clarity of mind,
And by subtle, but not gross, discernment.
Then there comes the third samādhi,
Moist with joy and bliss, and with a concentration Free from all discernment,
gross and subtle.
And from the third, there comes the fourth
Equipped with beneficial qualities
And with a concentration marked by joy.¹²²

42. Arising from the fourth, the limpid mind, Pure, like space, attains to the
absorption

Called “unbounded space,”

And thence the state wherein all things
Are but the mind devoid of all elaboration:

The absorption called “unbounded consciousness.”

From this there comes the unelaborated state wherein The mind and what appears
to it are not perceived: The absorption known as “utter nothingness.”

And from this state wherein the mind is free

From all conception of existence and of nonexistence, There comes the
absorption called “not existence and not nonexistence.”¹²³

Then the mind producing manifold defilement
Ceases naturally and achieves a state of peace.

43. When these nine successive stages of absorption Have been trained in step by
step,

Or without order, leaping here and there,

One will know all actions and all states of mind, In past and future lives, of others
and oneself.

One will see what birth will follow after death, And all things now impeded will
be seen.

One will have the power to multiply
One thing and make it many.
And freed from all defilement
One will know things in their nature and their multiplicity.
One will behold the buddhafi elds
Replete with blissful buddhas and their heirs.

44. Since at that moment one will fully realize That phenomena are but illusions,
One will achieve “mirage-like concentration.”
Since one’s mind will have no torment,
All impurity subsided, one will have experience of The “concentration of the
stainless moon.”

Because within the one expanse of evenness
Phenomena are not observed, one will attain
“Unsullied concentration similar to space.”
And there are others: hundreds, thousands,
Countless concentrations will be gained.

45. Because the meaning of the teachings That by virtue of deep insight has been
understood Is fully and one-pointedly retained through calm abiding, Powers
of concentration and of dhāraṇī¹²⁴
Are jointly and spontaneously achieved.

46. By gradual treading of the five paths Freedom is attained.
On the lesser level of the pathway of accumulation One undertakes the four close
mindfulnesses Of body, feelings, consciousness, phenomena.
On the middle level of accumulation,
By means of the four factors—
Power of will, exertion, application, diligence— One meditates on the four
genuine restraints
With regard to what is held as virtuous and nonvirtuous.
On the greater level of accumulation,
One meditates on the four bases of miraculous ability: Of will, intention, analysis,

and mindfulness.¹²⁵

47. There are four stages of the path of joining: In “Warmth” and “Peak,” one trains in the five powers: Confidence, and diligence, mindfulness, and concentration, wisdom.

In “Acceptance” and the “Supreme Mundane Level,”

One meditates most excellently

On the five forces: confidence and all the rest.¹²⁶

48. On the path of seeing, the ground of Perfect Joy, One undertakes intensive training

In the seven elements leading to enlightenment: In confidence and diligence, and mindfulness, Discernment, concentration, joy, and flexibility.¹²⁷

49. The nine grounds of the path of meditation Are based upon a threefold subdivision,

Lesser, medium, and great—

Each one being subdivided threefold:

The lesser, medium, and great divisions

Of the lesser level, and so forth.

These grounds are the Immaculate, the Luminous, the Radiant, Hard to Uphold, the Clearly Manifest, the Far Progressed, Immovable, the Perfect Intellect, and Cloud of Dharma.¹²⁸

Therein one practices the Eightfold Noble Path: Right view, right thought, right speech, Right conduct, livelihood, and effort,

Right mindfulness, right concentration.¹²⁹

50. When the training on the four paths

In the thirty-seven things that lead one to enlightenment Is all concluded, the ground of no more learning is attained: Nirvāṇa that abides in no extremes.

51. Without traversing of the grounds and paths, There is no gaining of the buddhahood

That stays in no extreme

That stays in no extreme.

All who reach this freedom,
After many kalpas, several lives, or just a single life, Rely upon this method.
Therefore those who enter either of the vehicles, Of cause or of result,
Should understand, and tread, these grounds and paths.

52. Through the essence of profound and peaceful luminosity, May all impurities
within the minds of beings disappear.

Exhausted in this world through long attachment to conceptuality, May their
minds today find rest.

12. THE THREE ASPECTS OF MEDITATIVE CONCENTRATION

1. The cause accordingly of samādhi,
Where calm abiding and deep insight merge, Is an unmoving concentration.
Of this there are three aspects to be learned: The aspect of the person,
By whom the concentration is achieved;
The aspect of the method,
The means by which the concentration is accomplished; And the aspect of the
concentration in itself, The accomplishment of nonduality.
2. Practitioners determined to forsake saṃsāra, Who physically withdraw
From the distracting occupations of this worldly life, And mentally withdraw
Far from the multitude of teeming thoughts— By such as these is concentration
swiftly gained.
3. Those endowed with faith,
Who have a tender conscience
With regard to both themselves and others, Who, careful and with perfect
discipline, Delight in virtuous things,
Are learned and contented,
Being frugal in their wants— By such as these is concentration swiftly gained.
4. Those who have control of mind and body And take delight in solitude,
Who shake off laziness and sleep,
Who do not relish conversation

WHO DO NOT FORN CONVERSATION,

Who are not prone to agitation or depression, Who have but few acquaintances—
By such as these is concentration swiftly gained.

5. Those who shun the busy occupations Of the town and its inhabitants,
Who live in lonely places
Far from the society of many friends,
Free from various projects and activities— By such as these is concentration
swiftly gained.

6. Those who do not look for happiness In this life or the life to come,
Or wish the peace of a nirvāṇa for themselves alone, Who sorrow at saṃsāra and
decide to leave it, Desiring freedom from saṃsāra for the sake of beings—
By such as these is concentration swiftly gained.

7. Regarding now the aspect of the means Whereby this is achieved,
When the five obscuring factors are removed— Sleepiness and dullness, agitation
and depression, doubt— The union of calm abiding and deep insight Is
properly accomplished.

Calm abiding is obscured by sleepiness and dullness, While deep insight is
impaired by agitation and depression.

Both are harmed by doubt.

All these five are incompatible with concentration; They may be epitomized in
sinking and in agitation.

One should refresh oneself when sinking

And when agitated, one should meditate one-pointedly.

8. When there is no calm abiding,
Deep insight is a state of moving thought.

Deprived of insight,

Calm abiding is a neutral and amorphous state.

But when they are united, this is the supreme path: The antidote to obscurations.

9. Calm abiding is achieved

Through resting body, speech, and mind.

When, with regard to things

All equal in their nature,

One's thoughts subside,

This is the chief character of calm abiding.

To concentrate one's mind upon a single point of reference Is the attendant feature.

10. Using or not using an apparent form, And concentrating outwardly or inwardly, These are the four means by which the mind is focused.

To focus on appearing forms

Means focusing on one or other of the five sensorial objects.

To focus on the mind without apparent form Means settling one-pointedly in a nonconceptual state.

Focusing the mind outside

Means concentration on a stone, a tree, a statue, and so forth.

Focusing the mind within

Means, for example, concentrating

On an upturned lotus in one's heart.

Settling the mind one-pointedly

Upon a single object

Is the aspect of the method Whereby calm abiding is achieved.

11. When, by these means, one-pointed calm abiding is produced, It should joyfully be mingled with the wisdom of deep insight, Thereby nurturing and stabilizing it.

For calm abiding to progress,

It is essential to bring into line one's way of living.

When one's calm abiding grows unclear and stale, One should refresh oneself in mind and body And pursue the meditation.

It's thus that calm abiding will be quickly gained.

12. For those who wish to have deep insight, A state of limpid clarity of mind, Discernment is the primary component:

Discernment is the primary component,
Resting evenly within a thought-free state Is an attendant feature.

13. As for phenomena and the nature of phenomena, One should look upon the
former

In accordance with the eight examples of illusion.

One should train to see their nature

As a space-like emptiness.

And as one rests in such a state,

Primordial wisdom will arise.

14. When deep insight is unclear and stale, One should exercise it in regard to
different things And view the latter purely

As the inseparable union of illusion and emptiness.

If thoughts proliferate, one should rest in calm abiding.

One will see a space-like luminosity—

An empty clarity devoid of mental movement— And the clouds of the two veils
will melt away.

At times there will appear A luminosity that's vast and ocean-like— A limpid
sphere where all arisings fade away: The state of no-thought will be gained
all by itself.

Enhancement is accomplished by applying this deep insight In the way one lives,
and in this way

Deep insight will be swiftly gained.

15. The union of calm abiding and deep insight Is a state of mind wherein
Stillness is the same as movement.

In both cases, the main feature

Is primordial wisdom concept-free,

While an undistracted freedom from discursive thought Is an attendant feature.

16. By resting in whichever state of mind arises— Whether stillness or
proliferation—

Thoughts, as soon as they arise, subside; The stillness is itself the state of

evenness.

Within the union of calm abiding and deep insight, Bliss and clarity and no-
thought manifest.

The union of appearances and emptiness, Of skillful means and wisdom,
Of generation and perfection—

All are naturally accomplished by themselves.¹³⁰

17. If this union becomes unclear and stale, One should train in calm abiding and
deep insight separately.

When sinking or excitement manifest,

One should meditate upon their opposites.

Here then is a means to reinforce the union Of calm abiding and deep insight:

When the sky is bright and free of clouds, One should turn one's back upon the
sun And contemplate the open sky.

A clear and empty state of mind,

Devoid of thoughts, will manifest.

18. The clear sky in the outer world Is but an image of the vast sky
Of the ultimate reality within.

The heart of luminosity is the secret sky.

One should understand the meaning of this threefold sky.¹³¹

19. The concentration in itself is the third aspect, And this is the accomplishment
of nonduality.

All things are of an equal taste, the state of great perfection.

Nothing is to be accepted; nothing should be spurned.

All grasping should be left aside,

For every kind of clinging is productive of saṃsāra.

But when there's no fixation,

Then, like space itself,

There comes a state beyond both bondage and release.

20. Just as various images are in a looking glass, So too are various things within

the state of emptiness.

Just as various clouds are never parted From the sky's expanse,
So too are various takings and rejectings Never parted from the nature of the
mind.

Just as various rivers are of one taste with the mighty ocean, So too are various
experiences and realizations in the state of *meditation*.

Just as various magic sleights are in the realm of sorcery, So too are saṃsāra and
nirvāṇa in the state of ultimate reality.

21. Just as in the ten directions

Space is an expanse ungrounded,

Likewise is the *view* of the primordial state of openness of things.

Just as water poured in water is a state beyond dividing, So too the mind cannot
be parted from the nature of the mind.

Just as various dreams are in themselves the state of sleep, So too the single taste
of both adopting and rejecting Constitutes the sphere of *conduct*.

Just as waves and ocean are but a vast expanse of water, Thought and nonthought
are a single state of evenness.

Just as one's successful business is a state of satisfaction, So too is the *result*, the
absence of both hope and fear.

All things are one, the sphere of Great Perfection.

This is what is to be recognized:

The expanse all-pervading of the ultimate reality of things.

22. Through the single nondual taste of different things, May every being find
freedom from duality Of apprehender-apprehended, self and other.

Exhausted in this world because they cling deludedly to things, May their minds
today find rest.

13. THE GREAT, SPONTANEOUSLY PRESENT RESULT

1. When means and wisdom are perfected,
Kāyas, primal wisdoms, and enlightened deeds,
All present of themselves, now stand revealed.

2. When main minds, mental factors,
And the universal ground
Subside completely in the dharmadhātu,
The ultimate expanse and primal wisdom
Cannot be divided; they have a single taste.
Twofold purity is at that moment gained,
And all conceptual elaboration ceases.

3. Just as into space the new moon is withdrawn, The heart of unborn luminosity
— Subtle primal wisdom—gathers
In the lotus of the ultimate expanse.
Peace is found then, free of any thought.¹³²

4. This is ultimate reality that cannot be observed, Free of change and movement
in the triple time.
This nature that is pure from the beginning
Is called the *vajrakāya*,
The *body changeless, indestructible*.
It is the final ground expanse
Wherein phenomena are worn away.

5. This nature is completely free Of the two adventitious obscurations.
Omniscience, ocean-vast in excellence, is found therein.
The qualities of realization and elimination
Come now to perfection.
Assessed in terms of its ten strengths
And other excellent perfections, it is called
Abhisambodhikāya,
The *body of manifest enlightenment*.
It is the final ground,
The source of the distinctive qualities of buddhahood.¹³³

6. Although in knowable phenomena
The mind is not engaged,
And in the knowing mind no apprehending is observed,¹³⁴
There is an inward luminosity,
As when the new moon's light is gathered into space— The subtle, supreme
primal wisdom
Gathered inwardly and yet not dulled.
Thanks to its omniscience,
It is the ground of all arising.
Thence unfolds the *body of form*, the *rupakāya*, Endowed with knowledge of all
aspects of phenomena.
This is what appears for others:
A treasure of enlightened qualities.
Because of its consummate peace,
This most subtle primal wisdom
Is called *dharmakāya*,
The *peaceful body of ultimate reality*.¹³⁵

7. These three bodies have no dealings with an extramental world.
They are extremely subtle and therefore are not nothing.

Transcending permanence, destruction,
And the other of the four extremes,
Unthinkable, unspeakable, beyond expression, They are that state wherein the far
shore is attained.
Empty is their nature, where all concepts are no more.
Only buddhas, no one else, experience them.¹³⁶

8. Within the palace of the dharmakāya utterly unborn, The victorious buddhas of
the three times constantly abide.
And yet they do not see each other: all is dharmatā.
They abide, so it is said, within the deep and peaceful nature.
And just as, at an earlier or later time,
The space within a vase remains the same,
Within this state of suchness,
The Conquerors are but one expanse of wisdom.

9. The dharmakāya, ultimate reality,
Is perfect cognizance of emptiness,
The gathering of wisdom,
The culminating point of the perfection stage.

10. From this very state there manifests
The self-experienced saṃbhogakāya
Endowed with the five excellencies:
Place, time, teacher, teaching, retinue.
The place is called the Field of Dense Array of Luminosity.
It glows with clear and shining lights of the five colors, Like brilliant rainbows
bright and clear,
Which fill the vault of heaven,
Pervading the abyss of space
Above, below, and everywhere.
And in it there are beauteous palaces,
Their four doors graced with cornices,

With five concentric walls with ledges all endowed And pendent strings of pearls.
They all have covered terraces with balustrades And shrine rooms graced with
domes.¹³⁷

11. The spaces of the palaces are all filled With parasols and banners, tail fans,
strings of tiny bells, Banners of victory, canopies, and every ornament.
There the goddesses of pleasure send forth clouds of offerings.
Within, without, on all sides, everything is bathed In swirling beams of light.
The center and the four directions are bedecked With ornaments of
corresponding hue and other brilliant colors.
Wherever one may look, there they appear of varying size.
The whole of space is filled by them:
Countless, teeming, like the seeds within an open pod of sesame.
Within the palaces are thrones
Upheld by lions, horses, elephants, peacocks, shang-shang birds.
Upon them there are lotuses and disks of sun and moon.

12. The time is no specific time;
It is the perfect ground beyond all movement and all change.
The no-time of the three times is Samantabhadra's time.
All three are perfectly the same: an all-pervading suchness.
It is a nature that is pure from the beginning.

13. The Teachers with their bodies blazing With the major and the minor marks
Are Vairocana and Akṣobhya,
Ratnasambhava and Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi,
Each of them encircled with four buddhas.
Each is joined in union with his respective consort: Ākāśadhātuvīśvarī,
Vajramāmakī,
Buddhalocanā, Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, Samayatārā,
All adorned with proper ornaments.
Rays of light stream forth from them:
In order, blue, white, yellow, red, and green.

These are the peaceful buddhas who reside
Within the lower maṇḍala.

While up above are found the wrathful ones.¹³⁸

These are the five glorious herukas: Buddha, Vajra, Ratna, Padma, Karma
(United with five wrathful queens),
Each one surrounded by another four.
Other features do they have, but they surpass description.

14. The teaching is the Natural Great Perfection, The expanse indescribable,
Beyond the reach of thought and word.

15. Each buddha has a retinue not lower than himself in dignity, For it is but his
self-experience:

Eight pairs of bodhisattvas, male and female;

Four doorkeepers with female counterparts.

All together there are two and forty peaceful deities, Six of which are the
nirmāṇakāya,

For others may behold them;

Two are dharmakāya, because they are within the ultimate expanse.

The remaining thirty-four belong

To the saṃbhogakāya's self-experience,

The specific retinue of which comprises twenty-four.¹³⁹

16. To the retinue of the wrathful deities belong Eight mataraḥ, Gaurī and the
rest,

And Siṃhamukhā and other of the eight piśācī goddesses, The four guardians of
the doors,

And eight and twenty mighty goddesses.

Of the eight and fifty wrathful deities,

Forty-eight belong to the specific retinue.

All are terrible devourers, all blazing in appearance.

All are unendurable with nine wrathful demeanors.¹⁴⁰

17. All the maṇḍalas, moreover, “present in the body”
Are buddhafiels, which are the exclusive self-experience Of the saṃbhogakāya.
Of all the peaceful and the wrathful deities,
Those that are perceived by beings to be guided Are nirmāṇakāyas.
They are not the exclusive self-experience
Of the saṃbhogakāya.¹⁴¹

18. All the deities of the buddhafiels
Endowed with five perfections
Are the self-experience of the saṃbhogakāya.
Therefore they are not distinguished
In their rank: some low, some high.
They shine with rays of brilliant sparkling light And are resplendent, clear, and
radiant.
This is the experience of the buddhas,
Who see and praise each other.

19. Even the most pure of beings to be trained Are powerless to behold these
beauteous buddhafiels That are arrayed on every side.
They are like the empty forms of yogic experience,¹⁴²
Beyond the grasp of thought.
They are the exclusive purview
Of the Conquerors, past, present, and to come.¹⁴³

20. From within this very state,
And in the worlds of beings to be taught,
The Teachers who instruct them
Show themselves by gradual degrees.
Such is the nirmāṇakāya luminous in character; The nirmāṇakāya, guide of
beings;
And the diversified nirmāṇakāya.¹⁴⁴
All of them are striving for the sake of living beings.

21. The five nirmāṇakāya Teachers, luminous in character,¹⁴⁵

Dwell in their respective fields:

Akaniṣṭha, Abhirati, Śrīmat,

Padmakūṭa, and Sukarmasiddhi.

They are the buddhas of the five families:

Akṣobhya, Vairocana, and the rest.

They blaze with light that issues

From the major and the minor marks of buddhahood.

They manifest in countless forms both peaceful and ferocious, Laboring
spontaneously for the twofold benefit of beings.

22. By nature, these five Teachers

Are the five primordial wisdoms:

Dharmadhātu, mirrorlike, equality,

All-discerning, and the wisdom all-accomplishing.

Each of these has four attendant wisdoms;

All are of a single taste.

23. The primal wisdom of the dharmadhātu

Is completely motionless, transcending all duality Of apprehended-apprehender,
All conceptual extremes.

The mirrorlike primordial wisdom

Is the luminous and empty ground of all arising.

It is the great wellspring of the three remaining wisdoms.

In the primal wisdom of equality everything is equal.

Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not two,

For they completely coincide.

All-discerning wisdom knows things in their difference— It is a perfect
knowledge of phenomena

In both their nature and their multiplicity.

Wisdom all-accomplishing is perfect and enlightened action, Constant,
unimpeded with regard to all phenomena.

24. The retinue composed of those who may be trained Consists of bodhisattvas who reside on the ten grounds.

The teaching comes through rays of light

That shine out from the Teachers in deep concentration, And the bodhisattvas thus conceive the wish

To cleanse the obscurations from their ground of realization, Removing avarice and all the rest.

They look upon their Teachers, who are utterly unstained, And see the difference that divides them still from them.

They cleanse the obscurations that remain,

Progressing to the ground of Universal Light.

And when their perfect form appears

As though reflected in a glass,

They bring about the wealth and benefit of beings.¹⁴⁶

25. Concerning then the time,

The Teachers manifest in the saṃbhogakāya fields In seamless continuity

Until the bodhisattvas have achieved their freedom.

26. The nature of those Teachers may be ascertained In terms of one (or other) of the five enlightened families.

When those yet to be trained

Are primarily engaged to purify their ignorance, They do so in the field of Akaniṣṭha.

Vairocana is their Teacher, and the teaching

Is the pure primordial wisdom of the dharmadhātu.

Likewise for their anger to be purified,

Akṣobhya's field appears.

Ratnasambhava appears to cleanse away their pride, And Amitābha for attachment and desire.

Amoghasiddhi manifests for cleansing of their envy.

27. Although the Teachers manifest as the saṃbhogakāya, Their retinues and all

the rest are different from themselves.
Therefore all are not saṃbhogakāya but “half-nirmāṇakāya”: The nirmāṇakāya
luminous in character
Perceived by beings who are pure.
Since they do not show themselves
Except for those residing on the grounds of realization, They are called
nirmāṇakāya that is “half-appearing.”¹⁴⁷

28. The ground is even in those buddhafiels, And there are lovely palaces
contrived
Of seven kinds of jewels ablaze with rays of light That shine in all the ten
directions.
There are countless bodhisattvas, lotus-born.
And every happiness that they might wish for
Falls upon them like a shower of rain.
In all four periods of the day,
The stainless Dharma is set forth with bell-like sound.
With wishing-trees and wish-fulfilling gems,
With lakes and streams, these beauteous fields Are the peaceful nirmāṇakāya,
luminous in character.

29. Likewise there are countless wrathful maṇḍalas And pure celestial realms
with massing clouds of ḍākinīs.
There are also the pure fields of glorious herukas of five families.
All of these appear to those
Who’re adept in the Secret Mantra.
Nowadays the learned and accomplished know them As the pure celestial realms
of great felicity.¹⁴⁸

30. From within the fields of the saṃbhogakāya There arise nirmāṇakāyas who
are guides of beings, Who appear in each of the six realms
As their respective Teachers:
Indra, Vemacitra, Śākyamuni, Dhruvasiṃha,
Lakṣmī, Dharmasī-

Jvaīamukna, Dnarmaraja.

In all the fields that lie in all the ten directions, These six sages purify the minds
of beings of the six migrations.

31. The emanations, primary and secondary, Of these six sages are beyond
imagining.

In each divine realm,

From the realms of Brahmā and of Īśvara

As far as Akaniṣṭha, they appear

As Teachers who instruct the gods in their respective kingdoms.

32. For human beings also they appear

In forms appropriate to them.

They manifest as śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, As kings, and so forth,
guides for all humanity.

They appear as various guides in the asura realms, And likewise for the animals,

They manifest as birds among the birds

And as majestic lions for the creatures of the wild.

These different kinds of Teacher are indeed beyond imagining.

And in the hells and preta realms,

They work for beings' sake in forms adapted to their state.

33. All these guides of beings have two kinds of wisdom: That which knows the
nature of all things

And that which knows them in their multiplicity.

They know the nature of phenomena

And they know phenomena, each by each, without confusing them.

Thus they labor for the twofold goal of beings.

34. The wisdom that beholds the nature of phenomena Knows the emptiness of
things

And expounds for wandering beings

The teaching that will lead to utter peace.

The wisdom that beholds the multiplicity of things Cognizes, without mixing them, the mind, sense powers, and the rest; It sets forth countless ways of teaching.

35. All these emanations are perceived by those who are impure.

Their field is the six worlds of the six kinds of beings.

These Teachers manifest according to the form of beings to be guided.

Their teachings are not uniform

But partake of different vehicles.

And the time that they appear

Is in accordance with the karmic destiny of beings.

36. In the six worlds of six kinds of beings, As the fruit of action and habitual patterns, good and bad, There are various states of being,

High and low, with joys and suffering.

These states and even the six Teachers who appear therein Are but beings' subjective visions— Like buddhas and like beings seen in dreams:

Pure is their nature, yet their form impure.

The buddhas' different, manifest, appearances

Are but the play of their compassion.

37. These six Teachers are the emanations Of compassion without bounds.

Throughout the time saṃsāra lasts,

Their enlightened action will continue endlessly.

38. From their enlightened action there appears The diversified nirmāṇakāya, Which includes material things:

Supports for offerings—such as paintings, statues, Various natural forms and writings;

Gardens, lotuses, and wishing-trees,

Sublime pavilions and pleasure groves, Caravansaries and boats and bridges;

Jewels and lamps, food, clothing, and conveyances; All such things: material objects

That appear to bring great help to beings.

39. Immediately they bring happiness and joy And ultimately they place beings
on the path to peace.

The diversified *nirmāṇakāya*

Spontaneously effects the benefit of beings.

40. Where there are no more beings to be trained, The guides withdraw, subsiding
in the ultimate expanse.

They are like the moons reflected in the water, Which gather back into the moon
above

When there are no more water vessels.

The self-experienced *saṃbhogakāya*

Melts back into the *dharmakāya*,

Just as at the end point of its phases,

The moon without increase or diminution

Sets and is absorbed by space itself.

And then, when there are beings to be guided,

The Teachers, as before, will gradually appear.

Such is the result, spontaneously present.

41. By virtue of this explanation,

Which has the nature of supreme and highest peace, May beings stay within the
luminous expanses of their minds.

And, wearied by mistaken clinging to the two extremes, *Saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*,

May their minds today find rest.

CONCLUSION

From the great clouds of the merit Of this well-turned explanation, May there fall
a copious rain
Of happiness and peace.
May all the beings of the three worlds See an increase in their fortune and
prosperity.
May they naturally achieve
The wealth of the Victorious Ones.

These days, the impure eyes of common minds Perceive as contradictory
The distinct paths of mantra and transcendent virtues.
Failing thus to unify them,
They regard them with a partial bias.

But here, the meaning supreme and profound Of both the causal and resultant
vehicles Has been distilled into a unity Adapted to the practice.
It was composed by Drimé Özer, Rising Rays of Stainless Light, At Orgyen Fort
at Gangri Thökar.

By this merit may all beings in the world Attain the highest state of complete
peace, Wherein the kāyas and the wisdoms are inseparably joined.
May there be good fortune everywhere and always.

PART TWO

EXCERPTS FROM
THE GREAT CHARIOT

Longchenpa's Autocommentary to
Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind

THE MIND IS THE ROOT OF ALL PHENOMENA

ALL PHENOMENA DEPEND upon the mind, and the mind depends in turn upon the present body endowed with [eight] freedoms and [ten] advantages. They all arise in dependence on each other. The mind is the cause of the entire phenomenal sphere of virtue, and the freedoms and advantages are its ancillaries or conditions. Therefore, now that we are in possession of them all, our sole concern should be to tame our minds. As it is said in the *Suḥṛllekha*:

The vital point is tame your mind,
For mind is the root of Dharma, so the Buddha said.

The *Question of Sagara Sūtra* also says, “Lord of Nagas! The mind is the root of all phenomena. They derive from the mind; they manifest from the mind. Therefore you should perfectly understand the nature of your mind.” And the tantra called *The All-Creating King* says, “All phenomena, which thus appear are manifested by the mind, are made by the mind.” In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* we also find,

Although within a looking glass a form is seen, It is not there but
merely seems to be.

Not knowing [that phenomena are but] the mind’s experience, The
two cognitions—apprehender, apprehended—both arise.

Because of these and through the links of ingrained habit, Various
things arisen from the mind Appear to beings outwardly.

And yet this world is just the mind.

And,

There are no objects of the senses; They are but the mind itself.
The mind stirred by habitual tendencies Is what appears as outer
things.

Moreover, outer and inner phenomena appear to the mind in the manner of dreams. While having no existence, they appear in all their variety in the perception of the deluded mind. They are appearances born from deluded habitual tendencies. They do not truly exist as things but seem to be truly existent to the mind. Therefore the mind is the root of all phenomena. Things like mountains and so on, which appear “impurely” to the deluded mind, are “contrived” by the mind—though they are not actually the mind itself, as will be explained presently. Furthermore, if the mind is not kept under control, it is impossible to keep the trainings. As it is said in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*,

Without this guard upon the mind,
The trainings cannot be preserved.

And also,

What use to me are many disciplines, If I can't guard and discipline
my mind?

And,

For all anxiety and fear,
And pain in boundless quantity,
Their source and wellspring is the mind itself, As He who spoke the
truth declared.

The hellish instruments to torture living beings— Who invented
them for such intent?

Who has forged this burning iron ground; Whence have all these
demon-women sprung?

All are but the offspring of the sinful mind, This the mighty Sage
has said.

Throughout the triple world therefore There is no greater bane than

mind itself.

And finally,

By simple taming of this mind alone All these things are likewise
tamed.¹⁴⁹

So it is that all the happiness and suffering of saṃsāra originate from the mind,
and therefore the effort to bring the mind under control is the root of all Dharma.
As it is also said in the *Ratnamegha-sūtra*,

The world itself is governed by the mind, And yet by mind, the mind
cannot be seen.

All virtuous deeds and all nonvirtuous deeds Are what the mind
accumulates.

In the *Kāśyapa Chapter* it is also said, “Because the mind is the author of all
these actions, it is like a painter. Since it is the source of all harm, it is like a
hostile army. Since it is the creator of all suffering, it is like an enemy.” And in
the *Classification of Wandering Beings Sūtra* it is said,

Upon the blazing iron ground Suffused all round with burning
tongues of fire, Cut by sharpened saws of iron,

In eight parts is a single body torn.

All arises from the minds of those Who sin in action, thought, and
word.

Therefore, since the mind is the root of all happiness and sorrow, the taming of
it should be our sole concern.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 144: 3–147: 1]

MIND, INTELLECT, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

THE BODY, BEING numbered among gross material things, is referred to in the root text as a “manifest city.” Speech, like an echo, is perceptible but not physically present and is therefore referred to as a “half-manifest city.” Finally the mind, in being devoid of the five sense doors, is utterly insubstantial and is therefore described as an “unmanifest city.” These three cities are respectively designated as “desire,” “form,” and “formless.” This is because in the scripture entitled *Summarized Wisdom*, the coarse body is associated with the desire realm; the speech, which is more subtle, is associated with the form realm; and the mind, which is most subtle, is associated with the formless realm. It also declares that the Acintyaprabhāsa,¹⁵⁰ the Child of Sublime Light, dwells in these three cities, and explains that this refers to self-arisen primordial wisdom.

The three kinds of suffering, whereby the body, speech, and mind are all tormented, arise through the circumstance of thought and are experienced, one after the other, in a manner that is deluded. How do they arise? The six consciousnesses issue forth through their corresponding sense doors toward the objects of the six gatherings, and the apprehension of these same objects results in the experiences of happiness, sorrow, or indifference which are understood to exist truly.

The mental state arising in the distinct aspects of form, sound, and so on is *consciousness* (*rnam par shes pa*). The first vivid cognition of the general aspect of the object is *mind* (*sems*). Finally, the mental factor (*sems byung*) that discerns the features of this object, and is continuously involved with craving, aversion, and ignorance is, in this context, called *intellect* (*gid*). As it is said in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi-śāstra*, “The perceived appearance of an object is consciousness. The first detecting cognition of it is mind. The mental factor of

the subsequent discernment of the particular features of this object is intellect. These three states interpenetrate and are concomitant with each other.”

Wherever there is mind, there is also the mental factor that is concomitant with it, constantly present in the mind in the manner of an ancillary. Conversely, the mental factor is itself pervaded by the mind with which it is related. The mind is thus concomitant with the mental factor and is ever present in the mental factor in the manner of an ancillary.

When an object is encountered in an act of knowing, the first moment of cognition, which focuses on the general aspect or identity of this object, is called mind. Then, when the individual features of the object are assessed, one speaks in terms of mental factor. Although these two are labeled differently, they are in fact none other than the very perception and discernment (intellection) of that object. As it is said in the *Ratnāvalī*,

If one says the mind is seen,
One does so only on the level of convention.
For without mental factors, there's no mind.
There's no object. They're not said to be concomitant.

On the level of the Tathāgatas or when, free of conceptions, one rests in the fundamental nature, even though appearing sense objects are perceived distinctly, one does not speak of mind, intellect, and consciousness, for there is no apprehension of dual appearance: there is no apprehended object and no apprehending mind.

As it is said in *Praises of the Mind Vajra*,

Beings, growing used to dualistic clinging
Imagine that mind, intellect and consciousness exist.
They do not have that primal wisdom free from thought.
The mind that sees the truth is supreme primal wisdom.

It is also said in the *Ratnakūṭa*, “Although they are free of mind, intellect, and consciousness, the Tathāgatas do not discard the state of concentration. This is the inconceivable secret of their mind.”

Furthermore, when the mind perceives forms, sounds, and so on (appearing outwardly) in those very aspects, this is referred to as consciousness (literally,

cognition of aspects). Again, one speaks of “cognition of aspects” because the mind is generated in exactly the same aspect as its object. The knower of the object, in the first moment of cognizing it as this or that, is called *mind*. When the particularities of that object are discerned (as they occur in a continuity of dependently arising instants of consciousness), one speaks of *intellect*.

Moreover, when the perceiving cognitions that vividly, and in an instant, issue from the different sense doors, examine the appearing object and take it to be something pleasant, attachment occurs. When they take it to be something unpleasant, aversion occurs. When they take the thing just in itself, as neither pleasant nor unpleasant, ignorance occurs. It is like seeing a beautiful woman with whom one is familiar, seeing an enemy by whom one has been defeated, or seeing things for which one feels neither attraction nor repulsion—walls, rivers, roads, trees, and people for whom one has no particular sentiments. As it is said in the Vinaya teachings, “Since attachment increases when you see people you like; since aversion increases when you see people who harmed you; and since ignorance increases with respect to all that falls between these extremes, take control of the doors of your senses.”

[Taken from the autocommentary, 205: 5–208: 5]

THE EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES AS THE BASIS OF DELUSION

AT THE VERY moment when cognitive experience (*shes pa*) occurs in relation to an individual object, the mind (*sems*) that perceives it without making any clear distinctions is called the consciousness of the universal ground (*kun gzhi'i rnam shes*). Subsequently, the cognitive event that apprehends the thing as this or that, discerning its features, whether in a rough or detailed way, is the intellect (*gid*). As it is said in the *Ornament for the Wisdom of Mañjuśrī Sūtra*, “The mind is the consciousness of the universal ground. That which clings to self is the intellect.”

Forms are seen in dependence on the eye, and that which perceives is the visual consciousness. Likewise sounds are heard in dependence on the ear; odors are detected in dependence on the nose; tastes are savored in dependence on the tongue; and contact is experienced in dependence on the body. The perceivers are the five sense consciousnesses.

Consciousnesses are called sources (*āyatana*, *skye mched*) because foregoing instants of consciousness give rise to subsequent ones. Since circumstances, namely, objects and their cognitions, are endless, and since the consciousnesses never separate from all these different aspects, extensive and manifold as they are, they are referred to as elements (*dhātu*, *kham*s). Since the subject mind arises from the object as though supported by it; since the latter arises in dependence on the former; and since the mind and its object are related in the manner of a phenomenon and its characteristic property, consciousnesses are said to be dependent arisings. When the object and the subject come together, happiness and so on may be felt and known. Therefore, owing to their contact in the act of perception, in which the subject and object coincide, the consciousnesses are referred to as feelings.

In brief, all actions resulting from the gathering of an object, sense organ, and cognition are either nonvirtues, when they are motivated by the three poisons, or great virtues when—as in the case of patience—they are free of these three poisons. When the ten positive actions are not associated with the path of wisdom and compassion, they constitute an inferior kind of virtue. For since they fall within the ambit of ignorance, they produce only a single happy result in saṃsāra and are then exhausted. They are consequently referred to as “virtues leading to happiness” (*bsod nams cha mthun gyi dge ba*). If, on the other hand, they are associated with the path [of wisdom and compassion], they are the cause of enlightenment and for this reason are referred to as “virtues leading to liberation” (*thar pa cha mthun gyi dge ba*).

Negative actions motivated by the three poisons are the causes of the evil destinies and all the sufferings that exist. Virtue leading to happiness is the basis of the abundant happiness of the divine and human conditions of the upper realms, whereas virtue leading to liberation is the cause of the higher realms in the immediate term, and finally of the definitive excellence of enlightenment. As it is said in the *Ratnāvalī*,

Craving, hatred, ignorance—

The deeds that they engender are nonvirtue.

When there is no craving, hatred, ignorance, The deeds performed
are virtuous.

From nonvirtue every sorrow

And likewise every evil destiny derive.

From virtue come all happy destinies And happiness in every life.

When all the dreamlike things that appear as if they were extramental are apprehended as being “other,” they turn, through habit, into sense objects and appear variously as pure and impure. They are the locus of delusion. Because the inner nature of the body engendered from the elements is not recognized, it turns, through habit, into an objective entity. Since it contains the aggregates, elements, consciousnesses, defilements, and sufferings (the result of the defilements), the body is the basis or foundation of delusion. The self-arisen primordial wisdom of luminosity is empty by its nature, luminous by its character, and unceasing in its variously arising radiance. Yet through its being fixated upon—in terms of a real apprehending subject and a real apprehended object—awareness (*rig pa*) turns,

through habit, into the ordinary mind (*sems*), which arises in the form of the five or three poisons. Through its clinging thus to “I” and “mine,” which is the root of delusion, the hallucinatory appearances of saṃsāra appear, though nonexistent, in the manner of reflections or dreams, or as falling threads or hairs seen by people with impaired vision. They definitely seem to be real. The apprehending subject is “I” and the apprehended object is taken to be “mine.” It is just like considering a house as one’s own.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 209: 1–211: 6]

THE THREE NATURES

THE TEXTS OF the Yogācāra speak of three great realities or natures: the imputed nature, the dependent nature, and the actual nature.

THE IMPUTED NATURE

The imputed nature (*parikalpita, kun brtags*) is divided into two categories: the imputed nature that is free of all characteristics (*mtshan nyid chad pa'i kun brtags*) and the figurative imputed nature (*rnam grangs pa'i kun brtags*). The imputed nature free of characteristics refers to what does not exist at all but is merely imputed by thought—such as the horns of a rabbit and the so-called self. It refers, in addition, to mistaken tenet systems and indeed everything that is merely “mind-positing,” as in the case of names and their meanings. A person may be called Leo or Lion, but this name is not something that can be found anywhere in the person’s body. And even if one were to explain its meaning, this is simply an assertion of the mind and does not exist as an actual object to which speech refers (through the expression of its characteristics) or as an actual object of the thinking mind. [They are of a different order,] as different as the word “multitude” and that which is meant by it.

By contrast, the figurative imputed nature refers to all the manifold things that appear to the deluded mind: the world and the beings therein; [states] like happiness and suffering; the aggregates (*skandha, phung po*), the elements (*dhātu, khams*), sources (*āyatana, skye mched*), and so on. Since they do not exist in fact but nevertheless appear to deluded minds in the manner of dreams, they are referred to as the *figurative* imputed nature. And since they appear but are

nevertheless nonexistent—their existence being an idea superimposed—they are referred to as the *imputed* nature. As it is said in the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*,

All that is imputed has no being.

It is created by deluded mind.

THE DEPENDENT NATURE

The dependent nature (*paratantra, gzhan dbang*) also has two aspects: the impure dependent nature and the pure dependent nature. The impure dependent nature refers to all the illusory appearances that manifest via the different sense doors: the impure aspects of the universe, such as earth, rocks, mountains, cliffs and the rest, together with the universe's contents, namely, beings. All these things are but the full development of the habitual tendencies [of the mind].

The pure dependent nature, on the other hand, refers to the pure fields and all that appears within the sphere of the pure vision of the buddhas: the buddhafi elds; the seven precious things; luminous, unfathomable palaces; and so on.

On this matter, certain people object that the dependent nature mentioned in the Yogācāra literature is untenable because it accounts for all phenomena as being exclusively gathered within the subjective experience of individual minds. But I do not consider this to be a proper subject of dispute. Phenomena produced through the habitual tendencies of the mind are not established in themselves, in the same way that the reflection of a face in a mirror is not the real face, even though it is produced in dependence thereon.

Moreover, the statement that all phenomena are gathered within the subjective experience of one's own mind calls for investigation. The question is: are they gathered within the mind as *mere perceived appearances*, or are they gathered therein as being the *mind itself*?

In the first case, if phenomena are no more than perceived appearances, there is no need to wonder whether they are contained within the mind or not. If, on the other hand, one were to say that they were contained therein, this is no more than a futile claim, for an object is by definition located extramentally.

In the second case, how could such a position be tenable? One might say that because phenomena derive from the mind, they *are* the mind. But that is like

saying that the child produced from a woman is the woman, whereas this is clearly not the case. It would also mean that the filth excreted by the body were the body itself, whereas it is evident that it is not so.

One could also object that since phenomena appear to the mind, they are the mind. But then it would follow that forms are the same as the visual consciousness, for they appear to the mind. And since in the past, the Buddha appeared within the experience of deluded beings, it would follow that he was the minds of such beings. And if this were so, the absurd consequence would follow that the beings with deluded minds are buddhas. Conversely, since beings appeared to the Buddha, it would follow that either all the beings were buddhas or that the Buddha, free from stain, were an [unenlightened] being. Such defective conclusions are unavoidable.

Again it might be argued that if there is no mind, there are no phenomena; and this is why they are said to be the mind. But the problem here is that, in that case, the actual cause and the actual result are rendered identical because if the former is not present, the latter cannot appear. Also one's enemy and one's anger would be identical because if there were no enemy, the anger aroused by him would not manifest. Moreover it does not make sense to say that phenomena are the mind because they are mind-created, for in that case, the painting becomes the painter since it was the painter who made it.

How therefore can it be right to say that extramental phenomena—earth, rocks, mountains, and cliffs—are the mind? To be sure, they are indeed the hallucinatory appearances produced by the mind's habitual tendencies. But if they were the mind, it would follow that when a hundred people see a single vase, the vase seen by them all would be the consciousness of them all, in which case they would all have the same consciousness. And if one were to say this, then when one person attains buddhahood, all beings would become Buddha; and when one being falls to the lower destinies, all beings would go there too. It would also follow that in the entire world there is but one single being—just as you or I—for the entire aggregate of other beings would be none other than that single being's mind. It would not be tenable for there to be any other being beside a single buddha, such as Śākyamuni. For all the beings seen by him would be but his own mind. One may think that this is so, but the evident fact is that we are all here!

It seems that there are many scholars nowadays who think in this way. All one can say is that they are extremely confused in their understanding of the Mahāyāna.

Their vast forms garlanded with lotuses,
Their ears with flowers adorned,
Their faces gleaming from the golden paint—
They're just majestic elephants and nothing else!

But what then are these appearances? They could indeed be understood according to the stainless doctrine of the Cittamātra False Aspectarians. The latter do indeed say in their texts that all that appears to oneself is indeed one's own mind. But the appearing object is not the mind. In the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* it is said,

All perceptions are the mind,
And yet the objects that appear are not.
The product of deluded tendencies from time without beginning,
They are like floating hairs before the eyes.

The False Aspectarians, however, fail to distinguish between the perception (that is, the perceived appearance of an object—*snang ba*) and the appearing object itself (the object that appears—*snang yul*).¹⁵¹

When the mind clearly apprehends as separate from itself a mountain (the appearing object) with the thought “This is a mountain,” a mental experience of a mountain occurs in dependence on the visual sense organ. And this aspect (of the mountain), which is held by the mind wherever one happens to be, is the mind's own subjective experience. When one goes elsewhere, the appearing object (the actual mountain) does not follow, but the propensity for it to appear to perception has been imprinted by the former visual consciousness. A meaning generality, the mental image (of the mountain), nonexistent yet clearly appearing, manifests vividly to the mental organ. Therefore, all the perceptions, or perceived appearances, evaluated by one's intellect, together with their retention, are mind. Likewise, the perceptions of all the other beings, and the retention of such perceptions, are mind. Nevertheless, the objects that trigger the conceptualization of the mental consciousness, and all the objects of the five senses, appear while being nonexistent, on account of the mind's beginningless habitual tendencies. They are like hairs floating in the air as seen by someone suffering from a visual disorder.

Some may object saying that, if this is so, phenomena bifurcate and become

twofold because the appearing object (*snang yul*) and its perceived appearance (*snang ba*) are established as distinct. To which it might be replied that if that were so, the mind itself would be divided into two. For the opponent is implying that the mind that is the appearance is outside (extramental), while the mind that apprehends the appearance is within. To this the opponent might answer that they are both the same in being the mind—they are of one and the same kind even though one speaks as though they were two. But here also, the appearing object that occurs [extramentally] through one's deluded tendencies, and the perceived appearance through which this object is apprehended as something definite are both appearances of what does not exist. They are not different even on the conventional level: they are both cases of deluded propensity. Since these two do not in fact exist, it is established that they are not distinct.

When this is examined from our own Madhyamaka point of view, not only is the appearing [extramental] object not said to be the mind, but even the perceived appearance [the mental aspect] is not said to be the mind either. For the inner mind is not externalized [as the outer object], and the outer appearances occurring for each of the sense powers are merely discerned inwardly by the mind. If the perceived appearance [the mental aspect] were left outside the mind [existing as an outer object], it would be possible either for a person to have simultaneously two consciousnesses or else to be an inanimate thing [because the mind is outside]. These and many other difficulties would follow. Therefore, although the apprehension of the appearance, or nonappearance, of something (both perception and lack of perception) is the mind, the appearing object itself is not the mind. It is just as when the ear consciousness detects the sound of a drum, the hearing consciousness does not *become* the drum's sound.

In short, although it seems that the mind is projected outwardly, it does not in fact go outside [it is not the outer object]. And since it is only the aspect of the outer phenomenon that appears within, that which appears outwardly is not at all the inner mind. What then is the actual situation? Though phenomena have no real existence, they nevertheless appear. For this reason, the whole array of phenomena that arise in their different colors, white and red, appear in the manner of the falling hairs seen by people whose sight is impaired by a phlegmatic disease. The things that appear are found neither outside nor inside the mind—nor somewhere in between. While appearing, they have no inherent existence or, to put it another way, they are said to be empty of intrinsic being. Therefore, insofar as both assertions indicate the assumption of real existence, there is no difference in saying that phenomena exist as the mind or that they

exist as something other than the mind.

It could be argued that the assertion that outer objects are not the mind is like that of the Vaibhāṣika view of the śrāvakas, but it is not the same. The Vaibhāṣikas say that sense objects are inert phenomena existing by way of their own characteristics. We, on the other hand, affirm that, like dreams, phenomena are the hallucinatory appearances of our own habitual tendencies—which the mind perceives without their being existent. Such a way of being need not be refuted even by the Mādhyamikas and is perfectly tenable. “But what is this?” it will be said. “The Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas refute all assertions!” Yes, but they do not refute mere perceived appearance! What they do refute, however, is the assumption of the true existence of things. As master Nāgārjuna has said,

Thus appearance is not refuted

But just the thought that things are truly real.

In the Cittamātra school, whereas the True Aspectarians assert that the appearing phenomenon is the mind, both they and the False Aspectarians say that the self-cognizing mind exists on the ultimate level. And this is an object of refutation for the Mādhyamikas. On the other hand, how could the Mādhyamikas refute hallucinatory appearances, which are the result of habitual tendencies and occur even though they in fact have no existence? And how indeed could they refute the assertions expounded correctly by the [Cittamātra] tenet system? For when the conventional level is posited, Madhyamaka and Cittamātra are in agreement. So much then for the dependent nature on the outer level.

We must further examine the position that, just as a later cognition arises on the basis of an earlier cognition, perceived appearance [the mental aspect] is also dependent on a preceding object—on account of which one speaks of the dependent nature on the inner level. However, if one speaks in this way simply because it is on the basis of an earlier object that a perceived appearance subsequently occurs, its “other-dependence” is simply a matter of words. In fact, they are the same thing. One may say that they are different and separate, but since they are both the mind, they cannot be truly different from each other. On the contrary, to claim that they are is a contradiction of their own tenet and is therefore incorrect. As it is said in the earlier text,

Because these various appearances

Seem to be dependent upon something else,

One speaks of an impure dependent nature
(Owing to the subject-object duality)
And of a pure dependent nature.
Although in truth they aren't dependent,
It's thus that they appear and thus they are explained.

THE ACTUAL NATURE

The actual nature (*parinispāna*, *yongs grub*) is also twofold. There is the changeless actual nature and the unmistakable actual nature.

The Changeless Actual Nature

The changeless actual nature (*'gyur ba med pa'i yongs grub*) is ultimate reality, naturally pure. It is the emptiness inherent in all things and is simply the case whether one is deluded or not. Since it remains so without variation throughout the passage of time, it is said to be changeless. It is the fundamental way of being of phenomena.

Regarding this, three kinds of emptiness are posited: emptiness of self (*rang stong*), emptiness of other (*gzhan stong*), and emptiness of both (*gnyis kyis stong*). Emptiness of self or self-emptiness is again twofold. On the one hand, it refers to things that do not exist according to their own characteristics, like the moon reflected in water—which appears to be there but is not. It also refers to designations that are empty by their nature and yet causally effective—even though there is no difference between themselves (the designation) and other (the designated).

Other-emptiness is also twofold. On the one hand, there is an emptiness of that which is extraneous (of what is not possessed) and, on the other hand, there is an other-emptiness that refers to names.

Emptiness of both (self and other) refers to the emptiness of designations [related to both self-emptiness and other-emptiness] and to the emptiness of the specific characteristics of names and things.

Regarding self-emptiness, the following may be said. [In terms of the ground,] the luminous nature of the mind, the tathāgatagarbha, the “essential element” (*snying po'i khams*), is empty of every defect and is replete with every excellent

quality—even though, from the point of view of the purity of the ultimate nature, it is actually beyond the elimination of negative, and the accomplishment of positive, qualities.

Hallucinatory appearances—phenomena, which arise in various forms, together with cognition, namely the eight consciousnesses—have no existence in fundamental reality and are thus empty of a nature of their own. These phenomena are also empty of their names, such as “pillar” or “pot,” and they exhibit a defective character. From the point of view of the purity of the ultimate nature, however, they are beyond the elimination of negative, and the accomplishment of positive, qualities. In terms of the path, this too is empty by its nature while yet displaying certain qualities and defects. From the point of view of the purity of the ultimate nature, the path transcends the respective elimination of negative, and the acquisition of positive, qualities. [In terms of the result,] when the ultimate purity is attained, this is empty of both defects and habitual tendencies but is not empty of the qualities of the tathāgatagarbha, which are finally actualized. From the standpoint of the purity of the ultimate nature, [the result] is beyond the elimination of negative, and the accomplishment of positive, qualities.

In short, “self-emptiness” means that each and every phenomenon is by nature unreal; it is empty of real existence. There is moreover a twofold classification of self-emptiness. Granted that the defining characteristics of phenomena are empty of themselves, either these characteristics have no existence at all, as in the case of a rabbit’s horns, or else they appear to deluded minds but have no real existence, being empty like the moon reflected in water.

Now designations, which are empty by their nature, consist in the ascription of names, words, and syllables. They are merely posited by the mind. They are not the specifically characterized objects themselves. A small child may be given the name Leo or Lion. Now the objective referent of the name “lion” is an animal with a turquoise mane, but neither the name, nor the thing nominally referred to, is to be found anywhere in the child’s body. Nevertheless, this name, which brings about an understanding, is able to indicate the object that is to be understood. All verbal ascriptions are the same: they are causally effective [they do the job of indicating], even though they are empty [of objective content].

The term “emptiness of other” or “other-emptiness” is used when a thing is said to be empty of something other than itself. Again there is a twofold classification. First, there is an emptiness of other that refers to something that is

not possessed, as in the case of the sun's being devoid of darkness, or of a thing's being devoid of specifically characterized phenomena that are other than it—as in the case of the sun being devoid of other things like a pillar or a cloth. Second, there is the emptiness of other that refers to names, as in the case of the sun's being referred to by various terms, for example, “the light giver” or “the seven-steeded.” But all such classifications and expressions of particular features of the sun's nature do not make contact with the actual, specifically characterized object, namely, the sun. Thus, the sun itself is empty of them.

“Emptiness of both” refers to the fact that all phenomena are both self-empty and other-empty. In terms of further classification, emptiness of both again has two aspects: in relation to imputed designations (*rnam grangs btags pa ba*) and in relation to specifically characterized things (*don rang mtshan pa*). In the case of the emptiness of imputed designations, it can be said that the designation “deluded in saṃsāra” is empty of the aggregates, elements, sources of the specifically characterized three worlds because it is merely posited as an expression by the conventional mind. As for the emptiness of specifically characterized things, this means that if a phenomenon is devoid of specific character, it does not follow that it has the characteristics of something else. It is empty like the son of a barren woman or the water seen in a mirage. Moreover, even though phenomena do not exist truly, their clear appearance is not in any way obstructed; they are empty like the dependent nature.

Thus when the three kinds of emptiness are subdivided, we arrive at six kinds of emptiness, which can be grouped into two classes, both of which transcend the intellect: the emptiness of things indicated by words (that is, “phenomena are utterly pure by their very nature”) and the emptiness of the words that indicate them. This is how emptiness of phenomena should be understood [according to the Cittamātra view].

Those who propound emptiness in the sense of a mere nothingness fail to understand the nature of emptiness, and their doctrine is similar to that of the non-Buddhist Cārvākas. Furthermore, the emptiness of those who say that “some things are empty and some things are not empty” is a lesser kind of emptiness. Their view is similar to the teachings of the eternalists as well as of the Buddhist śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. All such doctrines fall into the extremes of believing in either permanent existence or annihilation and therefore should not be followed.

The Unmistaken Actual Nature

The unmistaken actual nature (*phyin ci ma log pa'i yongs grub*) is the path of supreme liberation. When the fundamental way of being of phenomena is understood exactly as it is, the aspect of appearance is not discarded. It is thus that, on the relative level, merit is accumulated and, on the ultimate level, through the contemplation of the nature of emptiness, wisdom is accumulated through persevering in the meditation on space-like ultimate reality, which is neither one nor many. As it is said in the *Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā*, “What has been defined as “unmistaken” (the unmistaken actual nature) is perfectly subsumed in the truth of the path.”

In brief, when the unchanging ultimate nature, the luminous character of the mind, is assimilated, and when one has realized that all phenomena are empty in being simply the imputed reality or nature, if one practices on the path, impure hallucinatory appearances, together with the conceptual mind, will be transmuted or purified. And reaching the primordial state, one will acquire a perfect mastery of the pure buddhafi elds of the inexhaustible ornaments of the enlightened body, speech, and mind.

All the teachings of the sublime Dharma of the Mahāyāna are present in this doctrine of the three natures.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 212: 3–223: 4]

THE UNIVERSAL GROUND

ALL ACTIONS THAT lead either to saṃsāra or to the total purity [of enlightenment] are based, in the manner of seeds, in the universal ground (*kun gzhi*). As it is said in the *Immaculate Wisdom of Mañjuśrī Sūtra*, “The universal ground is the ground of all. It is the ground of saṃsāra, of nirvāṇa, and of the totally pure dimension of enlightenment.”

Now to refer to suchness or the ultimate expanse as the “universal ground” is to consider it as the neutral and completely indeterminate basis of all categorization. And it is on, or within, this ground that primordially unconditioned¹⁵² awareness is based—in a spontaneously present manner. From this point of view, moreover, the ultimate expanse is referred to as the ultimate universal ground of joining (*sbyor ba don gyi kun gzhi*).¹⁵³ The failure to recognize awareness is the basis for the phenomena of saṃsāra: the eight consciousnesses together with their habitual tendencies. And it is from this point of view that the ultimate expanse is referred to as the universal ground of various habitual tendencies (*bag chags sna tshogs pa'i kun gzhi*), on which are based all conditioned virtue and nonvirtue, through which the various states of happiness and suffering arise.

All the virtuous actions that cause and lead to their result, namely, happiness in saṃsāra (*bsod nams cha mthun*), are based on the universal ground of various habitual tendencies. And it is on this too that all the virtues leading to liberation (*thar pa cha mthun*) are based. Finally, the result, which consists in the removal of, or separation from, obscuring stains (*bral 'bras*), is based on the buddha-potential (*rigs*). This may be explained in greater detail as follows.

On the indeterminate universal ground are based—in both their causal and resultant aspects—negative action, lesser (that is, saṃsāric) virtue, action leading to liberation (which results in the removal of obstructions to the state beyond

suffering), and action leading to total purity, namely, all the realizations that occur on the path.

Virtue leading to liberation, which is an aspect of the truth of the path, is conditioned and adventitious and is based on the universal ground of various habitual tendencies as the cause or agent of the removal of, or separation from, obscuring stains (*bral rgyu*). The state resulting from such a removal has its basis in the buddha-potential. It is as when the sun is freed from the clouds that obscure it. The resultant light is grounded in the sun itself.

As it is said in the *Uttaratantra-śāstra*,

Earth is based on water; water's based on wind, And wind indeed is
based on space.

But space itself is not based on the elements Of wind or water or of
earth.

Likewise aggregates, the elements, and senses— All are based on
karma and defilement.

And karma and defilement both
Depend upon the mind's improper use.

And the mind's improper use
Depends upon the mind's own purity.

But the nature of the mind itself
Does not depend on any such phenomena.¹⁵⁴

In the same way as it is said here, the pure buddhafi elds and all enlightened qualities are primordially present—in the manner of the twofold buddha-potential—within the space-like, pure nature of the mind. The buddha-potential is the primordial, pure expanse of ultimate reality (*thog ma med pa'i chos kham s dge ba*).¹⁵⁵ It is the ground that is the basis for the separation from, or removal of, obscuration; it is thus the basis for nirvāṇa. Here it is necessary to understand the four terms: the ground or basis of removal (*bral gzhi*), the causal agent of removal (that which removes, *bral rgyu*), the result of removal (*bral 'bras*), and the object of removal (that which is to be removed, *bral bya*).

The basis or ground for the removal or separation is the buddha-element

(*kham*s) or essence (*snying po*). The causal agent of the removal is virtue leading to liberation, which cleans away the stains upon the ground of the removal and is the aspect of the path. The result of the removal is the immaculate sugatagarbha: the actualization of all enlightened qualities. The object of removal, the factors to be removed or detached, are the eight consciousnesses together with their habitual patterns, based as these are on the universal ground of various habitual tendencies. In the language of the Secret Mantra, these four terms are referred to as the ground of purification (*sbyang gzhi*), the agent or means of purification (*sbyong byed*), the result of purification (*sbyang 'bras*), and the factors to be purified (*sbyang bya*). The terminology is different but the meaning is the same.

All the causes of the impure state of saṃsāra, along with the associated consciousnesses—and also all the conditioned virtues that connect one to the ground of liberation—have for a long time been based (without being actually located anywhere) in the universal ground of various habitual tendencies, the nature of which is the state of ignorance.

All the qualities of nirvāṇa are based in the ultimate expanse, which is why the latter is known as the ultimate ground of joining (*sbyor ba don kyi kun gzhi*). Its nature (*ngo bo*) is empty; its character (*rang bzhin*) is luminous; and its cognitive potency (*thugs rje*) is all-pervading. Its jewel-like qualities are spontaneously present. It is neither stained nor is it freed from stains. It is primordially luminous and is inseparable from the kāyas and wisdoms. This state is referred to as the fundamental mode of being (*gnas lugs kyi don*). From the standpoint of its utter purity, it is referred to with such terms as “the space-like state,” “absence of characteristics,” “emptiness,” “the perfectly unconditioned state,” and so on. Nevertheless, it is not mere nothingness, a nihilistic void. For within its state of luminosity, the kāyas and wisdoms are spontaneously present. It is totally free or empty of samsaric phenomena. As it is said in the *Ghanavyūha-sūtra*,

The pure disk of the moon
Is always full and free from stain.
Owing to its temporal phases,
Wordly people think it grows and shrinks.
So too the actual universal ground
Is replete at all times with the buddha essence— This essence that
the Tathāgata
Indicated with the name of “universal ground.”

The childish in their ignorance,
Enslaved by habit, see this universal ground
In forms of various joys and pains,
As karma, ordinary cognition, and defilement.
Its nature, nonetheless, is pure and free from stain.
Its qualities are like the wish-fulfilling gem.
It is unmoving and is free from change.
To recognize it perfectly is utter freedom.

And Maitreya has said [in the *Uttaratantra*],

Therein is nothing to remove
And thereto not the slightest thing to add.
The perfect truth viewed perfectly
And perfectly beheld is liberation.¹⁵⁶

Many names are given to the ultimate universal ground. It is the basis, source, and cause of removal [of obscuration] and so on, and it is from this point of view that it is referred to as the ultimate universal ground of joining; as the beginningless, pure expanse of ultimate reality (*thog ma med pa'i chos khams dge ba*); as the sugatagarbha, the buddha-element; as the luminous nature of the mind; the dharmadhātu, the most fundamental mode of being; as naturally pure suchness; as the perfection of wisdom, and so on.

Once again, the habitual tendencies of saṃsāra are based upon the nature of the mind, and it is from this point of view that the nature of the mind is referred to as the universal ground of various habitual tendencies. For it provides the support for the gathering of nonvirtuous actions, virtuous actions, actions that lead to liberation, and actions that lead to the total purity of enlightenment. These actions, which from the very beginning are devoid of real existence, arise adventitiously. Furthermore, both positive and negative actions are based upon the universal ground of various habitual tendencies. And since the nature of the universal ground of various habitual tendencies is ignorance [the absence of discernment], it is indeterminate. Some say that its nature is not ignorance because it is itself the support of the five poisons as well as of utter purity. This is simply a misunderstanding, however. For the ignorance here referred to [as being the nature of the universal ground] is not the ignorance that is numbered among

the five poisons. In the present case, the ignorance is the coemergent ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*): the first moment of delusion that leads to saṃsāra.¹⁵⁷

The assertion that the universal ground provides support for the utter purity of enlightenment also requires examination. The universal ground of various habitual tendencies is the support neither of the primordial wisdom of buddhahood, which is endowed with the twofold purity (primordial purity and purity from all adventitious stains) nor of the buddha essence. This is because the universal ground as such is to be transmuted [into wisdom]. As it is said in the *Sacred Golden Light Sūtra*, “The universal ground, once transmuted, is the dharmakāya itself.” And in the *Exhaustion of the Four Elements Tantra*, we find: “The purified universal ground is the dharmadhātu.” The universal ground of various habitual tendencies is not the support of the buddha-element. It is rather the support or cause for the separation of impurities from the buddha-element. Thus it provides the support simply for the process of enlightenment through the conditioned accumulations of merit and of wisdom, which result from meditating on the path. Since the accumulations are contained within the truth of the path, they are said to be deceptive and impermanent. And this is so because they are based on the universal ground of various habitual tendencies.

But if they are based on the universal ground, it may be asked, how could the two accumulations adversely affect this same ground? It is just as with a flame that depends upon a wick while yet consuming it, and like a fire that burns the wood on which it depends. In just the same way, the path of the two accumulations, which is based, or depends, on the universal ground, purifies saṃsāric tendencies, thus dispelling all that defiles or obscures the buddha nature or element. Since the path of the two accumulations actualizes buddhahood, thereby rendering manifest the buddha nature as it is in its pristine state before being veiled, it is called a “pure condition or cause.” Subsequently, however, even this purifying antidote [the path of the two accumulations] is consumed, for it is a virtue that is imputed by the mind and thus belongs to the imputed reality. As it is said in the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra-śāstra*, “In the moment of manifest enlightenment, all true paths are eliminated.” And as it is said in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*,

The tinder of phenomena is all consumed,
And this is peace, the dharmakaya of the Conquerors.¹⁵⁸

So it is taught, here and elsewhere. And yet, one may ask, how can all true paths be eliminated? For the truth of path consists in the “emptiness of what should not be spurned” (*dor ba med pa'i stong pa nyid*),¹⁵⁹ as well as of the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment. But the emptiness of what should not be spurned and the thirty-seven factors are included in the level of buddhahood. They are not part of the path because they belong to the stage at which the path is perfected.

It is said that the universal ground of various habitual tendencies is referred to by means of many synonymous terms: coemergent ignorance, beginningless and endless obscuration, great darkness, primordial nescience, and so on.

Moreover, the nature of the mind is like space. This beginningless expanse is called the ultimate universal ground of joining because liberation depends on it. It is also called the universal ground of various habitual tendencies because saṃsāra is based in it. And it is explained that from this nature of the mind, there arise happiness and suffering, faults and excellent qualities, all of which belong to the distinct experiences of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. As the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra* declares,

Endless and beginningless in time,
The ultimate expanse is where all things abide.
All migrating beings have it;
Thus they have the state beyond all pain.

It is now time to distinguish the universal ground and the eight consciousnesses. The universal ground of various habitual tendencies, which [in respect of virtue and nonvirtue] is indeterminate, is like a mirror; the consciousness of the universal ground is like the clear sheen of the mirror; and the consciousnesses of the five senses are like images reflected therein. Now the first moment of clear discernment of a foregoing object—the first moment of identifying an appearing object of [one of] the five senses—is the mental consciousness, or intellect (*yid shes*). The feeling of desire, aversion, or indifference that then arises toward the perceived object is called the defiled mental consciousness (*nyon yid*).

Certain masters in the past have said that if the defiled mental consciousness does not examine the object, the consciousnesses of the six gatherings alone do not accumulate karma because they are not conditioned by any of the three poisons. This assertion, however, must be further examined. This is indeed the

case when the view, meditation, and conduct are maintained once the nature of phenomena has been recognized. On the other hand, beings who have never turned their minds to these matters and who are thus in a state of ignorance, do, as a result, accumulate negative actions.

To state the matter more explicitly, the door through which karma is accumulated is the mental sense organ in concert with the five effective sense organs. The agents of karmic accumulation are the defiled mental consciousness, the virtuous mental consciousness, and the neutral mental consciousness. The karma is accumulated in the universal ground, while the consciousness of the universal ground provides the space in which karma is developed, accumulated, diminished, and so on.

As it is said in the *Commentary to the Sūtrālaṅkāra* composed by the master Sthiramati,

The mental organ and the five sense organs (the eyes and so on) are the doors of karmic deeds. These are the access points for engaging in action. The mental consciousness or intellect (*yid*), which entertains virtuous, nonvirtuous, or neutral thought, is the agent of karmic action. The six objects (form and so on) are the objects of action. The consciousness of the universal ground provides the space for karmic action, while the universal ground is the basis or location—the home, as it were—for such action.

The consciousness of the universal ground is a clear and limpid state of cognition, in which there is no apprehension of either an object or a subject. From this, the five sense consciousnesses propagate. The visual consciousness [for example] perceives forms. It is not conceptual but is rather the detection of the form's aspects. The same is true for the consciousnesses of the ears, the nose, the tongue, and the body. They perceive their respective objects (sound, odor, taste, and texture) but are nonconceptual. They are cognitions of the different aspects [of their objects]. That which originates from the appearing objects of the five sense consciousnesses—or rather that which vividly manifests in the likeness of their aspects—is the phenomenon [which is mental] and also the mental consciousness. That is, from the side of the object, it is the mental phenomenon, whereas from the side of its arising in the mind (in the same aspect as it is perceived), it is said to be the mental consciousness. As it is said in the *Commentary to the Sūtrālaṅkāra*,

The mental consciousness arises in the same aspect as the (outer) object occurring in the preceding moment of the sense consciousness. Alternatively, it is a cognition that perceives an object that is not actually present. It is both an object and a consciousness.

Now as soon as the five sense consciousnesses and the consciousness of the universal ground cease—that is, as soon as the object of the preceding moment of the sense consciousnesses ceases, or rather, as soon as the six consciousnesses that derive from these objects cease, there occurs what is referred to as the mental organ and its consciousness. As it is said in the *Abhidharmakośa*,

In the moment that the six have ceased,
The occurring consciousness is mental.

When a form is seen, the consciousness of the universal ground is present, clear and limpid, without any apprehension of an object. The aspect of the seen object as this has arisen in consciousness is the visual consciousness. The subsiding of these two consciousnesses is called their cessation, and the cognitive aspect that then arises in an instant of thinking “This is a form” is said to be the mental consciousness (*vid*), or mind (*sems*). Since this moment of cognition is extremely rapid, there is no precise thought or conception, and so it is accounted nonconceptual (*rtog med*). But since it is the first moment of “knowing” the object, it is also said to be the “cognition of the apprehended” (*gzung ba'i rtog pa*). All detailed examinations of the object that derive subsequently from this first moment are considered to be the “cognition of the apprehender” (*'dzin pa'i rtog pa*).¹⁶⁰

Therefore, even though in the first moment, the mental consciousness knows its object, if there does not follow an examination of this object, karma is not accumulated. This is the assertion of all great yogis.

As it is said in the *Song of Realization of Kuddālīpāda*,

When consciousnesses of objects of the six sense powers
Are unspoiled by grasping, this is suchness.
There is no karmic action, no ripening of the same.
You see the stainless state that's similar to space.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 271: 3–280: 3]

THE UNIVERSAL GROUND, THE EIGHT CONSCIOUSNESSES, AND THE STATE OF SLEEP

WHEN BEINGS LIVING in the desire realm are on the point of falling asleep, the five sense consciousnesses and the defiled mental consciousness dissolve into the mental consciousness. The mental consciousness then dissolves into the consciousness of the universal ground and, for a short moment, there arises a clear, nonconceptual state. Some masters of the New Translation schools say that practitioners who recognize this state, and remain in the recognition of it, do not dream but experience the luminosity of ultimate reality. In fact, however, the consciousness of the universal ground dissolves into the universal ground, in which there is no conception of anything. And as the universal ground dissolves into the dharmadhātu, all apprehension, both gross and subtle, ceases, and ultimate reality—empty, luminous, and free from conceptual movement—manifests. If this state is recognized, all delusions are arrested. As it is said in the *Compendium Tantra of Precious Secret Wisdom*,

When the seven consciousnesses melt
Into the consciousness of the universal ground, And the universal
ground is purified in the ultimate expanse, There occurs
primordial coemergent wisdom, Empty, luminous, and self-
arisen.

This is what yogis must recognize.

And as this subsequently unfolds, the universal ground emerges from the dharmadhātu. From this the consciousness of the universal ground arises, and from this the mental consciousness alone appears, manifesting in various dream

states. It is at this moment that mental objects deriving from habitual tendencies arise and are identified as one's own.

More explicitly, when the winds or vehicles of moving thoughts and the winds of the channels that support the seven consciousnesses pass through the right and left channels or *roma* and *kyangma* and are entering the central channel or *uma*, there occurs the state called the “balanced consciousness of the universal ground” (*kun gzhi sum mnyam gyi rnam par shes pa*). This is so called because, at this juncture, the winds are of equal strength. When, however, these winds are in the central channel and mingle together in a single taste, this is the time of the universal ground, and the person in question is in a state of profound and dreamless sleep. There are some people, moreover, who do not dream at all. They remain in a state of nonfluctuation throughout the night.

Subsequently, the universal ground dissolves into the dharmadhātu. The channel of supremely unchanging luminosity, where the gross essence-drops and winds do not circulate, is located in the middle of the central channel. It has the nature of limpidly clear light. As it is said in the tantra called *The All-Illuminating Sphere*,

In the middle of the central channel

Is the channel of supremely changeless luminosity.

It is a luminous expanse both clear and immaterial, The place of
primal wisdom present of itself.

When the “refined wind of the central channel”—which is a name for cognition itself (*shes pa nyid*)—enters the channel of supremely changeless luminosity, luminosity manifests. It is at this point that lights, drops of light, rainbows, and so on of “manifest luminosity” appear. “Empty luminosity” also appears: it is the nature of the mind free from all conceptual movement. The “luminosity of union” also manifests: namely, great primordial wisdom experienced as luminous awareness.

From this there once again unfolds the universal ground, from which arises the consciousness of the universal ground and subsequently the mental consciousness. At this point the wind spreads through the life-supporting channel, which is the support of the mental consciousness. The wind then enters the channels that are the supports of the different sense organs. It is then that one wakes from sleep and there manifests the ordinary duality of apprehender and apprehended: the experiences of the daytime.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 284: 5–286: 4]

THE TATHĀGATAGARBHA

THE SŪTRAS OF definitive meaning belonging to the final turning of the wheel of Dharma clearly reveal the great secret of all the buddhas just as it is. These sūtras are the *Dhāraṇīśvararājaparipṛcchā-sūtra*, the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādaparipṛcchā-sūtra*, the *Ratnadārikāparipṛcchā-sūtra*, the *Vimaladevīparipṛcchā-sūtra*, the *Aṅgulimālīya-sūtra*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the *Maitreyaparipṛcchā-sūtra*, and the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*. These sūtras teach that the dharmadhātu, that is, the intrinsically pure nature of the mind or buddha-element, the essence of the Tathāgatas (the tathāgatagarbha), is primordially present in all beings. It is present from the very beginning and it is unchanging. Spontaneously, and from the very first, its appearing aspect is the source of the major and minor marks of the rūpakāya (the body of form), and its emptiness aspect is the dharmakāya (the body of ultimate reality) beyond all conceptual extremes. Since all enlightened qualities are naturally present within it, it is like a jewel; since it is unchanging, it is like space; and since it pervades all beings, as if moistening them, it is like water. By means of all such metaphors the tathāgatagarbha is set forth. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra-śāstra*,

As a jewel or space or water are all pure,
Its nature is at all times undefiled.¹⁶¹

For even when it is obscured by impurities, the tathāgatagarbha is itself free from stain. The nature of the mind is primordially luminous. As it is said in the *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines*, “As for the mind, the mind does not exist; the nature of the mind is luminosity.”¹⁶² This is the buddha-element (*khams*) or potential (*rigs*) present in all beings. The *Uttaratantra* declares,

¹⁶¹ *Uttaratantra-śāstra*, 1.1.15. ¹⁶² *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines*, 1.1.11.

Because the kaya of perfect buddhahood is all-pervading,
Because in suchness there is no division,
Because they have potential for enlightenment,
All beings have at all times buddha essence.¹⁶³

This buddha-potential is said to be the “beginningless, pure expanse of ultimate reality” (*thog ma med pa'i chos khams dge ba*). It is the primordial buddha within the ground. As it is said in the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, “There are no buddhas, first or last. Primordial Buddha lists to neither side.” And the *Hevajra Tantra in Two Sections* says,

Sentient beings are truly buddhas
And yet are stained by adventitious obscurations.
When these are removed, indeed they're truly buddhas.

At the time when one is an ordinary being, the nature of the mind is, from the standpoint of appearance, in full possession of the qualities of the rūpakāya. From the standpoint of emptiness, it has all the qualities of the dharmakāya. Since, however, the mind's nature is obscured by stains and is not actually manifest, it is referred to as the “element” (*kham*s) or the “potential” (*rig*s). At the time of awakening (*sangs rgyas*), it is freed from all stain and is called “enlightenment” (*byang chub*). The only difference between these two cases lies in the complete manifestation or otherwise of the mind's nature. It is not said that the qualities of enlightenment are nonexistent in the condition of ordinary beings and are generated anew later on. For these qualities are beyond all movement and change. As it is said in the *Complete Revelation of the Essence Sūtra*,

The ultimate expanse from time without beginning
Is the resting place of all phenomena.
Since it is possessed by every being,
All possess the state beyond all sorrow.
As it was before, so later it will be.
It is unchanging suchness.

The luminous character of the mind's nature is unsullied by defilement. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

This nature of the mind, this luminosity,
Like space, is without change.
Craving and the rest are adventitious stains
Deriving from deluded thought, and they do not defile it.¹⁶⁴

The buddha-potential may be classified twofold as the naturally present potential (*rang bzhin gnas rigs*) subsisting from the very beginning, and the developed potential (*bsgrub pa'i rigs*), which arises on the basis of the practices

that remove circumstantial impurities.

The naturally present potential may again be classified twofold. First, there is the naturally present potential that is the ultimate nature of phenomena—the empty nature of the mind, free from all conceptual extremes (*chos nyid rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs*)—which is the cause for the removal or separation (*bral rgyu*) [of obscuring stains] from the svābhāvikakāya. Second, there is the naturally present potential that is the phenomenal appearance of the ultimate nature (*chos can rang bzhin du gnas pa'i rigs*), which is the cause for the removal or separation [of obscuring stains] from the supreme rūpakāya.

From the very beginning, phenomenal appearance partakes of the ultimate nature. The *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* says,

Son of my lineage, the mind's nature is naturally luminous; it is naturally devoid of intrinsic being and is naturally pure. Its appearance is arrayed in the brilliant qualities of the major and minor marks, which are not separate from it. They are, however, distinguished from the standpoint of appearance and emptiness.

The developed potential refers to the potential that is purified by the cultivation of bodhichitta and so on—that is, through the practices on the path of learning, which are related to skillful means and wisdom, the accumulations of merit and wisdom. As the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra* says, “Ah, children of the Conqueror! The potential of enlightenment (*byang chub kyi rigs*) consists in an earnest search for the dharmadhātu. Those who have seen this potential—luminous in nature, vast as the sky—are those who have trained in the accumulations of wisdom and of merit.” And as the *Uttaratantra* says,

Like a treasure or a tree grown from a fruit,
The potential should be understood to have two aspects:
Natural presence that persists from time without beginning
And perfection that derives from proper cultivation.

From the potential's twofold aspect, it is said,
The triple kāya of the Buddha is attained.
From the first arises the first kāya;
From the second come the later two.

The svābhāvikakāya, fair and beautiful—
It should be understood—is like a precious image.
For it is present by its nature: it is uncontrived
And is a treasury of precious qualities.

Like a universal monarch is the sambhogakāya:
For it is sovereign of the mighty realm of Dharma.
The nirmāṇakāya is like a golden form:
It therefore has the character of a reflection.¹⁶⁵

The svābhāvikakāya, the nature of the mind, the naturally present potential that is the ultimate nature of phenomena, is like a jewel. Within this spontaneously present state, there manifests the naturally present potential that is the phenomenal appearance of the ultimate nature. This is both the sambhogakāya, which is like a universal sovereign, and the nirmāṇakāya, which is the sambhogakāya's reflection, and provides the support for the appearance of the supreme nirmāṇakāya, which manifests for the sake of beings to be guided. In the case of ordinary beings, these kāyas are veiled by impurities and are thus not perceptible. However, the accumulation of merit (arising through the cultivation of bodhichitta and so on) removes the veils that conceal the rūpakāya, whereas the accumulation of wisdom (effected through meditation on emptiness) dispels the veils that conceal ultimate reality, the svābhāvikakāya.

The potential that is naturally present and the developed potential are linked together primordially as support and supported. The first is like the support provided by limpid water, while the second is like the various reflections that appear in the water. The potential that thus dwells within the ground is like an object that is to be known, whereas the developed potential subsisting in the present situation is like the knowing mind. Once again, they are linked in the manner of support and supported. The natural potential—both the ultimate nature (*chos nyid*) and its phenomenal appearance (*chos can*)—is in a manner of speaking the cause that makes possible the removal [of obscuration]. It is not the result of it. The developed potential is like an antidote that dissipates the veils but is not the actual cause of the two kāyas in the manner of a causal process involving an agent and object of production. This potential brings forth a wealth of perfect qualities, which are realized on the path of learning. It releases them and brings them to maturity on the level of buddhahood.

As it is written in the *Sūtrālamkāra*,

The natural and the developed,
The support and the supported—
[The first] exists [as cause] and it does not exist [as the result].
[The second] should be understood as meaning the release of
qualities.¹⁶⁶

All beings are pervaded by the tathāgatagarbha. Nine images or similes are used to illustrate how it dwells in the midst of defilement. It is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

Like a buddha in a faded lotus, honey in the midst of bees,
Like the kernel in the husk and gold in filthy soil,
Like treasure in the earth, the shooting plant within the tiny grain,
Or like the image of the Conqueror wrapped up in tattered rags,

Like a lord of men enclosed within a beggar-woman's womb,
Or like a precious image hid within the clay—
Concealed by the defilements' adventitious veils,
The buddha-element subsists in sentient beings.¹⁶⁷

These nine similes all refer to the buddha-element, which is obscured in ordinary beings, in the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats, and in bodhisattvas who are on the paths of seeing and meditation. There are four images that illustrate how the tathāgatagarbha dwells in the minds of ordinary beings who have not entered the path and also of those who have entered it but are on the paths of accumulation and joining. It is present in their minds but is concealed by four impurities. The first image is that of the tathāgatagarbha that dwells within latent desire. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

Just as enclosed within a faded lotus flower,
The Tathāgata, shining with the thousand marks of buddhahood,
Is seen by those who have unsullied divine sight And taken from the
petals of that blossom, water-born.

In just the same way, those who “go in bliss” behold with their
enlightened and unsullied eyes That their own nature dwells in
those caught in the Hell of Torment Unsurpassed; And,
sovereigns of compassion who remain until the ending of
saṃsāra,

They act to liberate those beings from their obscurations.¹⁶⁸

The second image is that of the tathāgatagarbha dwelling in latent anger. As it
is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

Just as honey in the midst of swarming bees
Sought for by a skillful man
Who sees it and with clever art
Withdraws it from the swarm,

Likewise, the great Sage with his all-knowing eyes
Beholds the wisdom, buddha nature, honeylike,
And acts to free it fully and forever
From the beelike veils obscuring it.¹⁶⁹

The third image is that of the tathāgatagarbha that dwells within latent
ignorance.

Just as the kernel of a grain within its husk
Is inappropriate for human use,
And those who wish to eat of it
Must first withdraw it from its shell,

Just so the nature of the Conqueror
Is mingled with the dross of the defilements.
As long as it has not been freed therefrom, Enlightened deeds in the
three worlds will not occur.¹⁷⁰

The fourth image is that of the tathāgatagarbha dwelling amid the manifest and
strongly active defilements of desire, aversion, and ignorance.

Just as in a time of great commotion
A person's gold was dropped into a foul and dirty place,
Where it remains just as it was
For many centuries, by nature indestructible,

Until a god endowed with pure and godly eyes
Discerned it there and speaking to some person said,
"The gold that here lies hid is of great price.
Let it be cleansed and made into a precious thing."

The Sage, beholding thus the excellence of sentient beings
Sunk in their defilements like that foul and filthy place,
Sends down upon them rains of pure instruction
That the mire of their defilements might be cleansed away.¹⁷¹

There is one image that illustrates how the buddha-element dwells amid the propensity to ignorance as this is found in the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats.

Just as in the earth beneath a poor man's dwelling,
There was once a treasure inexhaustible,
Of which the man knew nothing
(For the treasure did not say that it was there),

Within the mind there lies a precious treasure.
Its nature is immaculate, with nothing to be added, nothing to
remove.

Because they do not know this, living beings Constantly endure the
many ills of poverty.¹⁷²

Two images illustrate how the buddha essence dwells amid the defilements that are to be eliminated by the path of seeing. The first is as follows:

Just as the ever-present tendency to burgeon from a seed,
Subsisting in a mango and the fruits of other trees,
Is provoked by water and the tilling of the ground

is provoked by water and the tilling of the ground,
That thence a kingly tree will gradually grow,

Just so, the pure expanse of ultimate reality that's caught inside the
rind— Living beings' ignorance and all the rest—
Will, on the basis of the virtues,
Burgeon by degrees into a king of sages.¹⁷³

The second of the two images is as follows:

Just as a spirit who discovers by the road
An image of the Conqueror contrived of precious jewels,
But wrapped in tattered, foul, and fetid rags, declares—
That it may be uncovered—“There it is beside the path,”

In just the same way those with unobstructed sight behold
The actual blissful Buddha even in the state of stooping beasts,
Enveloped in defilements in their various kinds,
And likewise show the means whereby it might be freed.¹⁷⁴

Then there are two images that illustrate how the pure expanse of ultimate reality dwells amid obscuring defilements that are eliminated on the path of meditation. Here is the first of these two:

Just as a woman, ill-favored and protectorless And living in a shelter
for the destitute,
May carry in her womb the glory of a king,
Not knowing she is pregnant with a lord of men,

Birth in existence, too, is like a home for destitutes;
And impure beings resemble the expectant woman.
By the stainless element they bear within them
They're protected—like the woman with a king within her womb.¹⁷⁵

The second image is as follows:

When molten gold is poured in and the form is set, at peace,
It has but the outer aspect of its earthen mold.
Those who see and understand—that they might free the gold within

—
Will clear away the outer case whereby it is concealed.

Likewise, having seen that that which is by nature luminous
Can only be obscured by something adventitious,
Sublime enlightened beings act to cleanse obscuring veils
From beings who resemble mines of precious gems.¹⁷⁶

The nine impurities related to these images are set forth in the *Uttaratantra*:

Desire, aversion, ignorance (whether in their flagrant state or else as
latent tendencies), All that is discarded on the paths of seeing
and of meditation, impurities subsisting on the pure and impure
grounds,

These nine are illustrated by analogies
Like being concealed within a lotus flower.
If the confining secondary defilements were to be Distinguished,
they would be numbered in their millions.¹⁷⁷

Regarding those who have these stains, the *Uttaratantra* says,

Childish beings, arhats, those who train,
And those possessed of wisdom are, in their respective order,
Stained by these impurities:
By four, by one, by two, and then by two.¹⁷⁸

These images and the impurities they illustrate are laid out in the *Uttaratantra*
as follows:

Just as a lotus rising from the mud
Delights the mind when first beheld
But later brings no joy,

So too is joy deriving from desire.

Bees when strongly agitated
Use their stings.
So too when anger has arisen,
It engenders sorrow in the mind.

Just as the pith of rice and other grains
Is covered by its outer husk,

Likewise understanding of the essence
Is hindered by the shell of ignorance.

Just as filth is uncongenial,
So too defilement in its full arising,
Causing those in the desire realm to pursue
Their cravings, is like filth.

Just as wealth when all concealed Remains unknown, its treasure
unobtainable,
The self-arisen element in beings
Is likewise hidden by the ground of tendency to ignorance.

Just as the gradual growing of a shoot
Cuts through the outer layers of a seed,
Just so, when suchness is beheld
All that seeing discards is countered.

Through connection with the noble path,
The transitory collection,¹⁷⁹ the essential point, is quelled.
All that is discarded on the path of meditation—all that primal
wisdom sheds—
Is shown to be like tattered rags.

The impurity supported by the seven grounds
Is like the impurity of confinement in the womb.
Nonconceptual primal wisdom is like being freed
From such confinement, like a birth without travail.

Impurities connected with the three successive levels,
It should be understood, are like the traces left by clay

It should be understood, are like the traces left by clay.

The concentration vajra-like

Of great beings will remove them.

Desire and so forth: all the nine impurities

Resemble thus the lotus and the rest.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, as it is recounted in the teachings of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*,

The Blessed Lord said to Kāśyapa: “This is how it is, my noble son. There was once a king who had in his service a giant with a jewel of diamond in his brow. It came to pass that when the giant was contending with another giant-like champion, his opponent struck his head with his own and without the former’s realizing it, the jewel in his brow sank into his flesh. Since he had been wounded, however, he called for a physician and asked his services. But the physician was wise, and since the wound had been caused by the jewel as it sank into the giant’s flesh, he did not apply any medicine.

“Well now, strong man! Where is the jewel in your forehead?” At this the giant grew afraid and told the physician that, to his knowledge, the jewel was still in his brow and had not disappeared. And thinking that if the jewel were not there, it must have been an illusion, he became extremely downcast. To comfort the giant, the physician then said, “Do not be sad! When you were contending, the jewel in your brow sank into your flesh, leaving nothing outside but an indication of its presence. When you were fighting, your blood was up and the gem sank down into your flesh. Yet, by the power of this same jewel, you felt nothing.”

The giant, however, disbelieved him and said, “O physician, do not lie. If the jewel had really sunk into my flesh, there would be filthy pus and blood, and there would be no indication of it outside.”

At that, the physician placed a mirror in front of the wound, and the jewel clearly appeared in it. On seeing this, the giant was greatly amazed.

Noble son, such is the plight of beings! Because they do not serve and follow a spiritual master, they fail to see that they have the

buddha nature. This nature is veiled; it is overwhelmed by desire, aversion, and ignorance. And so these beings circle in saṃsāra, amid the torments of many different realms of existence.

This story, from the point just indicated in the text and until the words, “Noble son! Within the bodies of all beings are the ten strengths, the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks,” explains the buddha nature in numerous different ways.

In the *Hevajra Tantra* we find,

Great primordial wisdom dwells within the body,
Wholly free of all discursive thought.
All things does it pervade.
It dwells within the body, yet from the body it does not arise.

In the *Precious Net* it is said,

All beings, I and everyone,
Are primordially enlightened,
But through the power of thought do beings circle in saṃsāra.
To free them all I generate the attitude of supreme awakening.

The *Wisdom at the Moment of Death Sūtra* says, “When the mind is understood, this is buddhahood. You should strongly cultivate the attitude of mind of thinking that nowhere else should buddhahood be sought.”

Praises of the Mind Vajra says,

Just as water dwells unsullied
In the very heart of earth,

Primal wisdom also dwells
Unsullied in the midst of our defilements.

And in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* it is said,

In any of the four times or the ten directions No perfect buddha will
be found.

The perfect buddha is the mind itself.

Therefore do not look elsewhere for buddhahood—

Where even the enlightened ones cannot discover it.

Thus it is set forth in these and other sacred texts. In short, it should be understood, with the help of metaphors—such as that of the great sheet of silk as vast as the three-thousandfold universe—that the kāyas and wisdoms of buddhahood dwell primordially within all beings, as inalienably as sunlight in the sun itself. This buddha-element is at all times naturally pure and changeless. The stains upon it are adventitious and imaginary. As the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra* declares,

Great Sage! Defilements are darkness, whereas perfect purity is light. Defilements are weak, whereas profound insight (*vipaśyanā*) is of great strength. Defilements are adventitious, whereas natural purity is the fundamental root.

Being primordially unstained, the buddha-element is pure; changeless and unmoving, it is the supreme identity (*bdag dam pa*); being at all times present, it is everlasting; and though it has fallen into the samsaric state of many sufferings, it is not overwhelmed thereby. Thus it is transcendent bliss. The *Uttaratantra* says,

Its results are the transcendent qualities

Of purity, identity, happiness, and permanence.¹⁸¹

The tathāgatagarbha pervades all beings. It is said in the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*.¹⁸²

Just as it is said that space is always everywhere,
Likewise it is said to be at all times present.

Just as space pervades all forms, Likewise it pervades the multitude
of beings.

This buddha essence is veiled by defilements, and yet, in itself, it is unsullied—it is like the sun enshrouded by the clouds. From the very first and until the time of our awakening, it is indestructible and inseparable from us. As it is said in the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra*, “The tathāgatagarbha pervades all beings in their three conditions, yet it remains unchanged by either defilement or the purity [of enlightenment].” The three conditions are mentioned in the *Uttaratantra*:

As impurity, impurity-and-purity,

And utter purity

Are described respectively

Beings, bodhisattvas, Tathāgatas.¹⁸³

Impurity thus refers to the condition of ordinary beings, both impurity and purity to the condition of the bodhisattvas, while utter purity refers to the condition of the buddhas. But what is this buddha-potential like? There is no image that can adequately illustrate it, and therefore it is said to resemble the condition of the Tathāgata. The *Uttaratantra* goes on to say,

Because it is beyond the world,

There's nothing in this world whereby we can imagine it.

This is why it has been taught

That the buddha-element is like the Tathāgata.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, according to the way the buddha-element actually is, it does not actually resemble any of the images supplied because, although the nature is one and the same, yet there are differences according to different conditions, and thus it is that the nine images apply to the buddha-element only in a piecemeal fashion.

Who is able to behold the buddha nature truly? Only the buddhas see it as it is. People who have been accepted by a spiritual master but who have no direct realization of the fundamental nature; the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas; beings who have faith in the Mahāyāna; and also the bodhisattvas dwelling on the grounds of realization understand it only in the manner of an aspiration—in terms of a general idea or universal. Even the bodhisattvas on the tenth ground realize this nature only partially. As the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra* says,

Just as the sun is glimpsed between the clouds,

Those who are intelligent perceive it only partially.

Even noble beings with the clear eyes of their minds do not behold it
fully.

But you, Lord, see the spotless dharmakāya, endless wisdom,

The ultimate expanse replete with knowledge objects numberless.

The buddha-element or essence subsists as the buddhafield “Wheel of Ornaments,” the ornaments in question being the three kāyas together with the primordial wisdoms within the nature of the mind. When it is seen exactly as it is, this is buddhahood. These texts [the *Uttaratantra*, the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra*, and all texts that teach the tathāgatagarbha] should therefore be explained and cherished.

For beings who are on the path of learning, the buddha-element is understood through faith and in a general manner. As it is said in the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra*, “The ultimate truth of the self-arisen wisdom must be realized through faith. The blazing orb of the sun is invisible to those who have no eyes.” And the *Essence of Enlightenment Sūtra* describes how it is seen only in part and not completely.

Ordinary beings, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas do not see the buddha essence exactly as it is. Consider the following illustration. A man who was blind from birth asked someone to tell him the color of ghee. He received the answer that it was like snow. On touching some snow, the blind man thought that the color of ghee was cold. He then inquired about the color of snow and was told that it was like a swan’s wing. When he heard a swan’s wing flapping, he thought that the color of snow was like the sound of wings. When he asked about the color of the swan’s wing, he heard that it was like a conch; and when he touched a conch, he concluded that the color of the swan’s wing was smooth. In whichever way his inquiry was expressed, the blind man was unable to discover the precise color of ghee. In the same way, it is very difficult to see the buddha nature.

This same sūtra gives another example of how difficult it is for ordinary beings to realize the tathāgatagarbha:

Once upon a time, a king summoned a group of blind men before him and, placing an elephant in front of them, asked them to describe it. Those who touched the trunk said that the elephant was like a hook. Those who touched its eyes said that it was like a bowl. Those who touched its ears said that it was like a winnowing fan. Those who touched its hindquarters said that it was like a sedan

chair, while those who touched its tail said that it was like a rope. All the blind men were describing the same elephant though without perceiving it fully. In just the same way, buddhahood has only been defined in terms of one or other of its aspects. Some have defined it as emptiness, others like a magical illusion, others as luminosity. But all have failed to understand it fully.

The noble bodhisattvas have a slight understanding of it, but they fail to see it precisely as it is. As it is said in the *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra*,

Noble son! In order to find a cure for his blindness, a man once consulted a physician. The latter took a golden scalpel and cut away the membrane of the man's cataracts. When he showed the man one of his fingers, the latter said that he could see nothing, but when he showed him two or three of his fingers, the man said that he could see something slightly. Son of noble family! In just the same way, if the buddha nature were not expounded in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, countless bodhisattvas would fail to glimpse the buddha nature, even though they may have perfected the transcendent virtues and abide on the ten grounds of realization. But if the Tathāgata sets it forth, they will have an inkling.

The metaphors that the sūtra then goes on to give illustrate the fact that whereas the buddha essence is partially glimpsed, it is not understood with complete certainty.

It could be argued that if the buddha essence—subtle as it is and hard to realize—cannot be seen by ordinary beings, there is no point in teaching it. But being told that the buddha nature is present in our and others' minds will prevent us from losing hope. Through understanding that liberation is not hard to achieve, we will have enthusiasm. Neither will we belittle others but will respect them as the equals of the Buddha our Teacher. By dispelling ignorance regarding the presence of the kāyas and wisdoms of ultimate reality within us, we will acquire wisdom whereby the ultimate expanse will be realized. Knowing thus the fundamental mode of being, we will avert all misconceptions with regard to existence and nonexistence, permanence and discontinuity, and thus we will have access to the primordial wisdom that realizes the ultimate truth. By avoiding a proud sense of superiority and self-centeredness, we will perceive that others are

of equal importance to ourselves and will have a great love for them. These are the five reasons for which the teaching on the buddha essence has been expounded. As the *Uttaratantra* says,

Like clouds and dreams and magical illusions,
Here and there it has been taught
That all things are completely empty.
Why then does the Victor here declare
The buddha essence to be present in all beings?¹⁸⁵

And in answer to this question, the text continues:

Disheartedness, contempt for lesser beings,
Believing what is incorrect, negating perfect qualities,
Excessive self-love—for those who harbor these five defects,
Thus he spoke that they might give them up.¹⁸⁶

If these five faults are discarded, five qualities will ensue. The *Uttaratantra* declares,

Enthusiastic joy, respect for others as if they were the Teacher,
Wisdom, primal wisdom, and great love:
Through the birth of these five qualities there comes
A freedom from wrongdoing and the view that all are equal.¹⁸⁷

Those who have a mistaken view regarding the buddha nature assume an arrogant demeanor. Their faces are covered with the golden net of wrong opinions, and they turn their backs on the sūtras of definitive meaning and the view of the Secret Mantra, saying that this quintessential teaching is of a mere expedient value. They speak like this because they think that the result arises from a cause. If it were not so, the result (so they think) would be like the permanent self of the non-Buddhists. They therefore declare with an absolute certainty that even the two kāyas of the Buddha manifest from the twofold accumulation.

Kayé! O you who have fine faces decked with lotuses! The truth is that you fail to understand the wisdom intention of the teachings expounded in the three

turnings of the wheel of Dharma. You consider as definitive the extreme position of emptiness. In the teachings of the first turning of the Dharma wheel, intended for beginners and those of basic capacity, the four truths are expounded in terms of what is to be rejected together with the remedies to this, so that beings may turn away from saṃsāra. These teachings describe the methods whereby beings are freed from what is to be abandoned [the truths of suffering and origin].

Now as a means to escaping the fetters of clinging to these remedies, the middle turning of the Dharma wheel expounds space-like emptiness and the eight similes that illustrate the illusory nature of all things. These teachings were given for the sake of beings of moderate capacity and for those who have trained in the earlier teachings.

The final turning of the Dharma wheel was intended for those who have perfected the previous teachings and for those of great capacity: it expounds the nature of phenomena just as it is. The buddha essence [as taught in the third turning] is not the same as the self of the non-Buddhists who, destitute of true knowledge, impute real existence to the self. This self of theirs has no existence at all. The non-Buddhists quantify it as great or small, and they do not affirm that it possesses the kāyas and wisdoms.

You who say that the teaching on the tathāgatagarbha is of only expedient value have a view that clings to no-self and emptiness—which is no more than an antidote to the self and nonemptiness. It does not constitute the definitive teaching.

In the *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* we find the following parable:

This, moreover, is how it is, my noble son. There was once a woman with a very young child that fell ill. Overcome with sorrow, she brought him to a doctor who mixed butter, milk, and molasses and gave the mixture to the child, telling the woman that she must not allow the child to suck from her breast until the mixture had been digested. In order to prevent her child from drinking, the woman smeared her breasts with bile, telling him that there was poison on her breasts and that he should not drink. The child, being thirsty, wanted to drink but, tasting the bitterness of the bile, could not do so. Later, when the medicine had been digested, the woman washed her breasts clean and told the child to come to suckle, for now he could drink. But, despite his thirst, the child would not, remembering the bitterness he had tasted before. Whereupon his

mother explained that she had smeared her breasts with bile to prevent him from drinking before the medicine had been digested. But now that it had been digested, she had washed her breasts and they were now no longer bitter. And so the child came slowly back and was able to drink again.

Noble son! In order to liberate all beings, I the Tathāgata have emphatically declared to them the absence of the self. Through earnest practice, beings may understand that there is no mental state called “I” and thus may pass utterly beyond sorrow. Moreover, it was in order to dispel the wrong view of the Cārvākas, and to bring beings to the utterly pure existence of the human state through meditating on the doctrine of no-self, that I the Tathāgata have explained that all phenomena are devoid of self, so that beings may grow used to emptiness. It was like the woman who, for her child’s sake, had smeared her breasts with bile. And just as later the woman washed her breasts and called her child to drink, so too have I explained the tathāgatagarbha. O bhikṣus, do not be afraid! Just as the woman called to her child, who then came slowly back, you should, O bhikṣus, distinguish these two cases. You should not consider that the tathāgatagarbha is nonexistent. When formerly in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* I expounded emptiness, you should understand that I did so thinking only of the fact that phenomena have no intrinsic being. Meditation on an emptiness that is a mere nothingness will not result in the arising of the kāyas and wisdoms of buddhahood. For a result must follow upon its cause.

It is in such a manner that emptiness means the emptiness of concepts that grasp things, in the very moment of their perception, as being either one or many. It means the emptiness of their intrinsic being. Things are like reflections in a mirror. Emptiness does not mean that things are like imaginary objects that in the past did not exist, that in the present do not exist, and that in the future will not exist. As it is said in the *Heart Sūtra*: “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is none other than form, and form is none other than emptiness. The same is true for feelings, perceptions, conditioning factors, and consciousness—all are empty.” And the *Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā* declares that every phenomenon is, in its own time, empty by its nature. If there were no form, how could there be emptiness of form?

As it is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

Emptiness endowed with supreme aspects
Has been likened to a portrait that's complete.

And,

Therein is nothing to remove
And thereto not the slightest thing to add.

The perfect truth viewed perfectly
And perfectly beheld is liberation.

The buddha-element is void of what is adventitious,
Which has the character of something separable.
This element is not itself devoid of supreme qualities, Which have
the character of what cannot be parted from it.¹⁸⁸

It is said in the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra*,

What is being set forth in this passage? The tathāgatagarbha is in its nature utterly pure. There is no reason at all to remove defilements from it because its very nature is freedom from adventitious stains. And there is not the slightest reason for pure qualities to be superadded to it, for its nature, the dharmatā, is already endowed with pure and inalienable qualities. Therefore the tathāgatagarbha is empty of defilements that are alien to it and that may be removed from it. It is not empty of the inconceivable qualities of enlightenment, which are more numerous than the grains of sand in the Ganges and from which it cannot be parted by any means. So it is said. Therefore, to affirm that it is empty with regard to what is absent from it [namely, defilement] is the correct way of seeing. Furthermore, to say that whatever superior quality it possesses is present in it permanently is to understand the matter properly, just as it is.

The two kāyas of a buddha are present from the beginning. That which obscures them is dispelled by the two accumulations. It is not the case that the action of dispelling is the *productive* cause of the *produced* result (of the two kāyas). For in that case, it would follow that the dharmakāya and sambhogakāya are conditioned and thus impermanent.

The dharmakāya is therefore beyond all movement and all change. As it is said in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*,

This peaceful kāya, radiant like the wish-fulfilling tree, Is like the
wishing-jewel that without forethought lavishes
The riches of the world on beings till they gain enlightenment.
It is perceived by those who are beyond conceptual construction.¹⁸⁹

And the *Uttaratantra* says,

Because he has the mastery of every quality,
Because death's demon he destroys,
Because he is without intrinsic nature
And because he is the lord of all world, he's permanent.¹⁹⁰

And once again, in contradiction of the causal process, it also says,

It is unconditioned and spontaneously present;
It is not known through outer causes;
Endowed with knowledge, love, and power—
It is buddhahood, the fulfillment of the twofold aim.¹⁹¹

It is thus that the process of enlightenment in terms of cause and result—of something that engenders and something that is engendered—is denied. Consequently, the meaning of no-self, emptiness, nonduality, and so on should be understood in the following way. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the Buddha says,

The secret essence of the Tathāgata, the buddha nature utterly pure, is said to be beyond change and movement. Even if it is described as existing, the wise and learned should not cling to it. To describe it as nonexistent is to speak falsely. Inferior people deny it as nonexistent. They fail to understand the secret essence of the Tathāgata. If it is described as suffering, the blissful nature of the body is not understood. Foolish people think that all bodies are impermanent; they consider them like unfired pots. The wise and learned, on the other hand, discern correctly and do not say that everything is at all times impermanent. Why so? Because within this body of ours is the buddha nature, the seed. Fools consider that all the qualities of enlightenment are without self [just empty], but for

the wise and learned, the no-self is just an ascribed label, which they understand in terms of the absence of true existence. Secure in this knowledge, they have no doubts about it. When the tathāgatagarbha is described as empty, the foolish, hearing this, conclude that it is nonexistent in a nihilistic sense. But the wise and learned understand the Tathāgata potential as unchanging and beyond all movement. When liberation is said to be like an illusion, fools conclude that to say that beings attain liberation is a teaching of demons. The wise and learned, on the other hand, understand that, among humankind, only the lionlike Tathāgata is everlasting, unchanging, and beyond all movement. When it is said that conditioning factors [the second interdependent link] manifest because of ignorance, foolish people hearing this make a distinction between ignorance and knowledge. But the wise and learned understand that, by their very nature, they are not two, and that genuine reality is the absence of duality. When it is said that because of conditioning factors, consciousness arises, foolish people think that conditioning factors and consciousness are two different things. The wise and learned, on the other hand, understand that by their nature they are not two, and that the absence of this duality is a genuine reality. When it is said that all things are without self, and that even the tathāgatagarbha is without self, foolish people understand that self and no-self are two different things. But the wise and learned understand that, by their nature, they are not two. Self and no-self are not two by their nature.

The tathāgatagarbha is therefore praised by all the bhagavān buddhas as boundless, immeasurable, and infinite. And I too have expounded it in detail in the sūtras [of the last turning of the Dharma wheel].

When in the *Magical Display Sūtra* it is said that the Icchantikas¹⁹² will never pass beyond sorrow, and when this same text speaks of them as cut off from the buddha-potential, one might conclude that the buddha essence is not in fact possessed by all beings. This, however, is not so. This was said with regard to those who, having given up the teachings of the Great Vehicle, will not gain freedom for a very long time, and to those who, straying from the path, are temporarily separated from the buddha-potential developed on the path. They are not, however, cut off from the luminosity that is the nature of the mind. As it is

said in the *Commentary to the Uttaratantra*,

When the Buddha said that the Icchantikas would never pass beyond sorrow, he was thinking in terms of “another time” (*dus gzhan la dgongs nas*).¹⁹³ He said it in order to remove aversion to the Dharma of the Great Vehicle. For it is hostility to the teaching of the Great Vehicle that produces the Icchantika condition. But since they possess the utterly pure buddha-potential, it is wrong to think that they will never become utterly pure. For thinking of the fact that all beings without distinction may be purified, the Buddha declared that “Though [the veil] is beginningless, it has an end. That which is naturally pure and permanent has been enveloped from beginningless time by a sheath [of defilement] and consequently has not been seen. It is like a golden statue hidden beneath a veil.”

From time without beginning, the pure expanse of ultimate reality [the buddha-potential] dwells in all beings. The time will come when each one of them will become utterly pure. “Though the veil is beginningless, it has an end.” So it is established.

The awakening of the two kinds of buddha-potential is accompanied by signs. The signs of the awakening of the naturally present potential that is the dharmakāya (*rang bzhin chos sku'i rigs*) are described in the *Madhyamakāvātāra*,

Certain simple, ordinary people,
When they hear of emptiness, will feel
A joy that leaps and surges in their hearts.
Their eyes will fill with tears, the hairs upon their skin stand up.

Such people are the vessels for the teaching;
They have the seed of wisdom, perfect buddhahood.
The final truth should be revealed to them,
In whom ensuing qualities will come to birth.¹⁹⁴

The signs of the awakening of the naturally present potential that is the appearance of the rūpakāya (*gzugs sku chos can gyi rigs*) are described in the *Sūtrālamkāra*,

Compassion prior to embarking (on the path),
Interest and acceptance,

Perfect virtuous practice
Are said to be the certain signs of the potential.

As for the benefits of the awakened buddha-potential, the same text says,

Even if, a long time later, they must go to lower realms, They will be
quickly freed therefrom;
There they suffer little pain,
And wearied with the world, they will bring beings to maturity.¹⁹⁵

As the text says, once the buddha-potential has been awakened, then even though it is possible to be reborn in the lower realms, one is quickly freed therefrom, like a ball of silk bouncing up from the ground. Suffering but little, [the bodhisattvas] feel an intense weariness with the world and bring beings to maturity. If beings did not possess this buddha-potential, they would feel no sorrow in the midst of pain, and some of them would feel no impulse to leave saṃsāra and to attain nirvāṇa. Even the desire to be free would not arise in their minds. On the other hand, the fact that, even in the absence of anyone to teach them, some beings feel pity for those who suffer, and feel revulsion with their existential condition when they themselves feel pain—all this is said to be through the power of the pure expanse of ultimate reality [the tathāgatagarbha] that they have within them from beginningless time. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

If one did not have the buddha-element,
No sorrow would one feel in pain,
No wanting would there be to pass beyond all suffering—
No interest and no aspiration would there be for it.

This seeing of the faults and sorrows of existence,
The qualities and happiness of the state beyond all sorrow,
Comes from the possession of the buddha-potential.
If this potential were not there, it would not come.¹⁹⁶

Having thus shown in some detail how the possession of this potential means that one possesses the essence of buddhahood, I will conclude with the following poetic interlude:

Without exception every being has the essence of the Sugata
 Enveloped in enshrouding adventitious stains wherein
The clear light, flame of the expanse of ultimate reality,
From time without beginning, dwells.
The kāyas and the wisdoms dwell in every being,
Spontaneously present, never to be parted.
When emptiness and the essence of compassion are achieved,
This buddha-element receives the name of the enlightened state
And brings about the good and happiness of every being.
Present of itself from time without beginning,
But like sun and sky concealed by clouds,
It is obscured by adventitious stains.
Thus pain is suffered in existence, which is like a dream.
Cultivate a strength of diligence in order to remove defilement.

These appearances of the six migrations,
Adventitious and illusory,
Produced by karma and habitual tendencies,
Are but the stuff of dreams.
In the present, past, and future,
They are utterly unreal though they appear.

Primal wisdom, luminous,
Is present of itself and from the very first.
Beings have it constantly, yet at this time they do not see it,
Just as when asleep they do not see their place of rest.

Therefore, do not cling
To what is meaningless, imaginary, defiled,

But in the clear light of the mind's own nature
Train yourself.

Seize for yourself and others All the riches of the twofold goal.

Why is it that beings wander in saṃsāra, even though they possess this potential? What is the reason for it? It is because beings fail to recognize the buddha-potential dwelling within them and instead grasp at a self where there is no self. The conditions for this failure are provided by the unbroken sequence of defilement, by false friends, by indigence, and by lack of independence. It is thus that beings circle in saṃsāra. As it is said in the *Sūtrālamkāra*,

Habituation to defilement, evil friends,
Poverty, subjection to the power of others—
These in brief are threats to the potential:
You should know that there are four of them.¹⁹⁷

And as it is said in the *Stages of Luminosity*,

Beings do not see primordial luminosity.
They call their minds their “I” and cling to “mine.”
“These things,” they say, “are other.” And clinging to a self,
Confused, they wander through the reaches of existence.
Joy and sorrow, all awry, they feel
According to their karma.

And words to similar effect are found in *The All-Creating King Tantra*.

The primordial, luminous nature of the mind is self-arisen primordial wisdom, empty and clear. By nature, it is empty like space, yet its character is luminous like the sun and moon. And the radiance of its cognitive potency manifests unceasingly and unobstructedly like the surface of a limpidly clear mirror, free from stain. Having thus the nature of the dharmakāya, saṃbhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya, the sugatagarbha is unconfined and is not limited either to saṃsāra or nirvāṇa. Its empty nature provides the open arena necessary for the manifestation of all things; its luminous character allows the five self-arisen lights to appear as sense objects; and its cognitive potency—self-cognizing primordial wisdom—manifests as the detecting cognition owing to which delusion is said to

occur. It is said in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*,

Ema-o! Through the working of one's thoughts,
One strays from the sugatagarbha.

It is at that moment that, inasmuch as one fails to recognize primordial wisdom, one speaks of coemergent ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*). Inasmuch as one takes the self-experience [and display] of primordial wisdom as something other, one speaks of conceptual ignorance (*kun brtags pa'i ma rig pa*). Through failing to recognize that this self-experience of primal wisdom arises within the fundamental mode of being, and through clinging to it as a self and sense objects, this same self-experience is mistaken for the outer vessel of the universe and for the beings that are its inner essence, with their bodies (the result of their habitual tendencies) and their minds, filled as they are with the five poisons in their various forms. As *The All-Creating King* declares,

Beings fail to understand my nature—
I who am the all-creator.
They scrutinize the things that I myself create
And crave and are attached to them,
And therefore these appearances acquire solidity.
Yet transient, illusion-like, they all disintegrate.
Beings are like men born blind
Who do not see the way things are.

The cause of their delusion is ignorance. As it is said in the abridged *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, “All beings of whichever capacity, high, medium, or low, have manifested through ignorance, so the Sugata has said.” The contributing condition for their delusion is their clinging to duality. As it is said in the *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines*, “Beings circle in saṃsāra because of their clinging to ‘I’ and ‘mine.’” And the *Prajñāpāramitā in Twenty Thousand Lines* says,

Ordinary, childish beings perceive aggregates where there are no aggregates, elements where there are no elements, sources where there are no sources, and dependently arising things where there are no dependently arising things. Because of their fully ripened karma,

they incorrectly apprehend dependently produced phenomena.

How is it that beings arise? Owing to the two kinds of ignorance, conditioning factors [action] occur, and it is through these that existence is compounded. It is through conditioning factors that different kinds of beings exist [consciousness as the result], and name-and-form and so on are produced. Once the body takes shape [beginning with the stage when the embryo is globular, and so on until the moment of birth], there is contact, feeling, and the six senses and so on, until the stage of aging-and-death. Thus there unfolds the twelvefold cycle in which beings turn—on account of which one speaks of saṃsāra, or cyclic existence.

It might be thought that it is impossible for the primordial, fundamental nature to exist as saṃsāra, and that within the sugatagarbha there can be no circling in saṃsāra. But this is untrue. The process resembles the case of limpid, transparent water that is free from all impurity, but which because of the winds of winter turns to ice as hard as stone. Within the primordial nature, and because of the duality that has arisen of apprehended and apprehender, hallucinatory appearances are perceived that are various and seemingly quite solid. This is demonstrated in the *Song of Action* from the *Collected Songs of Realization*,

When blown and agitated by the wind, Even yielding water will turn
hard as stone.

When the mind's disturbed by thought,

Formless nescience takes shape
As something solid and extremely hard.

This is what happens when delusion occurs within the sugatagarbha. The unchanging, unmoving primordial purity of the nature of the mind is called the ultimate universal ground of joining (*sbyor ba don gyi kun gzhi*). It is the dharmakāya, in which the perfect rūpakāyas, buddhafi elds, and primordial wisdoms are all implicit. Yet they are veiled by ignorance, on account of which they are falsely perceived in terms of apprehender and apprehended. So it is that the ultimate ground of joining becomes the universal ground of various habitual tendencies (*bag chags sna tshogs pa'i kun gzhi*), in which are lodged—from time without beginning—the seeds of all the many habits of delusion. Subsequently, and depending on which habitual tendencies are the stronger, happy or evil destinies are experienced and one circles in them as in a dream. At that time, one clings to “I” and “self”; one tastes of hatred and desire and all the five poisons. Thus one engages in action and the creation of yet further habitual tendencies. Thoroughly mistaken with regard to things that have no existence, one clings to them and experiences them in all their variety as if they were truly existent. One turns continuously on the wheel of hallucinatory appearances revolving day and night without reprieve. This very circling is completely groundless. It seems that one wanders farther from liberation because of one’s manifold delusions. But these are like the illusions of a dream. One wanders, prey to feelings of joy and sorrow, just like the prince who, losing his realm, became a wanderer on the road. Yet throughout the entire time of his destitution, he possessed by his very nature the happiness of supreme riches. For he was born within the kingly state, and his sorrow was but a transient condition. As it is said in the *Treasure Inexhaustible, a Song of Instruction*,

Beings entangled in the bindweed of existence, In the desert of self-
clinging parched with thirst,
Are like a young prince dispossessed and fatherless.
Mental anguish is their lot; they have no chance of happiness.

And yet, throughout the time that they wander senselessly in the desert of the

world, they nevertheless possess, as it has been shown above, the tathāgatagarbha as their very nature. The *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* says,

Kyé, O child of the Buddha! So it is. Imagine an immense expanse of silk cloth, equal in size to all the worlds of the three-thousandfold universe, and on this vast sheet of silk are painted all the worlds of the entire universe. Thus it is devised. The great sheet of silk is painted over every part of its extent. The three-thousandfold universe is painted equal in size to the worlds of the three-thousandfold universe. The worlds of the two-thousandfold universe are painted equal in size to the worlds of the two-thousandfold universe; the worlds of the one-thousandfold universe are painted equal in size to the worlds of the one-thousandfold universe. The worlds of the four cosmic continents are painted equal in size to the worlds of the four cosmic continents. The great ocean too is painted according to its actual size; the painting of Jambudvīpa is the size of Jambudvīpa; the painting of Pūrvavideha is the actual size of Pūrvavideha in the east; the painting of Aparagodānīya is the actual size of Aparagodānīya in the west; the painting of Uttarakuru is the actual size of Uttarakuru in the north. The painting of Mount Sumeru is in size equal to Mount Sumeru itself; the palaces of the gods living on the earth are painted equal in size to the actual palaces; the palaces of the gods of the desire realm are painted equal in size to those palaces; palaces of the gods of the form realm are painted equal in size to those actual palaces. In length and width, this great sheet of silk is of a size equal to the worlds of the three-thousandfold universe. And nevertheless it is placed within a single infinitesimal particle. And in the same way that it was placed within a single infinitesimal particle, it is placed in each and every infinitesimal particle. Now it came to pass that certain beings were born, wise and learned, perspicacious and clear-minded, with eyes endowed with divine sight, pure and clear. And with their godlike eyes, they looked upon this great silken sheet and saw that it was enclosed within a tiny, infinitesimal particle and was thus of no use to anyone. And they bethought themselves, “*Kyé*mamala! If this infinitesimal particle were forcibly split with great power, the great sheet of silk will sustain all beings.” And so they contrived a great

energy and power and with a tiny vajra, they split the infinitesimal particle. And as they had thought, this great sheet of silk did indeed support and sustain all beings. And just as they had done to this one infinitesimal particle, likewise did they do to all the other particles without exception.

Kyé, O child of the Buddha! Likewise the unbounded primal wisdom of the Tathāgata, the primal wisdom that sustains all beings, permeates the mind streams of all beings. And the mind streams of beings are likewise as unbounded as the primal wisdom of the Tathāgata. So it is. But childish beings, fettered by their clinging to their thoughts and their perceptions, do not know the primal wisdom of the Tathāgata. They are completely ignorant of it; they do not experience it; they do not realize it. But perceiving with his wisdom free from all attachment that the dharmadhātu dwells present in all beings, the Tathāgata transformed himself into a teacher who declared, “*Kyé mamala!* Beings know nothing of the perfect primal wisdom of the Tathāgata, even though they are completely permeated by it. I will therefore reveal to them the path of the noble ones. Thus they may eliminate and destroy all the fetters that their thoughts contrive.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 310: 6–348: 3]

REFUGE

THERE ARE TWO objects of refuge, common and uncommon. The object of refuge envisaged by beings of both small and medium scope is the common object of refuge [that is, shared by all], whereas the object of refuge for beings of great scope is uncommon [in being exclusive to them]. The reason for this may be explained as follows.

When beings of small scope (who have entered the Dharma) and the two classes of beings of medium scope commit themselves to the sacred object of refuge, they do so only with regard to their present situation and for the present time [until their death]. By contrast, the object of refuge for the Mahāyāna, but not for beings of small and medium scope, is the dharmakāya of the Buddha, the Dharma of the Great Vehicle, and the Saṅgha of the bodhisattvas. In the case of the Mahāyāna refuge, to take causal refuge means to take the Three Jewels as the guides who will escort one to the result. By contrast, to take resultant refuge is the wish that the Three Jewels, understood in the sense of a result, be actualized within one's own mind stream. In both cases, the rituals of the accompanying vows and the kind of compassion involved are similar. And as it is said in the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*,

Know that the resolve of those who wish for buddhahood
Arises through compassion.¹⁹⁸

Moreover, those who adhere to the expository vehicle of causality [the sūtra section of the Mahāyāna] take refuge in the belief that buddhahood will be attained only after three measureless kalpas and more. To wish that the ultimate dharmakāya be gained within one's mind stream is to take resultant refuge. Until this is achieved, to take refuge in the Three Jewels as one's guides is the cause of

such an attainment and is therefore the “causal refuge.”

In the immediate term, the object of refuge is described as the Three Jewels, but ultimately, the real object of refuge is the Buddha’s dharmakāya alone. By contrast, the form body (rūpakāya) of the Buddha, the Dharma of transmission and realization, the four paths [of learning] present in the minds of bodhisattvas, the two kinds of cessation of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, the four pairs of beings belonging to the Saṅgha of the lesser vehicle, and the great beings residing on the ten grounds of realization of the Great Vehicle are not objects of refuge, for they are of relative status and are not ultimate. They themselves must still attain liberation by relying upon something other than themselves. To be sure, since the form body is of relative status, and because the Dharma of realization present in the mind streams of bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas (as distinct from the Dharma of realization present in a buddha’s mind) is impermanent—for it is accomplished with effort and is yet to be perfected—the form body and the Dharma of realization are both deceptive.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the Dharma of transmission is something to be laid aside once the truth has been seen. And the members of the Saṅgha, inasmuch as they are apprehensive of the obscurations and latent tendencies associated with their different levels, experience fear and therefore must rely upon the Buddha. As it is said in the *Uttaratantra*,

Because the one will be forsaken and the other is deceptive,
Because [cessation] is a simple absence, and because there is still
fear,
The twofold Dharma and the noble Saṅgha
Are not the highest, everlasting, refuge.²⁰⁰

What then is true refuge? It is the ultimate dharmakāya. As the *Uttaratantra* also says,

In the final sense, the refuge of all beings
Is buddhahood alone.
For the Sage embodies Dharma and is
The final goal of the Assembly.²⁰¹

And the *Showing Gratitude Sūtra* says,

The Venerable Ānanda asked, “What is the Buddha in which we take refuge?” The Buddha replied, “You take refuge in the dharmakāya; you do not take refuge in the rūpakāya.”

Ānanda then asked, “What is the Dharma in which we take refuge? And the Buddha replied, “You take refuge in the ultimate Dharma, not in the relative Dharma.”

Ānanda then asked, “What is the Saṅgha in which we take refuge?” And the Buddha answered, “You take refuge in the ultimate Saṅgha, not the relative Saṅgha.”

In brief, therefore, when, with the wish to acquire within the mind one of the three kinds of enlightenment,²⁰² one takes refuge with a commitment to this goal, the purpose of the causal refuge is brought to fulfillment and is hence referred to as the resultant refuge.

Because the buddhas, Śākyamuni and others, appear to the minds of beings and explain to them the path that protects them from fear, they fulfill the role of Teachers. Because the Dharma that they reveal brings beings to the state of fearlessness, it fulfills the role of the path. And since the Saṅgha saves beings from fear, it fulfills the role of a friend. Consequently, since they are the cause of the accomplishment of the Three Jewels within the mind, they—the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—are regarded as the objects of causal refuge. For if, through the assistance of the Saṅgha, beings implement the Dharma revealed by the Buddha, they will be freed from fear.

Certain masters have expressed the opinion that the dharmakāya of the Buddha achieved within oneself is the only thing that protects one from the fear of the most subtle obscurations and from the fear that those who follow the Mahāyāna experience with regard to the lower vehicle. They therefore say that the Buddha’s dharmakāya constitutes the very object of resultant refuge. They say too that, in the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas, the Jewel of Dharma is a realization that is born spontaneously in the mind stream at some point in the future and is, for that reason, qualified as the resultant refuge. In the vehicle of the śrāvakas, on the other hand, it is the Saṅgha or rather the arhatship that will arise within their mind stream at some future time that is posited as the object of resultant refuge. The masters just mentioned say, therefore, that the objects of resultant refuge of the three vehicles are different.

This is not quite correct. In the Mahāyāna, it is said that within the state of

buddhahood, the three kāyas are at one with the Three Jewels. Since this is so, how could it be right to say that the Dharma and the Saṅgha are not present equally? Both the śrāvakas and the pratyekabuddhas claim that the two cessations are the ultimate goal. Consequently, the ultimate truth, according to their tradition, becomes in effect the dharmakāya of unsurpassed enlightenment. How therefore can the śrāvakas be without the Jewels of Buddha and Dharma? The pratyekabuddhas, for their part, also affirm that enlightenment is the nature of cessation. They do not exclusively assert the Jewel of Dharma. This being so, the object of resultant refuge is said, in each case, to be enlightenment. And the wish to attain the ultimate Three Jewels is to take resultant refuge. As it is said in the *Question of Ugra the Householder Sūtra*,

To take refuge in the Buddha is the wish to attain buddhahood.

To take refuge in the Dharma is the wish to attain Dharma.

To take refuge in the Saṅgha is the wish to attain the Saṅgha.

To take refuge in the Three Jewels for the benefit of both oneself and others is to take causal refuge. As the *Ratnakūṭa* says,

O bhikṣus! To free yourselves and others from fear and harm, take refuge! All your cherished hopes will be perfectly fulfilled!

Practitioners of the Secret Mantra wish to realize directly the nature of the mind that dwells within themselves, abiding naturally and in this very moment as Buddha. In common with the other vehicles, they take refuge in the Three Jewels as outer objects. However, in a manner that is specific to themselves, they meditate on the nature of the mind, which is primordially unborn. Moreover, the Three Jewels present in every maṇḍala and the Three Jewels of the general teachings are both considered to be objects of causal refuge; and to take refuge in them is to take causal refuge. The Three Jewels, as constituted by the nature of one's own mind, namely, self-arisen primordial wisdom, are the objects of resultant refuge; and to remain one-pointedly therein, in a state unspoiled by acceptance and rejection or any other contrivance, is to take resultant refuge. Given that one wishes to attain a result, namely, the state of the external Three Jewels, one may speak of a resultant refuge; and for the sake of that result, one may assert a causal refuge, in the sense of saying that one relies on the protection [of the Three Jewels]. Although it is possible to speak in this way, it is

nevertheless the case that, principally, refuge lies naturally within oneself, and it is through remaining in that state, without aspiring to anything else, that one takes resultant refuge. It is rather as a concordant condition for the accomplishment of this that one takes refuge in an external Triple Gem—which is, as we have said, to take causal refuge. As it is said in the tantra called *Accomplishment of Primordial Wisdom*,

Elsewhere, in the sovereigns of the triple maṇḍala,
I wished to find that perfect excellence,
And therefore to the cause I prayed.
Yet with the understanding that
The mind's clear luminosity
Is the very nature of that threefold maṇḍala,
I rest therein one-pointedly in even meditation.
This is truly said to be supreme resultant refuge.

Now, the Three Jewels are identified in two ways. On the common level, that is, according to the Hīnayāna, they are, first, the Buddha's supreme *nirmāṇakāya*; the Dharma of transmission and realization—respectively, the twelve sections of the Buddha's teachings and the qualities of the path arising in the minds of individuals (concentration and so on); and the Saṅgha of ordinary and noble beings. The category of ordinary beings comprises, first, the lesser Saṅgha, consisting of *śrāmaṇeras*, *śrāmaṇerīs*, and *upāsakas*—for they all constitute a field of merit for beings; and second, monks or *bhikṣus*, who have received full ordination and who are referred to as the greater Saṅgha. The term “gathering of the Saṅgha” is used to indicate to a group of at least four monks. The category of noble beings comprises the stream enterers, the once returners, the nonreturners, and those who are candidates for arhatship. The one who abides in the level of arhatship is the Buddha.

All these categories are known in the Mahāyāna, wherein it is nevertheless considered that the Buddha has the nature of the three *kāyas*, that he is endowed with the two purities and has perfected the twofold aim. As the *Uttaratantra* says,

It is unconditioned and spontaneously present;
It is not known through outer causes;
Endowed with knowledge, love, and power—

It is buddhahood, the fulfillment of the twofold aim.²⁰³

[In the Mahāyāna,] the Dharma is considered to be by nature inexpressible in thought and word. By its character it is the antidote or path that leads to buddhahood. According to its aspects, it comprises first, the ultimate and actual Dharma [of realization] defined as the five paths and the two cessations and, second, the verbal Dharma: the twelve sections of the scriptures.

As the *Uttaratantra* says,

Inconceivable, devoid of two,²⁰⁴ and nonconceptual;
Pure, and luminous, and acting as an antidote;
Free from all attachment, from attachment freeing,
Dharma has the nature of two truths.

Freedom from, and freeing from, attachment
Are contained in the two truths: cessation and the path.²⁰⁵

There are two kinds of cessation. First, there is analytical cessation, the absence of conceptual elaboration, which is the result of removing previously existing impurities through the use of antidotes. Second, there is a nonanalytical cessation, which consists in resting in the space-like state that is naturally free from concepts or impurity. [The truth of] the path consists in the realizations occurring on the paths of accumulation, joining, seeing, and meditation. That which thus comprises the characteristics of the two truths (of cessation and path) is in fact the entire Dharma of transmission and realization.

Finally, [within the context of the Mahāyāna], the Saṅgha comprises all those who have realized the luminous nature of the mind: the noble beings residing on the ten grounds of realization. As the *Uttaratantra* says,

Because they purely see with inward primal wisdom
The nature and the multiplicity of things,
The assembly of the wise who never more return
Have qualities that cannot be surpassed.²⁰⁶

From the uncommon point of view, namely, that of the Vajrayāna, [the objects of refuge] are understood differently according to the class of tantra in question.

In the Kriyā and Caryā Tantras, the Jewel of Buddha is the five wisdoms and the pure and actual nature of the three or four kāyas, together with their miraculous array: the deities of blessing (Mañjuśrī, Avalokita, and Vajrapāṇi) belonging to the Tathāgata, lotus, and vajra families, and all the deities of the greater and lesser maṇḍalas of the saṃbhogakāya and nirmāṇakāya in both their peaceful and wrathful aspects. The Jewel of Dharma includes all that has been mentioned above but with the addition of the particular features given in the individual texts. As for the Saṅgha, this is said to consist of three groups: the śrāvakas, the bodhisattvas, and the vidyādharas.

According to the Yoga Tantra, the Jewel of Buddha is defined as the five wisdoms and the pure nature of the three or four kāyas; as Vajrasattva (Lord of all families) and the peaceful and wrathful manifestations of the three kāyas belonging to the five families of [vajra], jewel, lotus, action, and Tathāgata; as the main deities and their retinues, single and multiple (of the root maṇḍalas, together with the samaya, dharma and karma maṇḍalas); and as the four mudras, together with all the deities belonging to the greater and lesser maṇḍalas. The Buddha comprises all of these, while the Dharma and the Saṅgha are the same as described in the Kriyā and Caryā Tantras.

In the Anuttarayoga, the Jewel of Buddha consists of the principal deities and their retinues. These are inseparable from the saṃbhogakāya buddhas and are the Tathāgatas endowed with vajra body, speech, and mind. These deities are either single, multiple, or in groups. They dwell within the maṇḍalas in the Densely Arrayed buddhafiield. All the many nirmāṇakāya deities, moreover, emanating from the saṃbhogakāya belong to the Jewel of Buddha. The Jewel of Dharma consists of all that has been previously explained. Finally, the inseparable nature of the Three Jewels, blazing with the major and minor marks, constitutes the sacred, unsurpassable Jewel of Saṅgha.

Why is it that the Three Jewels are referred to [in Tibetan] as the “Rare and Supreme Ones”? It is as the *Uttaratantra* says,

Because so rarely they appear and are without impurity,
Because they are endowed with power and ornament the world,
Because they are unchanging and supreme,
They are indeed the Rare and Supreme Ones.²⁰⁷

In short, because they may be compared in six ways with precious substances,

the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—the Three Rare and Supreme Ones—are likened to Jewels. Accordingly, they are compared with gems that are rarely found. For those who have not cultivated the root of virtue for an immense lapse of time are unable to encounter them. They are compared with flawless gems because their every aspect is immaculate. They are compared with powerful gems because of the inconceivable strength of their excellent qualities: the six kinds of preternatural cognition and so on. They are compared with gems that ornament the world because they are the cause of the virtuous thoughts of all migrating beings. They are compared with gems that are more precious than any jewel that has been made because they transcend the world. They are compared with gems that are unchanged by praise or blame, for they are uncompounded by their nature.

They are moreover presented threefold because, as the *Uttaratantra* declares,

In terms of Teacher, teaching, and disciples,
And related to three vehicles,
And regarding those inclined to observances of the three kinds,
Three refuges are posited.²⁰⁸

The *Commentary to the Uttaratantra* explains that in order to reveal the qualities of the Teacher to those who seek the enlightened state—in other words, the practitioners of the vehicle of the bodhisattvas, as well as those who revere the Buddha as supreme—the Buddha is taught and presented as their refuge. For he is the “greatest of all two-footed creatures.”

For those who enter [the path] in order to understand the profound teaching of interdependence—in other words, those who belong to the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas and those who revere the Dharma as supreme—and as a means of showing to them the excellence of the Doctrine that the Teacher has revealed, the Dharma is taught and presented as a refuge. For it is the “supreme freedom from attachment.”

In order to instruct those who embark upon the path as a means to understanding the words taught to them by another—that is, the practitioners of the śrāvaka vehicle and those who revere the Saṅgha as supreme—demonstrating to them the excellent qualities of those who have well entered the Doctrine of the Teacher, the Saṅgha is taught and presented as a refuge. For it is the “most sublime of all assemblies.”

In sum, the immediate refuge in the present time and situation is the Triple Gem. Nevertheless, the Buddha alone is the ultimate refuge. As the *Uttaratantra* declares,

In the final sense, the refuge of all beings
Is buddhahood alone.
For the Sage embodies Dharma and is
The final goal of the Assembly.²⁰⁹

This describes the character of resultant refuge, the final goal.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 426: 6–438: 4]

THE THREE CONCENTRATIONS OF THE GENERATION STAGE

FIRST ONE SHOULD perform the preliminary practices. Seated cross-legged on a comfortable seat, one should imagine that one's teacher, the yidam deities, and the deities of the maṇḍala are present in the sky in front of oneself. One should take refuge in them three times and then generate the attitude of bodhichitta, reciting three times the formula taken from the *Net of Precious Peaceful Deities*:

All endless beings, like myself,
Are buddhas from the very first.
Knowing this to be so, I give rise
To the intention for supreme enlightenment.

One should then recite the *svabhāva* mantra and recall that phenomena are established in the state of great emptiness. This refers to the *concentration of suchness* (*de bzhin nyid kyi ting nge 'dzin*) in which one should train oneself as follows. It is said in the *Great Exposition of the Generation and Perfection Stages*,

HUNG

The nature of the pure mind of enlightenment Is a state that from
the first is unborn, all-pervasive, endlessly profound,
Nonabiding, unobservable, beyond the mind's construction.
It rests completely in equality beyond all thought and word.

It is also said in the *Heruka Galpo*,

Great space, the dharmadhātu, is beyond imagining.

The space of ultimate reality is free from all conceiving.

Ultimate reality, the vast and inconceivable expanse, Is devoid of
reference like space itself.

It is necessary to perform the suchness concentration because it provides the causal connection for the arising of the rūpakāya from the dharmakāya. Since all the visualizations that follow are in this way associated with the great perfection of primordial emptiness, the knots of clinging to entities and their characteristics will be untied. It is said in the *Stages of the Path*,

Because of emptiness, all paths are free of attributes; Fixations of
self-clinging all subside.

Afterward, in order to untie the knot of a one-sided clinging to emptiness, one must practice the *all-illuminating concentration* (*kun tu snang ba'i ting nge 'dzin*). All phenomena appear even though they have no intrinsic being. Within a state of illusion-like compassion, one should meditate for a while on the self-arisen and self-cognizing primordial wisdom, which is luminous and devoid of all fixation. As it is said in the *Stages of the Path*,

Through meditation on the King, awareness self-cognizing, Supreme
enlightenment is found.

Suchness, once it has been seen, becomes

The ground for the arising of compassion.

Certainly it's in this order that it manifests.

Finally there comes the *concentration on the cause* (*rgyu'i ting nge 'dzin*). This is twofold. First is the visualization of the circle of protection. In the infinite expanse of space, from the syllable HUNG, there appears a blazing mass of fire in which there arises from the syllable bhruṃ a wheel [or rather sphere] consisting of a hub, a rim [or surface], and ten spokes. The empty space inside the hub represents the dharmadhātu. On each of the ten spokes, there is a lotus and disks of sun and moon marked with the syllable hung. These transform into Hūṃkāra on the vertical spoke at the zenith, Vijaya on the eastern spoke, Nīladaṇḍa on the southeast spoke, Yamāntaka on the southern spoke, Akṣobhya on the southwest spoke, Hayagrīva on the western spoke, Aparājita on the northwest spoke, Amṛtakuṇḍalī on the northern spoke, Trailokyavijaya on the northeast spoke, and

Mahābala on the vertical spoke at the nadir.²¹⁰

Each of these deities has one face and two arms, wears a kilt of tiger skin, and is bedecked with snakes. With right leg bent and left leg outstretched, they all hold the attribute indicating their enlightened family, or else a vajra and bell. The two wrathful deities at the zenith and nadir both belong to the Tathāgata family. They are dark blue and hold a wheel. The wrathful deities to the east and southeast belong to the vajra family. They are gray and hold a vajra. Those in the south and southwest belong to the jewel family. They are dark yellow and hold a jewel. Those in the west and northwest are of the lotus family. They are dark red and hold an eight-petaled lotus. Those in the north and northeast are of the karma family. They are dark green and hold either a crossed vajra or a sword.

Whether or not one visualizes the palace, the main concentration on the cause consists in a brief meditation on oneself as the main deity (the cause heruka), which then dissolves into emptiness. In the present context, the concentration on the cause refers to the meditation on the seed syllable from which the main deity is generated.²¹¹

[Taken from the autocommentary, 806: 3–809: 3]

THE SIMPLE PRACTICE OF THE GENERATION AND PERFECTION STAGES

FOR THOSE WHO are unable to engage immediately in the extensive practice of the generation stage, or who devote themselves exclusively to the perfection stage with only slight elaboration, I will explain how, through meditating on a single deity, one meditates on them all.

First one should take refuge and generate the attitude of bodhichitta. Subsequently, as the *Guhyagarbha* describes,

The rootless nature of the mind

Is of all phenomena the root.

The mind itself is of the nature of a syllable, A syllable that is a
precious, wish-fulfilling cloud.

And,

A is neither empty nor not empty; Not even in the center can it be
observed.

All things are but names. All buddhas

Dwell in strings of syllables.

Pronouncing the syllables A A A, and resting in the state in which phenomena are neither one nor many, one should meditate on the vast abyss of the unclouded sky. In the center of this untrammelled expanse, where the sun and moon are shining, one should meditate on [oneself as] the glorious Samantabhadra inseparable from Samantabhadrī. His hands are in the position of meditative

absorption and, being of the nature of the dharmakāya, he is without ornaments and garments. Five-colored beams of light radiate from him forming a tentlike luminous sphere, wherein there is a central palace, from which rays of light pervade all the reaches of space. The whole of phenomenal existence blazes into light. One should then recite OM AH HUNG A A as much as one can, after which one should rest in the nature of space. By meditating in this way, one meditates on all the maṇḍalas of the buddhas, for one meditates upon their very source. As it is said in the *Guhyagarbha*,

In the clear expanse of the maṇḍala of space, with sun and moon,
Meditate upon the King of primal wisdom with his Queen.
In this way you will meditate
On all the maṇḍalas of the Victorious Ones.

Proceeding in this way, it is through meditating on a single perfection stage that one meditates on them all. In the heart of Samantabhadra thus visualized, there is a sphere of light ablaze with the radiance of the five primordial wisdoms, luminous and free of thought. One should focus one's mind on it without distraction. For as long as the breath is slowed down until it is motionless, all thoughts vanish and one remains for days in the state of ultimate reality, the primordial wisdom of equality, which is beyond both one and many. One will perceive lights and rainbows and buddhafi elds. And as day and night mingle together, one will remain in a continuous state of luminosity in which there is no fluctuation. Thus one's mind will dwell in self-cognizing primordial wisdom (the primordial wisdom that cognizes itself distinctly). Furthermore, calling to mind that the nature of the mind is thus from the very beginning, one will understand that the accomplishment of buddhahood does not come from somewhere else. As it is said in the *Guhyagarbha*,

Perfect buddhahood will not be found In any of the four times or the
ten directions.
The nature of one's mind is Perfect Buddha.
Do not look for buddhahood elsewhere.

Through such practices of generation and perfection, practitioners are connected with all the maṇḍalas of the generation and perfection stages. They cause one to gain all accomplishments. No hindrances are created by them, by

way of even slight omissions or additions to the ritual and so on. They have endless beneficial qualities. As it is said in the *Guhyagarbha*,

Since one is linked thereby to all the maṇḍalas, All the maṇḍalas one will attain.

No faults or defects will occur

As through additions or omissions to a ritual.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 842: 5–845: 2]

THE MIND AND THE OBJECTS THAT APPEAR TO It

WHEN A PERSON'S face is reflected in a mirror, the clear surface of the glass provides the support for the appearance of the reflection, and the face, for its part, has the power of casting its aspect upon the mirror, giving rise to its reflected form. Thanks to these conditions, a face appears, but in the very moment of its appearing, the reflection is neither the face itself nor a face different from the face that cast its aspect. In just the same way, all the multifarious appearances perceived by the deluded mind appear through the interdependence of the causes and conditions of delusion. And when they appear in the way that they do, the appearing objects, in all their variety, are not the mind itself, but neither are they truly existent extramental things. For their appearance is due solely to the deluded habitual tendencies of the mind. It is thus that they are hallucinatory appearances and perceptions. In just the same way that black lines are seen by people suffering from an ocular disorder, they appear and yet are not really there.

Now some may ask, "If all appearances, such as earth, stones, and so on, are neither inside nor outside the mind, what are they?" To this I say that such people are like pigs, taking for real what is merely the product of dualistic clinging. In the very moment that the entire range of phenomenal existence—the phenomena of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—appear, they cannot be found either inside or outside the mind. Nor are they somewhere in between! It is said that they are similar to the eight examples of illusion. The *Samādhirāja-sūtra* declares,

When a woman with her face adorned
Looks on a mirror or an oiled plate,
The circle of her face is what she sees,
And yet it is not there nor is it somewhere else

THEY SEE IT IS NOT THERE, NOT IS IT SOMEWHERE ELSE.

Know that all phenomena are thus.

More explicitly, it is from these nonexistent appearances that the illusion of apprehended and apprehender (whereby the appearances are identified as this or that) originates. In this context, the apprehended (*gzung ba*) is the cognition that arises in the first moment in which the object of engagement (*gzung yul*) is detected. It is the mind that arises in the guise of the thing apprehended, whereas that which apprehends is the subsequently arising mental factor of discernment. As it is said by Avalokitavrata, “The apprehended is the mind itself, apprehended as an object. The apprehender is the mental factor that discerns it.”

Here, ordinary people, who being unlearned, are as pretentious as they are mistaken, say, “The apprehended are the things that appear, mountains and so on. The apprehender is one’s own mind.” Away with the ideas of such foolish cowherds! In the experience of noble beings, who have eliminated the duality of apprehended and apprehender, do such sense objects appear or do they not appear? If these people claim that they appear, it follows that noble beings perceive the duality of apprehender and apprehended. For they have said that the object is the apprehended, while the cognizing mind is the apprehender. If, on the other hand, they say that sense objects do not appear to them, then this flies in the face of countless scriptural passages that say, on the contrary, that the appearances seen by the noble ones are like illusions; that the śrāvaka arhats see mountains and temples; and that the enlightened wisdom that knows phenomena in all their multiplicity perceives all objects of knowledge. Although many such demonstrations and arguments can be found, there is nevertheless no end to the wrong ideas that people have about this point. But what is one to do? It is as Dharmakīrti says:

Because there is no end to false, mistaken paths,

Here there’s no explaining them.

The assertion that outer appearances are the mind has been refuted. Nevertheless, these people persist in taking mountains and other such things as objects and the first moment of consciousness that apprehends them as perception. In truth, they fail to distinguish the perceived appearance (*snang ba*) from the object that appears (*snang yul*). Such is the great intelligence of these cowherds—reifying deceptive things and assuming them to be true.

The object that appears is not the mind. For it remains where it is when one is

not in its presence and does not change its position when one goes elsewhere. Likewise, the object appears endowed with color and so on. Now if the appearing object were really the mind, it would necessarily follow one around. It would be necessarily present wherever one might be and would disappear whenever one was absent. And just as the mind has neither color nor shape, the object would be without them too, as was previously explained. Since the determination of something as either appearing or not appearing is a matter for the mind, it is certainly appropriate to state that the “mere perceived appearance” of something is a mental state. However, it is extremely ignorant and unacceptable to say that the appearing *object* is the mind.²¹²

[Taken from the autocommentary, 856: 1–858: 6]

THE OMNISCIENT LONGCHENPA SPEAKS ABOUT HIS REALIZATION

THIS VAJRA SONG²¹³ illustrates the kind of realization that is devoid of center or limit. When this level of realization occurs, whatever arises subsides into the ground nature, like clouds melting away in the sky. The primordial expanse of the mind's nature and the primal wisdom (the spontaneously arisen state of openness and freedom) mingle together. When this happens, there is no retreating from the nature of one's own mind, for there is nowhere left to go. The point of the exhaustion of all phenomena is reached. One has escaped the dangerous path of the mind that adventitiously clings to, or rejects, things through taking them to be truly existent. It is at this point that the field of ultimate reality beyond coming and going is reached. Where else, then, can one go? There is nowhere. Yogis who reach such a state have left behind the land of delusion, and they will never again return to the city of saṃsāra. For they have reached the space-like ground.

So it is that I have come to the expanse of the nature of my mind. Apprehending thoughts are purified in the primordial ground like clouds that melt away in the sky. My body, speech, and mind rest in a state of openness and freedom without any effort on my part. Is it possible, therefore, for anyone to perceive the state in which I am? Even if I were to explain this to those of lesser fortune, they would be unable to see it as it truly is. For this is the moment of the certainty of my own realization.

Reaching thus the very heart of the ultimate mode of being, I aspire for nothing more. Other yogis have gained freedom by the same manner of realization as myself. Now no questions and no doubts remain for me, and none can teach me more than I have now understood. As it is said in the *Songs of Realization*,

Before me and behind me, and in all the ten directions, Everything I
see—that, that it is!

Now like the Lord, this day I sever all delusion.

Now no questions shall I ask of anyone.

In times gone by, thanks to the excellent sequential arrangement of view, meditation, and action, I relied on the higher and lower grounds and paths as if they were rungs on a ladder, and I became familiar with the way in which these manifest in the higher and lower yogas. But now that the ground and root of the mind have passed away, all these things have likewise passed away. I now have no further goal; no objective remains for me to strive for. Whatever now occurs, I do not cling to it, like a madman drunk on beer. And like a little child, I do not identify appearances. For me there remains no practice to be performed in any sequential arrangement. Everything is an all-embracing evenness, relaxation, openness, a condition free of all objectives. I am in a state of equality or sameness that transcends all clinging. It is a marvelous state of sheer wonderment. As the *Songs of Realization* say,

Like a wish-fulfilling gem this realization is.

Now I know—great wonder—all delusions fall away!

Now, whatever arises manifests as dharmatā. For delusion is purified in the ground and I have attained a realization similar to space beyond all reference. Karmic action and all conditioning factors have subsided. As it is said in the *Songs of Realization*,

Beings are bound by their respective karmas.

Freed from these, their minds are liberated.

And when the current of their mind is freed, then surely this is
nothing else Than the attainment of the supreme state beyond
all sorrow.

All that I do is performed in a state of freedom devoid of all fixation. Consequently, I have no clinging, and thus for me bondage and freedom are no more. It is as the *Songs of Realization* say,

When one truly understands [the sameness of] both action and
nonaction There is no bondage and there is no freedom

... realization, there is no bondage and there is no freedom.

When this state is attained, freedom is accomplished through the transfer of one's teacher's realization to oneself. As the *Songs of Realization* say,

This is the nature, unborn and primordial
That my glorious teacher showed to me.
Today I have accomplished it!

Now that such a realization has been gained, I sing my song of the self-arisen, uncontrived primordial wisdom, the nature of the mind. The nature of phenomena is a state unlimited and unconfined; it transcends both being and nonbeing. The realization of this nature is like the orb of the sun. Its myriad *stainless rays of light*²¹³ illuminate the world of beings with good fortune, causing the lotus garden—the minds of those who wish for freedom—to burst into flower. And having done so, they depart for the land of Samantabhadra, the supremely blissful state.

[Taken from the autocommentary, 895: 4–896: 2 and 896: 6–898: 5]

NOTES

For the list of abbreviations, see the bibliography on this page.

1. See Tulku Thondup 2014, p. 119.
2. Ibid., p. 121.
3. The Tibetan term (*rnam thar*) literally means “perfect or complete liberation.”
4. See the biographies composed by Dudjom Rinpoche and Tulku Thondup. An even more detailed account may be found in Nyoshul Khenpo’s history of Dzogchen in Tibet, while Jampa Mackenzie Stewart has gathered together the most detailed collection of hagiographical stories and legends. All these accounts are warmly recommended to the interested reader. Works of a more academic nature may be found in Gene Smith and David Germano.
5. See Smith, p. 278n71–72.
6. See Davidson, pp. 94–96.
7. See Smith, p. 279n75–76.
8. See Tulku Thondup 2014, p. 139, and Stewart, pp. 35–37.
9. Tulku Thondup 2014, p. 140.
10. See TPQ, Book 2, pp. 254–55.
11. The rainbow body, of which there are several kinds, is the achievement of enlightenment through two practices of the Great Perfection: *trekchö* (*khregs chod*) and *thögal* (*thod rgal*). Generally speaking, it is marked by the dissolution of the physical body into rainbow light. For a full description, see Tulku Thondup 1984, p. 192. See also TPQ, Book 2, p. 456n514.
12. This account is based on the oral teaching of Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, who

remarked that they have never reappeared and are still waiting to be rediscovered.

13. For a detailed explanation of the concealment and recovery of Dharma treasures (terma), see Tulku Thondup 1986.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
15. In Guru Rinpoche's tradition, these seventeen tantras are supplemented by an eighteenth tantra, *Kun tu bzang mo klong gsal nyi ma'i rgyud*. This was also concealed as a treasure and was revealed by Ratna Lingpa (1403–1471).
16. For an overview of the history of the Drikung monastery, see Sperling 1987.
17. See Dudjom Rinpoche, p. 591.
18. For a lively account of the political and social condition of Tibet at that time and of events surrounding the rise to power of the Phakmodrupa school, see Shakabpa, pp. 73–82.
19. Longchenpa's arrival in Bhutan was celebrated for many years afterward by a special dance in which, instead of a mask, the lead dancer would wear the skull of the actual animal that served as Longchenpa's mount. See Ura, p. 25.
20. See Mackenzie, p. 78.
21. See Ura, p. 27.
22. Owing to his opposition to Longchenpa, Tai Situ usually receives a rather bad press in the traditional biographies. History records, however, that he was a beneficent if short-lived ruler. He is said to have restored the infrastructure of the country, building bridges and repairing roads, and to have established a rule of law of such efficacy that it was said that during his reign an old woman carrying a sack of gold could travel unmolested from one end of the country to the other. Maintaining his vows, at least in the article of celibacy, he remained a monk till the end of his days in 1364.
23. See Tulku Thondup 1996, p. 117, and 2014, p. 144.
24. See Nyoshul Khenpo, pp. 131–45.
25. For brief descriptions of the contents of Longchenpa's works, see Tulku Thondup 2014, pp. 145–48. See also Germano, pp. 10–38.
26. See Germano, p. 23.
27. *Ngal gso skor gsum gyi spyi don legs bshad rgya mtsho*.

28. *chings chen po lnga* and *dgos 'brel yan lag bzhi*. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 439n4 and 440n7.
29. “When the turbidity of the mind (*sems*) and mental factors (*sems byung*) subsides, luminous primordial wisdom, the nature of the mind, arises from within. To habituate oneself to this is called the path to enlightenment. It is quite simply to persevere in this practice, remaining uninterruptedly, day and night, in a state in which sleepiness and idleness are abandoned. As it is said in the *Pañcakrama*,

When all activity of mind and mental factors
Comes to complete rest, it is then that
Luminous, primordial wisdom manifests,
Free of concepts, without center or periphery.

“In this context, the mind is defined as the cognitions that assume the existence of the three worlds and examine them accordingly. Since they are the turbidity that conceals suchness, if they are made to subside completely, one has access to nonconceptual primordial wisdom. As it is said in the *Satyadvayavibhaṅga*,

The mind and mental factors are the cognitions
That falsely ascribe existence to the triple world.

“The detecting cognition (*rtog pa*) that perceives the general presence of an object when it first sees it is the ‘mind.’ It is the first moment of knowledge of an utpala lotus [for example]. Then, when the particular features of the object are adverted to, there is the mental factor of examination or discernment (*dpyod pa*). These are the cognitions of the flower’s blue color, its round shape, its pistil and stamens, and so on. As it is said in the *Madhyāntavibhāga*,

That which sees the thing is consciousness.
Its features then are seen by mental factors.

“And as the *Abhidharmakośa* says, ‘Detecting cognition and discernment: coarse and fine.’

“The detecting cognition and the discernment, which are habitually

labeled as mind and mental factor, are arrested in enlightenment. As it is said in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*,

The tinder of phenomena is all consumed,
And this is peace, the dharmakāya of the Conquerors.
There is no origin and no cessation.
The mind is stopped, the *kāya* manifests. [9: 17]

“Moreover, when the self-cognizing primordial wisdom is wrapped in the webs of defilement caused by the illusion of duality, it is called ‘mind.’ For it consists in the nonvirtuous mental factors of detecting cognition and discernment. Liberation from this is called buddhahood. For even though [in that state] an object is known, there is a freedom from duality, as implied in detecting cognition and discernment. As it is said in *Praises of the Mind Vajra*,

When it is enveloped in defilement’s webs,
It is what may be called the ‘mind.’
But when this from defilement had been freed,
‘Buddhahood’ it will be named.”
[AC 130: 5–131: 4]

30. See part 2, “The Mind Is the Root of All Phenomena,” pp. 167–170.
31. Seven suns, arising in succession, destroy the world. The fire then mounts upward and consumes the heavens of the first samādhi. There then comes a rain that washes away everything from the level of the second samādhi down. The ensuing wind scatters the remaining debris, from the level of the third samādhi down. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 364.
32. *du byed kyi sdug bsngal*. Even when not obviously negative, the actions performed with the defiled consciousness make or compound manifest future suffering. For this reason, one speaks of “suffering in the making.” [TPQ-YG I, p. 296]
33. See part 2, “Mind, Intellect, and Consciousness,” pp. 171–173.
34. See part 2, “The Eight Consciousnesses as the Basis of Delusion,” pp. 175–177.
35. See part 2, “The Three Natures,” pp. 179–190.

36. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 360–64.

37. *yi dvags dbying la gnas pa*. The principal abode of the pretas is five hundred leagues below Rajgir, while their subsidiary habitations are in the human and divine realms. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 360.

38. “It is said in the *Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā*: ‘O Subhūti, because the five aggregates, whereby existence is perpetuated, are defiled, they are the place of all suffering. They are the basis of all suffering, the receptacle of all suffering, and the source of all suffering.’

“The physical body is the place of suffering because it is here that pain manifestly occurs. Feeling is the receptacle of suffering because it seizes eagerly upon it. Perception is the basis of suffering because it gives us first access to it through the stirring of thoughts about it. Conditioning factors and consciousness are the sources of suffering because they respectively supply its agent and perceiver. All this is explained in the great commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines*.”

[AC 258: 5–259: 2]

39. See part 2, “The Universal Ground,” pp. 191–200.

40. “The mind engages in thought within a coarsely dualistic framework of apprehender and apprehended, and through actions of virtue and nonvirtue it falls into the desire realm. The cultivation of concentration unassociated with the [realization of the] fundamental nature of phenomena, in which the appearing object is detected but no discernment occurs, is an activity that, stored in the universal ground, causes one to be born in the form realm. Finally, the kind of meditation in which the appearing object is blocked in a completely blank state of mind plants the seed in the universal ground for rebirth in the formless realm. As it is said in the ‘Chapter on Concentration’ in the *Ratnakūṭa*: “Those who are agitated by mental activity—giving rise to action that is virtuous, unvirtuous, or neutral—take birth in the realm of desire. Those who one-pointedly practice the yoga in which the mind is without discernment but does not discard its object, and who have no realization of the nature of phenomena, contrive for themselves a birth in the realm of form. Those who are in neither the desire realm nor the form realm, whose minds behold no object and who are used to meditating a great deal, circle within the formless realm. For them there is never any liberation from the three realms of saṃsāra. Therefore, persevere insistently in excellent study and assimilate it through meditation.” [AC 280: 5–281:

4]

41. “The completely open, that is, blank state of mind that does not discern or cognize any object is the state of the universal ground. When appearing objects are clearly seen in a state of mind that is vivid but devoid of discernment, this is the moment of the consciousness of the universal ground. At that time, the perceptions of objects arising distinctly and clearly in the mind are the five sense consciousnesses. With regard to [each of] these objects, that which arises in the first instant as the apprehended, and the discerning cognition mingled with defilement that arises in the second instant as the apprehender, are, respectively, the mental consciousness (*yid shes*) and the defiled mental consciousness (*nyon yid*). These are the seven consciousnesses [that is, the five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, and the defiled mental consciousness].” [AC 281: 6–282: 2]
42. See part 2, “The Universal Ground, the Eight Consciousnesses, and the State of Sleep,” pp. 201–203.
43. For an explanation of the form realm, see TPQ, Book 1, p. 504. For an explanation of the four samādhis associated with the form realm, see *ibid.*, pp. 329–32.
44. See *ibid.*, p. 504.
45. Namely, the consciousness of the universal ground (Skt. *ālayaviññāna*) and the universal ground itself (Skt. *ālaya*).
46. “One” refers to the universal ground (*kun gzhi*). “Two and one together” refers to both the universal ground together with the consciousness of the universal ground (*kun gzhi rnam shes*) accompanied by the mental consciousness (*yid shes*). “All that have a single nature” refers to the universal ground and the eight consciousnesses. As the text indicates, these three expressions refer respectively to deep sleep, dreaming, and waking.
47. See part 2, “The Tathāgatagarbha,” pp. 205–241.
48. *Dhāraṇī* is the power of retention, that is, retentive memory. It is the unforgetting recollection of the words and meaning of the teaching. As it is said in the *Perfect Accomplishment of Susitikara Tantra*:

The power of memory or *dhāraṇī* is therefore of the three kinds:

Words and meaning, and the two together.

It is called *dhāraṇī* because it holds them perfectly

And shields them from decline.

See also note 124.

49. “Since the three syllables om ah hung are primordially and naturally the essences of the body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas, one should recite them without distraction. One should translate the name of one’s teacher into Sanskrit, if one knows how. Otherwise, one should leave the teacher’s name as it is and add to it the formula for the desired activity. In the case of the peaceful activity, this should be shantim kuruyé svaha; for the activity of increasing, pushtim kuruyé svaha; for the magnetizing activity vasham kuruyé svaha, and for the wrathful activity maraya p’et. For example, one could recite: om vajra guru padma sambhava ah hung karma pushtim kuruyé svaha. The outward practice of peaceful activity, the inward practice of semipeaceful and semiwrathful activity, and the secret practice of the wrathful activity correspond to the three states of the *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *dharmakāya* respectively.” [AC 409: 2–5]
50. See Patrul Rinpoche, pp. 153–57, for the story of Sadāprarudita.
51. See part 2, “Refuge,” pp. 243–252.
52. Many systems of Vajrayāna grounds are set forth in different tantras. Generally speaking, however, there are said to be thirteen grounds. That is, above the ten sūtra grounds, there is an eleventh ground of Universal Light, a twelfth ground called Lotus Free of All Desire, and a thirteenth ground of Vajra Holder, known also as the Great Wheel of Collections of Syllables. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 229.
53. Taking into account the two stages of “candidate for” and “abiding by the result” associated with any given level, four pairs of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas may be distinguished. The four kinds are as follows: stream enterer (*rgyun du zhugs*), once returner (*lan gcig phyir ’ong ba*), nonreturner (*phyir mi ’ong ba*), and arhat (*dgra bcom pa*). For a detailed description, see TPQ, Book 1, p. 230.
54. “The adepts of the Secret Mantra are the vidyādhara (*rig ’dzin*, “keepers of knowledge or awareness”). There are four kinds of vidyādhara: (1) vidyādhara with a karmic body (*rnam smin rig ’dzin*); (2) vidyādhara with power over life (*tshe dbang rig ’dzin*); (3) mahāmudrā vidyādhara (*phyag rgya chen po’i rig ’dzin*); and (4) spontaneously accomplished vidyādhara

(*lhun grub rig 'dzin*). Vidyādhara with a karmic body practice the stages of generation and perfection on the paths of accumulation and joining and, though their bodies remain ordinary, their minds accomplish the deity....If they pass away before obtaining the supreme mundane level (*chos mchog*) of the path of joining, they will accomplish the mahāmudrā in the bardo. For their bodies have been discarded and their minds have matured into deities....

“Vidyādhara with power over life have reached the limit of the supreme mundane level; possessing bodies that are now indestructible, they are beyond birth and death, and their minds accomplish the path of seeing....

“Mahāmudrā vidyādhara dwell on the nine grounds of the path of meditation, from the second to the tenth. Their bodies appear in the aspect of maṇḍalas [that is, of deities], and their minds are purified from the stains related to the nine grounds. They enjoy nonconceptual primal wisdom....

“Spontaneously accomplished vidyādhara correspond to the level of buddhahood....Some masters assert that the state of mahāmudrā vidyādhara corresponds to the first seven grounds, while that of the spontaneously accomplished vidyādhara corresponds to the three pure grounds of realization (the eighth to the tenth). This view, however, appears to be incorrect because the four kinds of vidyādhara progress through, and are contained within, the whole path starting from the level of beginners until that of buddhahood.” [AC 460: 1–463: 2]

55. “When beings awaken in the essence of enlightenment, the time for taking refuge, as stipulated in the ritual of taking the vow, is now passed. Thus, in a purely nominal sense, the vow is relinquished. On the other hand, it is truly abandoned when, through entertaining wrong views, one rejects the Three Jewels, or when one returns the vows of refuge because one is unable to practice its precepts.” [AC 471: 3–4]

56. I.e., *chos khams dge ba* (Skt. *śubhadharmadhātu*). The pure expanse of ultimate reality is yet another name for the buddha-potential or tathāgatagarbha. The Tibetan word *dge ba* has several possible acceptations. Here it is translated as “purity,” in line with the meaning of the Sanskrit *śubha*.

57. See notes 48 and 124.

58. These are the four so-called *brahmavihāras*, the four attitudes that provoke rebirth in the form and formless realms. They are distortions of the four

boundless attitudes because their character is one of partiality and clinging. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 241.

59. See *ibid.*, pp. 431–35.

60. *thog med dge ba*. This expression is an abbreviation of *thog ma med pa'i chos khams dge ba*, the beginningless pure expanse of reality (see note 56).

61. “Once this attitude of bodhichitta has been engendered and for as long as it is maintained without decline, then even in the state of meditative equipoise in which the conceptual mind is inoperative, wisdom and bodhichitta remain united. If the bodhichitta previously generated is maintained unspoiled, an uninterrupted stream of merit arises even in the five states in which the mind is not manifest and is inactive. These five states are deep sleep, the state of faint or swoon, the absorption of nonperception [in which the defiled mental consciousness continues to function], the absorption of cessation when perception and feeling are arrested [and which is free of the defiled mental consciousness], and the continuous absence of perception [which occurs in the formless realms]. As Vasubandhu says in his *Triṃśikā-kārikā*: ‘The mental consciousness does not occur when one is in a state of deep sleep or has fainted. Neither does it occur in the two kinds of absorption or when there is a constant lack of perception [i.e., in the formless realm].’ *The Way of the Bodhisattva* says,

For when, with irreversible intent,
The mind embraces bodhichitta,
Willing to set free the endless multitudes of beings,
In that instant, from that moment on,

A great and unremitting stream,
A strength of wholesome merit,
Even during sleep and inattention,
Rises equal to the vastness of the sky. [1: 18–19]

“All one’s actions thus become meaningful. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* says, ‘O son of noble family! For someone who possesses bodhichitta aiming at supreme enlightenment, all actions of thought, word, and deed are meaningful. All of them are only and at all times virtuous.’ Furthermore, although they are not immediately associated with a fully manifest attitude of bodhichitta,

nevertheless, since such actions, whether virtuous or neutral, are associated with a sense of bodhichitta that has been kept unspoiled, they become virtues leading to liberation. One also becomes the object of respect for all the world. The *Gaṇḍavyūha* says, “The person who possesses bodhichitta is the great object of respect for the gods and all the world.” [AC 520: 1–521: 4]

62. *grangs med bskal pa*. The expression “immeasurable kalpa” does not in fact mean infinity; it denotes a specific period of time defined by Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa* as 10^{59} kalpas.
63. The “realm of Brahmā” (*brahmāloka*) is the collective name given to the heavens of the form realm.
64. “The seven attributes of the royalty (*rgyal srid bdun*) are the wheel, wish-fulfilling jewel, queen, minister, elephant, supreme horse, and general.” [AC 560: 4] See also TPQ, Book 1, p. 462n121.
65. “The eight auspicious substances (*bkra shis rdzas brgyad*) are white mustard, durwa grass, kusha grass, orange-colored powder, curd, bezoar, mirror, and a white conch shell turning in a clockwise direction.” [AC 560: 5]
66. “The seven subsidiary precious objects (*nye ba'i rin chen bdun*) are the silken shoes, cushion, steed, bedding, throne, sword, and lambskin.” [AC 560: 5–6]
67. These three lines refer respectively to the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, to all the beings up to the tenth ground of realization, and to beings in the three lower realms. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 267–68.
68. The downfalls of a king (*rgyal po'i ltung ba lnga*) are so called because people in positions of power are liable to commit them. But, of course they are downfalls for anyone who has taken the bodhisattva vow.
 1. With an evil intention, to take the property of the Three Jewels or to induce others to do the same.
 2. To repudiate any of the three vehicles or to lead someone into the belief that they do not constitute the path to liberation.
 3. To rob, beat, imprison, or kill the wearers of the monastic robe or to force them to return to lay status, or to induce another to do the same.
 4. To commit any of the five sins of immediate effect.
 5. To hold wrong views (that, for example, there is no truth in the law of

karma).

69. Regarding the downfalls of a minister (*blon po'i ltung ba lnga*), the first is to destroy with hostile intent a homestead, a village of four castes, a small town or a large town, or an entire region. The other four downfalls correspond to the first four downfalls of a king.
70. The eight downfalls of ordinary people (*phal pa'i ltung ba brgyad*) are as follows:
 1. To teach the doctrine of emptiness to persons who are unprepared for it.
 2. Consciously to direct people of Mahāyāna disposition away from the Mahāyāna path and lead them to the practice of the Hīnayāna.
 3. By an injudicious praise of the Mahāyāna to lead people of Hīnayāna disposition to give up their vows of prātimokṣa.
 4. To hold, or to teach another to hold, that the following of the Hīnayāna path does not eradicate defilements, and to say that the śrāvakas do not have an authentic path to liberation.
 5. Out of jealousy, to criticize other bodhisattvas openly and to praise oneself.
 6. Falsely to claim the realization of the profound view.
 7. To consort with powerful people, encouraging them to persecute practitioners, and secretly to appropriate the religious offerings for oneself.
 8. To disrupt the practice of meditators by appropriating their goods and distributing them to those who merely study or perform rituals, and to disturb those engaged in śamatha meditation.
71. Then there are two downfalls to which everyone is liable:
 1. To abandon bodhichitta in intention by embracing the attitude of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (this is mentioned in the *Mahāguhyaupayakaushalya-sūtra*) and
 2. To relinquish bodhichitta in action by allowing one's vows of generosity and so forth to decline (see the *Ratnakūṭa*).
72. "For instance, an attendant fault related to wrong views is the simple disrespect (of the karmic law, teacher, etc)." [AC 622: 1]
73. In brief, there are two kinds of upāsaka (*dge bsnyen*): the complete upāsaka and the upāsaka of pure conduct. Of these, the first renounces killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and alcohol. The second renounces all

sexual activity. Laypeople who are practicing the twenty-four-hour upavāsa discipline (*bsnyen gnas*) observe the ten precepts of the śrāmaṇera ordination but are allowed to use gold and so on as a means of sustaining their families. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 287–88.

74. Those who received the śrāmaṇera (*dge tshul*) ordination abstain from four root faults: killing a human being, stealing, lying, and sexual activity. In addition they renounce intoxicating substances; singing and dancing and so forth; the wearing of ornaments, perfumes, and so forth; the use of valuable furniture and of high seats and beds; the consumption of food at improper times; and the accepting of gold and other valuables. All together they observe ten precepts. The fully ordained monk or bhikṣu (*dge slong*) observes 253 precepts, while the fully ordained nun (*dge slong ma*) observes 364 precepts. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 288–91.
75. Women novices in training for full ordination (*dge slob ma*) must renounce, in addition to the ten transgressions of a śrāmaṇera, twelve further things: the six root faults such as touching a man and the six related faults such as possessing jewels and precious metals. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 290.
76. “Since they are composed of infinitesimal particles, the body of the one who harms and the body of the one who is harmed do not truly exist in terms of an actual harmer and something that is actually harmed. Moreover, the minds of both of them are found neither inside nor outside the body, and therefore these too have no existence as harmer and harmed. Finally, if the words of the one who harms are examined, they are not found to exist in any way. Thus the harmer, the harm, and the object harmed are all three empty by their nature. And in emptiness there is neither happiness nor sadness, neither good nor bad, neither exhilaration nor depression. Even though harm seems to occur, because it is without intrinsic being it should be understood to exist on the relative level according the eight examples of illusion: an emanated apparition, a trick of sight, *etc.* On the ultimate level, by contrast, all is like space. It is through such reflections that we should train ourselves in patience. *The Way of the Bodhisattva* says,

Knowing this, we will not be annoyed

At things that are like magical appearances. [6: 31]

“And when the primordial, unborn emptiness is examined, it is as *The Way of the Bodhisattva* says:

With things that in this way are empty
What is there to gain and what to lose?
Who is there to pay me court and honors,
And who is there to scorn and to revile me?

“And,

What is there to give me joy and pain?
And if I search their very suchness,
Who is craving? What is craved?

Examine now this world of living beings:
Who is there therein to pass away?
Who is there to come, and what has been?
And who, indeed, are relatives and friends?

May all beings like myself discern and grasp
That all things have the character of space! [9: 151–54]

“If one habituates oneself to patience by means of many methods, it will come without any difficulty. *The Way of the Bodhisattva* says,

There’s nothing that does not grow light
Through habit and familiarity. [6: 14]

“Thus, in this life one will become the beloved friend of all and will find happiness, and in the next life one will gain the higher realms and buddhahood. *The Way of the Bodhisattva* says,

No need to mention future buddhahood,
Achieved through bringing happiness to beings.
How can I not see that glory, fame, and pleasure
Even in this life will likewise come?

For patience in saṃsāra brings such things
As beauty, health, and good renown.
Its fruit is great longevity,
The vast contentment of a universal king.” [6: 133–34]

[AC 661: 4–662: 6]

77. “Childish beings” refers to ordinary beings—technically all who have not yet attained the Mahāyāna path of seeing. Obviously, as in the present context, the expression can be understood less technically to refer simply to people of uncontrolled mind and unruly behavior.
78. For a detailed discussion of the samādhis and formless absorptions, see TPQ, Book 1, pp. 329–32.
79. For a presentation of the qualities of realization, including the four kinds of perfect knowledge and the six kinds of preternatural knowledge, see TPQ, Book 1, pp. 387–89.
80. Though the Vajrayāna, the resultant vehicle, surpasses the causal vehicle, the goal of both of them is the same. As *The Lamp of the Three Modes* declares,

The goal may be the same, and yet by understanding,
Ease, and manifold techniques—
To be employed by those of sharp ability—
This Mantrayāna is by far superior.

81. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see TPQ, Book 2, pp. 93–96.
82. See TPQ, Book 2, p. 374n65 and 66.
83. “The Highest Yoga father tantras such as *Guhyasamajā*, *Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka*, and so forth are classified as Mahāyoga. They mainly teach the stage of generation, the aspect of skillful means, and the practice of the wind energy of the stage of perfection. The mother tantras, related to wisdom, such as *Viśuddha*, *Vajrakīla*, *Cakrasaṃvara*, *Hevajra*, and so forth are classified as Anuyoga. They mainly teach the stage of perfection related to wisdom, wherein, by practicing principally on the essence-drop (the essential constituent or bodhichitta), nonconceptual primordial wisdom,

blissful and empty, is reached. The nondual tantras such as the *Māyājāla* are called Atiyoga. They mainly teach the indivisibility of the stage of generation and the stage of perfection, in other words, the inseparability of skillful means and wisdom. And in relation to the perfection stage, they principally affirm what is referred to as the blissful, clear, nonconceptual, and inconceivable luminous wisdom arisen from the practice on the channels, wind energies, and essence-drops. In each of the three kinds of tantra, the deities are in union, which symbolizes the indivisibility of skillful means and wisdom. And the samaya substances of meat and alcohol and so forth are enjoyed as a sign that one does not discriminate between good and bad, accepting and rejecting, pure and impure. These tantras assert that all phenomena are buddhas within the single maṇḍala of primordial enlightenment. In the king of the tantras of the definitive meaning, the glorious *Guhyagarbha* of the *Māyājāla* cycle, it is said that since all things have but a single nature—the primordial state of buddhahood—they are inseparable.” [AC 739: 1–740: 2]

84. Caryā Tantra and Upa Tantra are synonyms. Longchenpa uses both terms (in stanzas 4 and 6).
85. For the winds and the essence-drops, see TPQ, Book 2, pp. 160–64.
86. “Everything is primordially the state of buddhahood (*sangs rgyas pa*). The five seemingly impure aggregates are the state of buddhahood inasmuch as they are the buddhas of the five families. The five physical elements are the state of buddhahood inasmuch as they are the five female buddhas. All thoughts are the state of buddhahood in being the maṇḍala of the bodhisattvas. Thus, there is not a single atom of something other than buddhahood to be found. As it is said in the *Guhyagarbha*,

Ema-o!

The components of the vajra aggregate

Are known as the five perfect buddhas.

The sources and the elements are the maṇḍala of bodhisattvas.

Earth is Locanā and water Māmakī,

Fire is Pāṇḍaravāsini, wind Samayatārā,

Space is Ākāśadhātviśvarī.

The three worlds of existence are a buddhfield.

All things without exception

Are not other than the state of buddhahood.

Other than the state of buddhahood

The buddhas have themselves discovered nothing. [AC 760: 1–5]

87. “The generation stage, the first of the stages of the Secret Mantra, in which one concentrates and meditates on a deity, is classified fourfold according to the manner in which it purifies the propensities for the four ways of taking birth. As it is said in the *Māyājāla*:

As means to purify four ways of being born,

There are likewise four ways of generation:

Most elaborate, elaborate, without elaboration,

And utterly without elaboration.

“I explain these four ways of purification according to the elucidation of the great master Vimalamitra.

“Beings born from eggs are, in a sense, ‘twice born.’ In a similar fashion, when in meditation one uses an extremely elaborate mode of concentration, one first takes refuge and generates the attitude of bodhichitta. Then, visualizing oneself in an instant as the father-mother deities, one invites the maṇḍala of the deity in the space in front of oneself. One then makes offerings and praises, confesses one’s faults, rejoices in virtue, requests the turning of the wheel of Dharma, and prays for the aim desired. One then dedicates one’s merit and requests the deity to depart with the words *benzar mu*. One may also rest for a while in the contemplation of emptiness in a state of meditative equipoise. It is thus that one accumulates both merit and wisdom. This refers to the short generation stage. One then proceeds to the detailed meditation on the specific maṇḍala of the deity arising from the state of emptiness. This is the extended form of the generation stage.” [AC 764: 1–765: 1] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 136–39.

88. “Just as in the case of those who are womb-born, who come to birth after the gradual growth and perfection of their bodies [in the womb], one meditates on all the different stages. First one takes refuge and generates

bodhichitta. Then, after the recitation of the *svabhāva* mantra, there arises from the state of emptiness the seed-syllable of the deity (hung, for instance). This corresponds to the entry of consciousness into the mingled white and red essence-drops. The spherical and then elongated form of the embryo corresponds to the transformation of the syllable hung into a vajra. The stages when the embryo changes from an oblong to an ovoid shape corresponds to the transformation of the vajra into a sphere of light, which is the [substantial] cause of the deity's body. The fetus continues to develop, becoming fish-shaped, then tortoise-shaped, and finally the entire body is formed. All this corresponds to the transformation of the light into the deity. One then meditates on the entire generation stage. Some authorities say that the seed-syllable transforms into a sphere of light, which then transforms into the implement, which finally transforms into the deity. Since the short generation stage and the making of offerings to the field of merit are not included here, the present generation stage is [considered to be] only moderately elaborate." [AC 765: 3–6] For a more detailed discussion, see TPQ, Book 2, pp. 139–46.

89. "Birth from warmth and moisture is a simpler process. Consequently, in this kind of generation stage, refuge and bodhichitta are followed by the simple recollection, or pronunciation of the name, of the deity, which then arises from the state of emptiness. The elaborate visualization, starting from the seed-syllable until the complete visualization of the deity's body, is omitted." [AC 766: 2–3] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 146 and 396n231.
90. "Miraculous birth occurs in a single instant. Consequently, by simply recalling the deity, one meditates clearly on it. There is no need for any elaboration—not even so much as the pronunciation of the name—for the deity to be generated." [AC 766: 4–5] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 146 and 396n232.
91. "The visualization gradually melts away, finally dissolving into the *nada* of the life seed-syllable, which is extremely subtle—so fine that it is as if written with the hundredth part of a horsehair. And this in turn dissolves into the dharmadhātu in which one rests. This is the perfection stage unaccompanied by visible form, on which beginners should meditate. It counteracts any clinging to the appearances of the generation stage as if they were real. If, while practicing the generation stage, one leaves the mind without distraction in the state that is free of thought, the primal wisdom of bliss, luminosity, and no-thought will arise, and this constitutes the

perfection stage accompanied by visual forms. Those who gain a little stability in their meditation should practice in this way, for it is the antidote to a one-sided clinging to emptiness.” [AC 767: 6–768: 3] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 154ff.

92. “The Sanskrit *abhiṣeka* [translated into Tibetan as *dbang* and subsequently into English as “empowerment”] in fact expresses two ideas: the washing away of impurities and the giving of power. First, it washes away the impurities of the disciples’ minds. Second, it gives them the power to attain enlightenment in the future and, in the immediate term, to meditate on each of the different paths. Once one has received the transmission of blessing (*rigs gtad*), the permission to practice (*rjes gnang*) or an actual empowerment (*dbang*), as explained in the different tantras, one is able to engage in the corresponding practice....” [AC 774: 4–6] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 112–26.
93. “In the Highest Yoga Tantra (Anuttara Tantra) texts, four empowerments are mentioned. First, the vase empowerment purifies the impurities of the body and enables the practitioner to meditate on the stage of generation. Second, the secret empowerment purifies the obscurations of speech and enables the practitioner to meditate on *caṅḍālī*, the tummo practice. Third, the wisdom empowerment purifies the obscurations of mind and enables the practitioner to meditate on nonconceptual primordial wisdom, which is blissful and empty. Finally, the precious word empowerment purifies all impurities and enables the practitioner to meditate on the mahāmudrā, the fundamental nature of phenomena. By means of the first three empowerments, the accumulation of merit is perfected and the obscurations deriving from defilement (*nyon sgrib*) are purified. By means of the fourth empowerment, the accumulation of wisdom is perfected and the conceptual obscurations (*shes sgrib*) are purified. When the four empowerments are coordinated with the pure grounds and paths, the vase empowerment brings to perfection the path of accumulation; the secret empowerment brings to perfection the path of joining; the wisdom empowerment brings to perfection the path of seeing; while the actual empowerment of mahāmudrā brings to perfection the path of meditation. All four empowerments bring [the minds of the disciples] to maturity, while meditation on the generation and perfection stages brings them to liberation.” [AC 776: 3–777: 2]
94. “The essence of samaya is the extraordinary, superior intention to preserve intact and undamaged all the excellent trainings undertaken in the Secret

Mantra. Samaya may be categorized into root and branch samayas. The root samayas are the samayas of body, speech, and mind. As regards the samaya of body, one must meditate on the body of a deity and restrain oneself from all the negativities of the body such as killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, together with all that is ancillary to them. The samaya of speech is to recite the mantra and to turn from the negativities of speech together with all that is linked to them. The samaya of mind is to train in profound concentration and to turn away from all the negativities of mind together with all that is linked to them. In brief, if one leaves one's body, speech, and mind in an ordinary state, the samaya is damaged. Thus one must refrain from anything that detracts from the utterly pure and enlightened body, speech, and mind." [AC 778: 6–779: 4] See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 179–229.

95. The wisdom (*dgongs pa*) of nondual Ati refers here to the view expounded in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which Longchenpa explains from the perspective of the Great Perfection.
96. See part 2, "The Three Concentrations of the Generation Stage," pp. 253–255.
97. "In the center, there is blue Vairocana [in union] with Ākāśadhātviśvarī; in the east, there is white Akṣobhya with Māmakī; in the south, there is yellow Ratnasambhava with Buddhalocanā; in the west, there is red Amitābha with Pāṇḍaravāsini; and in the north, there is green Amoghasiddhi with Samayatārā. Beneath them all there is a four-spoked wheel on which these buddhas of the five families are seated. Outside this wheel, and in the four outer and inner buttress-like steps, there is (inside) in the southeast, blue-green Kṣitigarbha with the goddess of charm; in the southwest, there is dark blue Ākāśagarbha with the goddess of garlands; in the northwest, there is light red Avalokiteśvara with the goddess of song; in the northeast, there is light blue Vajrapāṇi with the goddess of dance. On the outside, there is, in the southeast, white Maitreya with the goddess of incense; in the southwest, there is dark blue Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin with the goddess of flowers; in the northwest, there is light red Mañjuśrī with the goddess of lamps; and in the northeast, there is green-yellow Samantabhadra with the goddess of perfumes. On the surrounding plinth of the hall are the six Munis. In the eastern doorway are Bhairava and Bhairavī; in the southern doorway are Vijaya and Vijayī; in the western doorway are Hayagrīva in male and female form; and in the northern doorway are Amṛtakuṇḍalī in male and

female form. Here I have explained in order what is presented, somewhat unsystematically, in the tantra.” [AC 817: 6–818: 6]

98. Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī are the ground for the generation of the maṇḍala. Samantabhadra symbolizes appearance; Samantabhadrī symbolizes emptiness.
99. “Regarding the purity that the deities represent, the purity of the five aggregates is expressed by the buddhas of the five families, while the union of their appearance and emptiness is expressed by the fact that they are in union with their consorts. The purity of the eye, ear, nose, and tongue consciousnesses is expressed by the four inner bodhisattvas [Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Ākāśagarbha, and Avalokiteśvara]. The purity of the [sense objects of] form, sound, smell, and taste is expressed by the four inner goddesses of charm and so on [Lāsyā, Gītā, Mālyā, and Nartī]. The purity of the organs of sight, hearing, smell, and taste is expressed by the four outer bodhisattvas [Maitreya, Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin, Samantabhadra, and Mañjuśrī]. The purity of the past, present, future, and the fourth time of inconceivable dharmatā is represented by the four outer goddesses. The intrinsic purity of the four sources (*āyatana*)—the sense consciousnesses, sense organs, sense objects, and mental consciousness deriving from the sense consciousnesses, for example, the experience of touch (*reg pa*), tactile sense (*reg byed*), object of touch (*reg bya*), and tactile consciousness (*reg shes*)—is symbolized by the four male doorkeepers. The fact that, by their nature, phenomena are neither permanent nor annihilated, and that they are without self-identity and without characteristics, is symbolized by the four female doorkeepers.

“The agents of purification for the six defilements, the six [conceptual] perfections, and the six migrations are the six Munis. The intrinsic purity of the universal ground and of the consciousness of the universal ground is the father-mother deities Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī. In the present state of impurity, all the deities are now associated with the consciousnesses, which are themselves the subdivisions of the universal ground, and with the sense organs and their objects. In the state of purity, however, they are associated with the primordial wisdoms and buddhafiels. This is how the purity of the deities should be understood.” [AC 823: 3–824: 3]

100. The three syllables are OM AH HUNG. The syllables associated with the five families are OM AH HUNG SO HA OR OM HUNG TRAM HRI AH.

101. “Once one has understood that all phenomena are ‘enlightened’ in a single maṇḍala, one should fix this knowledge in the mind, and within the state of the great spontaneous presence of the nature of one’s own mind, which is all things, one should recite the mantra, make offerings and praise, and so on. This is different from the outer tantras (up to and including the Yoga Tantra), wherein there is a clinging to the distinction between good and bad, where one invites the deity to come from outside and to enter into oneself and so forth, and where, at the end of the session, one requests it to depart.

“As it is said in the *King of Marvels Tantra*:

Knowing all things as the maṇḍala, one meditates
Upon equality, spontaneously present from the first.
Therefore there’s no need for stages, mind-contrived,
Whereby the deity is invited then requested to depart.

“Thus one practices in a manner in which the samayasattva (visualized meditational deity) and the jñānasattva (wisdom deity) are not differentiated. For one’s body is the deity, one’s speech is mantra, and one’s mind is the deity’s mind. On the other hand, if beginners and those who are fond of elaboration invite the deity, present offerings and praises, and so on, there is no conflict.” [AC 825: 5–826: 3]

102. See note 94 and TPQ, Book 2, pp. 213–14.

103. Strictly speaking, the sacred feast offering (*gaṇacakra, tshog*) on the tenth day of the lunar month should be made in the morning (or the daytime). On the twenty-fifth day of the month (the tenth of the waning moon), it should be offered in the evening or at night.

104. See part 2, “The Simple Practice of the Generation and Perfection Stages,” pp. 257–259.

105. This refers to the quintessential teaching of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which is presented here from the point of view of Atiyoga.

106. See part 2, “The Mind and the Objects That Appear to It,” pp. 261–263.

107. “As it is said in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*:

Ema-o! A wondrous and a marvelous thing,
A secret all the perfect buddhas know!
Without being born are all things born,

And in the moment of their birth, they are unborn!

Ema-o! A wondrous and a marvelous thing,
A secret all the perfect buddhas know!
Without ceasing, all things cease,
And in the moment of cessation, all things are unceasing!

Ema-o! A wondrous and a marvelous thing,
A secret all the perfect buddhas know!
Without remaining, all things yet remain,
And in the moment of remaining, they do not remain!

Ema-o! A wondrous and a marvelous thing,
A secret all the perfect buddhas know!
Without their being observed, all things are yet observed,
And in the moment they're observed, they're unobservable!

Ema-o! A wondrous and a marvelous thing,
A secret all the perfect buddhas know!
Without their coming or their going, all things come and go.
And the moment that they come and go, they're free of coming and
of going!"

[AC 862: 5–863: 3]

108. “It is thus that one is not fettered by appearance. If one does not cling to what appears (in the sense of taking and rejecting), one remains unaffected by it. For there is no intrinsic relation [between the observer and the observed]. One is fettered only by clinging, and it is precisely this that is to be eliminated....If, as a result of one’s investigation, one clings to the absence of intrinsic being in form, sound, smell, taste, and textures, and if one clings to ideas of impurity and so on, the outcome will be that even though the objects themselves are relinquished, the clinging mind does not subside and the root of clinging is not severed. Proceeding in this way—which is like the action of a dog that does not bite the man who threw the

stone, but bites the stone instead—one fails to free oneself from defilement. By contrast, if a man throws a stone at a lion, the lion will kill him. Similarly, the root of all defilements like craving and aversion is the mind itself. Wherefore, one should examine one’s own inner mind and dissipate the defilements with the wisdom that understands their lack of intrinsic existence.” [AC 870: 2–6]

109. See part 2, “The Omniscient Longchenpa Speaks about His Realization,” pp. 265–267.
110. The words in italics are a literal translation of Longchenpa’s name, *Dri med ’od zer*.
111. “Because their appearance and their emptiness are inseparable, phenomena transcend the concepts of one and many and thus are unconfined. This is what is meant when it is said that they are like space. As it is said in *The All-Creating King*,

All things have a space-like nature.

Space has no intrinsic being.

Space is unexampled.

Space is measureless.

Understand that such is the reality

Of everything without exception.

“Just as phenomena are equal in that they are all like space, they are equal in the way that they appear, like reflections in a mirror. They are equal in their emptiness and are like reflections devoid of independent concrete existence. But since they are causally efficient, they are equal in being true from the point of view of the deluded mind. They are like form and its reflection, which are both able to generate the cognitive function of the visual consciousness. They are also equal in their falsity, for they are baseless hallucinations like the experiences of those who have consumed the datura plant. They are equal in their presence, for from the point of view of mere appearance, they are like the oxen that appear in a magical display. They are also equal in their absence, for they lack intrinsic being like water seen in a mirage. They are equal in transcending all limitation, for they are like the infinity of space. Phenomena are equal from the very first. Their ultimate nature is a sphere that transcends all division and defies all

description. They are primordially empty.” [AC 904: 2–905: 1]

112. “The theory of the skandhas, dhātus, and so on is but a mental imputation, and mental imputations do not occur in the way that things do. They are intrinsically empty. Nominal ascriptions cannot be located either inside or outside their corresponding objects. They are adventitious and do not exist [as concrete entities]. Although specific characteristics are ascribed to objects, the latter are simply names, mere configurations of thought. Although it is said that the objects labeled are like fire arising from its fuel, they are but the forms perceived through deluded habit, like a fire seen in a dream. They have no existence in any fundamental sense. It is thus that phenomena and beings that seem to exist to the deluded mind are but appearances onto which [the idea of] existence has been superimposed. All sense objects, however they appear, are equal in their deceptive character. It is not that things fall into two categories: true and false. If one examines appearing objects and the cognitions that apprehend them, they are unconnected, for they do not impinge upon each other. When subject and object are examined, they are like space, for they are not [intrinsically] related either as a subject relating to its object or as an object to which a subject relates. Their relationship in fact has no reality. Moreover, not only does this relationship not exist, but neither do the mental categories of “universal ideas” and “particular instances” exist in the sense of concrete, specifically characterized entities. For whether one classifies them as universals or particulars, these designations are on a level in that they produce no discernible change in phenomena themselves. When one examines the matter in this way, the folly of grouping unrelated items in terms of apprehender and apprehended becomes evident. It demonstrates that all grasping that arises from ignorance is mistaken.” [AC 906: 1–907: 2]
113. “Let me explain this in the well-known manner that is easy to understand: When the reflection of a face appears in a mirror, it is perceived without the [actual] face and the reflected face becoming two different things. Neither does the reflection arise through the transference of the image from the face into the mirror. In the same way, when the manifold objects of the senses appear to their respective sense consciousnesses, it is not the mind that goes to the outer object. Rather it is the aspect of the object that appears in the sense consciousness. And this should be understood in a way similar to the appearance of reflections in a mirror. Although a face appears

in the mirror, it is not the actual face that is transferred therein. It is the reflection, or the aspect, of the face that appears in it. When an aspect arises in consciousness, it is through the mind's clinging to it [as the actual, really existing, thing] that one is deluded in saṃsāra.

“When, however, this matter is properly examined, even the claim that the mind does not go out to its object but that it is the aspect of the object that arises in the mind is not substantiated. Since the mind that arises [as the object] does not exist inside or outside the body or somewhere in between, there is nothing that apprehends the aspect. Moreover, if this aspect is examined, it has no intrinsic being, with the result that the aspect arising in the mind is not established either. Therefore neither subject nor object is logically established. As it is said in the *Root Stanzas on the Middle Way*,

What arises in dependence on another

Is not at all that thing itself.

But neither is it something else—

There is no annihilation, there's no permanence.” [18: 10]

[AC 907: 6–908: 5]

114. “Śamatha (calm abiding) and vipaśyanā (profound insight) are considered either to share the same nature or to be different. In the first case, śamatha is considered to be the stillness aspect, while vipaśyanā is the clarity aspect, of the mind. And it is through the union of śamatha and vipaśyanā, whereby the [union of] emptiness and luminosity is understood as the absence of conceptual extremes, that one is liberated from samsaric existence. It is said in the *Suhrillekha*:

Lacking wisdom, concentration fails.

And without concentration, wisdom too.

For someone who has both, saṃsāra's sea

Fills no more than the print left by a hoof.

“In the second case, śamatha and vipaśyanā are considered to be different in two ways: according to the letter of the teachings and according to their sense. On the one hand, the one-pointed mind that rests in the meaning of what has been learned is śamatha, while the understanding of this meaning is

vipaśyanā. On the other hand, to concentrate one’s mind by means of meditation is śamatha, whereas to realize subsequently that the mind has no intrinsic existence is vipaśyanā.” [AC 920: 3–920: 6]

115. This is a reference to the five kinds of vision and the six kinds of preternatural knowledge that are numbered among a buddha’s qualities of realization. See TPQ, Book 1, p. 387.

116. “The path is said to traverse the stages of four primordial wisdoms....As *The Ocean of Jewels* tells us,

In terms of luminosity, when the four aspects are complete,

This is the ground of great primordial wisdom.

“Light” is the absence of discursive thought.

Its “increase” is illusory primordial wisdom.

Its “culmination” is the supreme noble path.

Its “utter culmination” is the path’s completion.”

[AC 935: 2–4]

117. “On the path of meditation, in its lesser, medium, and greater stages, practitioners grow used to the primordial wisdom they have beheld [on the path of seeing]. They acquire innumerable qualities on each of the grounds and bring benefit to beings by means of their emanations. On the first seven grounds, the states of meditation and postmeditation are distinct because discursiveness persists in the postmeditation period. On the three pure grounds, however, manifest thoughts no longer occur, and therefore the stages of meditation and postmeditation mingle in a single taste within the state of primordial wisdom.” [AC 940: 3–4]

118. See TPQ, Book 2, pp. 155–57.

119. “It is through mental stillness, namely, the emptiness aspect free of thoughts, that calm abiding, the perfection stage, and the accumulation of wisdom (the cause of the dharmakāya) are spontaneously accomplished. On the other hand, it is through the mind’s luminosity, the appearance aspect, that deep insight, the generation stage, and the accumulation of merit (the cause of the rūpakāya) are also spontaneously accomplished. At that moment, the six ultimate transcendent virtues, free from conceptual focus, are brought to perfection. As the *Question of Brahmaviśeṣacintī Sūtra* says, ‘The absence of clinging is generosity. Nonobservance is discipline.

Nonabiding [in the extremes] is patience. The absence of effort is diligence. The absence of one-pointedness is meditative concentration. The absence of concepts is wisdom.'

“Regarding generosity and the other five practices, if one simply abides by them, they do not in themselves become transcendent virtues. If, however, one does go beyond all such attitudes, they become transcendent. And at that point, true discipline is perfected. As it is said in the *Question of Susthitamatidevaputra Sūtra*: ‘When there is no concept of discipline or indiscipline, this is transcendent discipline.’ Furthermore, the two accumulations are perfected. As it is said in the *Ten Wheels of Kṣitigarbha Sūtra*, ‘It is the absence of conceptual focus in their regard that constitutes the accumulations of merit and wisdom.’ And in the *Sacred Primordial Wisdom Sūtra*, we find,

The bodhisattva Jñānaketu asked, ‘What accumulations are gathered by a monk who engages in the practice?’

The Buddha answered, ‘Merit and wisdom are accumulated and their gathering is very great.’

The bodhisattva asked, ‘What is the accumulation of merit?’

The Buddha answered, ‘Merits are positive, wholesome phenomena endowed with characteristics such as generosity.’

The bodhisattva asked, ‘What then is the accumulation of wisdom?’

The Buddha answered, ‘It consists in the absence of characteristics, transcendent wisdom, and so on.’

The bodhisattva asked, ‘What are these two accumulations like?’

The Buddha answered, ‘The accumulation of merit is referred to as a samsaric accumulation. It can be likened to the water contained in a cow’s hoofprint. How so? It is because it is soon destroyed and exhausted. It leads the childish astray. For after experiencing the bliss of the divine and human states, they must wander in the lower realms. The accumulation of wisdom, however, is referred to as a nirvanic accumulation; it is like the water of a vast ocean. How so? Because it is indestructible, inexhaustible, and undeceiving and brings one to the attainment of nirvāṇa. O Jñānaketu, you should gather only the accumulation of wisdom.’

“When the Buddha said this, he was thinking of the fact that positive actions leading to happiness are transformed [when they are associated with wisdom] into actions leading to liberation, and that therefore practitioners should meditate principally [on wisdom].” [AC 965: 6–967: 4]

120. “As it is said in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

When something and its nonexistence
Both are absent from before the mind,
No other option does the latter have:
It comes to perfect rest, from concepts free.” [6: 34]
[AC 968: 3]

121. As explained in stanzas 41 and 42, the nine absorptions are the four samādhis of form, the four absorptions of no-form, and the absorption of cessation.
122. For the four samādhis, see TPQ, Book 1, pp. 329–31.
123. For the four absorptions, see *ibid.*, pp. 331–32.
124. “The perfect understanding of the words and meanings of the Dharma, gained through all-discerning profound insight, is held one-pointedly in the mind by means of calm abiding. This being so, it follows that profound insight consists in dhāraṇī, while calm abiding is concentration. As it is said in the *Expanded Primordial Wisdom*: ‘Profound insight is dhāraṇī—the power of retaining the Dharma teachings. Calm abiding is concentration.’ And concerning dhāraṇī, it is said in the *Excellent Accomplishment Tantra*, ‘Dhāraṇī is of three kinds. It is the perfect power of retaining the words, the meanings, and the words and meanings together. And since it protects or retains these from decline, one speaks of the dhāraṇī or power of retaining.’” [AC 976: 1–3]
125. For an explanation of practice on the path of accumulation, see TPQ, Book 1, pp. 391–92. Regarding the four bases of miraculous ability, Yönten Gyamtso cites endeavor (*brtson ’grus*) instead of mindfulness (*dran pa*) (YG II, p. 978).
126. For the four stages of the path of joining, see TPQ, Book 1, pp. 392–93.
127. For the seven elements leading to enlightenment on the path of seeing, see *ibid.*, p. 393. Yontan Gyatso cites evenness (*btang snyoms*) instead of confidence (*dad pa*). Longchenpa’s autocommentary also cites evenness instead of confidence (AC 991: 3 and 992: 4).
128. See TPQ, Book 1, pp. 227–29.

129. For the Eightfold Noble Path, see *ibid.*, p. 394.
130. “Just like waves falling back into the water, when thoughts arise, they subside in the instant that they occur. Their arising and subsiding occur simultaneously. At that time, their arising and subsiding corresponds to profound insight and to the gathering of the conceptual merit (*snang bcas bsod nams*) naturally present as the generation stage. To dwell in the limpid clarity of self-cognizing awareness, which is peaceful by its nature, corresponds to calm abiding and to the gathering of nonconceptual (*snang med*) wisdom, which is present as the stage of perfection. So it is that śamatha and vipaśyanā are naturally united and dwell spontaneously within the mind from the very beginning.” [AC 1023: 6–1024: 2]
131. “Through watching the sky of the outer world, which is taken as a symbol of awareness, the awareness thereby symbolized will arise. The secret [sky] will subsequently manifest, that is, the realization of primordial wisdom. This is the ultimate instruction in which all other teachings are set forth....Just as the symbol, the [outer] sky, is empty, luminous, and unceasing, so too the mind cognizing it is unceasing primordial wisdom, which is luminous and empty. This is the inner sky or space. Thence there arises primordial wisdom, empty, luminous, and free from conceptual construction, accompanied by the experiences of bliss, luminosity, and no-thought. All phenomena sink back into the nature of space. This is a freedom from the apprehension of things and their characteristics and is the secret sky of luminosity. It is at that time that the ten signs—smoke and so forth—manifest. And as the wind-mind enters the central channel, the five lights illuminate the entire abyss of space.” [AC 1025: 2–1026: 2]
132. “This is ultimate purity. The luminosity of the ground has been attained. Within the sky of the ultimate expanse, primordial wisdom of inner luminosity dwells in the manner of the new moon. It is the support or ground of manifestation of the qualities of omniscience. There is no outwardly appearing saṃbhogakāya that, from the very beginning, is perceptible to beings to be trained. For at this point, there is but the sole dharmakāya, beyond all stains of the four extremes. At the time of the new moon, although the moon is in the sky, it does not radiate light whereby it could be observed. Likewise, the primordial wisdom of the dharmakāya, gathered into the ultimate expanse, is extremely subtle and profound. As we find in *The Light of Primal Wisdom*, ‘Since it is gathered into the ultimate expanse, it is invisible. Since it is extremely subtle, it is not nonexistent.

Like the new moon, it is deep, peaceful, and extremely subtle.” [AC 1045: 2–1045: 5]

It should be understood that the phases of the moon are not understood in terms of the moon’s position in relationship to the sun (as in the heliocentric solar system). According to the cosmology of ancient India, the moon, composed of water crystal, produces its own light, projecting and withdrawing it in phases in the course of the month.

133. See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 278–79.

134. This refers to the dualistic way of knowing in terms of the apprehended object and the apprehending mind.

135. “Just as at the time of the new moon [when all one sees is the sky alone], when primordial wisdom is blended with the ultimate expanse (the space of the mind’s nature), all mental elaborations subside, whereas wisdom-knowledge remains unceasing. This [wisdom] is therefore said to be ‘gathered within and yet not dulled’ (*thim la ma rmugs*). The primordial wisdom of inner luminosity, in a state of perfect equipoise, constitutes the core from which the outwardly radiating luminosity is diffused and spread. This does not apprehend the duality of subject and object. It is the extraordinary nonconceptual primordial wisdom: the peaceful dharmakāya, the body of ultimate reality.” [AC 1048: 2–4]

136. “The three bodies mentioned here—subsisting as the inner luminosity of the ultimate expanse—are the actual support for the arising of the outwardly radiating luminosity. They are not permanent because they are beyond all reference and conceptual focus. Neither are they discontinuous, for they are self-cognizing primordial wisdom (*so so rang rig pa’i ye shes*). Neither are they both or neither. Since they are not established as either permanent or discontinuous, this second pair of alternatives is also excluded.

“Since the three bodies of inner luminosity are the ground of manifestation, they provide—for bodhisattvas dwelling on the grounds, as well as for ordinary beings—the cause for seeing the form bodies (of the outwardly radiating luminosity), for hearing their teachings, for smelling the perfume of their sublime discipline, for savoring the taste of Dharma, for feeling the blissful touch of concentration, and for comprehending the Dharma with reasoning and intelligence. All these things arise from the wisdom of inner luminosity, which dwells in the ultimate expanse—like the light of the new moon gathered in the sky—and which can be experienced

- by none but the buddhas alone.” [AC 1049: 2–6]
137. See also TPQ, Book 2, pp. 282ff.
138. The lower maṇḍala refers to the maṇḍala of peaceful deities dwelling in the heart; the upper maṇḍala is the maṇḍala of wrathful deities dwelling in the crown of the head. See also TPQ, Book 2, p. 464n546.
139. For a further explanation, see *ibid.*, p. 286.
140. For the explanation of the nine wrathful demeanors, see *ibid.*, p. 149.
141. “Moreover, the maṇḍalas that are present within the body, as taught in the Anuttara Tantras of, for example, Guhyasamajā, Hevajra, and Cakrasaṃvara, are maṇḍalas of the exclusive self-experience of the saṃbhogakāya. They do not appear to others. From some of them, wrathful maṇḍalas are emanated in order to subdue spirits that mislead and create obstacles. These belong to the nirmāṇakāya; they are not the maṇḍalas of the Akaniṣṭha buddhafield.” [AC 1062: 5–1063: 2] See also TPQ, Book 2, p. 287.
142. tr “When the winds enter the central channel, yogis perceive so-called empty forms (reflections of emptiness), which are imperceptible to others.” [AC 1065: 2]
143. See TPQ, Book 2, p. 293.
144. “From within the expanse of the saṃbhogakāya’s exclusive self-experience, and in order to guide beings, pure and impure, the cognitive potency (*thugs rje*) of the Buddhas effortlessly displays three kinds of Teacher or Guide. These are first, the nirmāṇakāya of luminous character (*rang bzhin sprul sku*), which is in harmony with the saṃbhogakāya; second, the nirmāṇakāya that is the guide of beings (*’gro ’dul sprul sku*), which manifests as the Teachers [or Munis] of the six classes of beings; and third, the diversified nirmāṇakāya (*sna tshogs sprul sku*), which manifests as both animate beings or inanimate things.” [TPQ, Book 2, p. 293] For a detailed exposition, see TPQ, Book 2, pp. 294–315.
145. “These are the Teachers, reflection of the saṃbhogakāya, that appear to bodhisattvas on the grounds of realization. They resemble the self-experienced saṃbhogakāya, but they are not the actual saṃbhogakāya itself. The latter is related to the former in the manner of an appearing object and its reflection in a mirror.” [AC 1067: 4–5]
146. For a more detailed explanation, see TPQ, Book 2, pp. 297–98.

147. Although they are referred to here as the “half-appearing *nirmāṇakāya*,” the fact is that they appear only to the bodhisattvas on the ten grounds of realization. They do not figure in the experience of the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and so on. Similarly, even though the five Teachers appear as the *saṃbhogakāya*, they, their retinues, their buddhafiels, and so on, are not the exclusive self-experience of their primordial wisdom and are not inaccessible to beings other than themselves. For they are indeed perceived by the pure minds of bodhisattvas residing on the grounds of realization. This is why they are referred to as “semi-apparent *saṃbhogakāya* buddhafiels” or “*nirmāṇakāya* buddhafiels of luminous character.” See TPQ, Book 2, pp. 299–300.
148. For a more detailed explanation, see *ibid.*, pp. 300–305.
149. See Shantideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, 5:1, 5:18, 5:6–8, 5:5, pp. 100–104.
150. An emanation of Vajradhara, the first of the twelve teachers of the Great Perfection.
151. The Tibetan term *snang ba* has a double ambivalence. Used verbally, it can mean, and be translated into English, as (intransitively) “to appear” or (transitively) “to perceive” or “to experience.” The term can also be understood nominally in the sense of, on the one hand, “appearance” or “phenomenon” or, on the other hand, “perception” or “experience.” These ambivalences are often present in Tibetan expressions and indeed may be exploited in order to express the subtlety of a given context.
152. Awareness is described here as primordially unconditioned (*ye nas ’dus ma byas pa*) because, unlike, for example, the sense consciousnesses or other ordinary states or mind, it is not the product of causes and conditions.
153. For an explanation of the terms “universal ground of joining” and “universal ground of habitual tendencies,” see p. 238. See also TPQ, Book 2, p. 451n499.
154. See *Mi pham zhal lung (The Words of the Invincible One)*, Mipham Rinpoche’s commentary on the *Uttaratantraśāstra*, 1:55–57. It is difficult to give the precise location of citations from the *Uttaratantra* since only a part of this text is divided into chapters and the stanzas are not numbered. For referencing purposes, therefore, we have used the system devised in Mipham’s commentary.
155. See endnote 56 for an explanation of *dge ba* (virtue) in this context.

156. 1: 157.
157. For an explanation of coemergent ignorance, see p. 236 and TPQ, Book 2, p. 244.
158. See Chandrakirti, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, 11:17, p. 106.
159. See *ibid.*, 6:196, pp. 95 and 318.
160. The careful reader will note here that the English words “conceptual” and “cognition” are both translations of the Tibetan word (*rtog pa*), which has different nuances of meaning according to context.
161. 1: 30.
162. This text is usually interpreted as referring to the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma. In the teachings of the first turning of the wheel, the mind, like other phenomena, is mentioned as if it were a real existent. And in this context, “mind” means the ordinary intellect, the mind as experienced by ordinary, unenlightened beings. In the second turning, which expounds the ultimate nature of phenomena as emptiness, the mind is defined as being without true existence. In the third turning, which has to do with the buddha nature or tathāgatagarbha, the nature of the mind is explained as luminosity.
163. 1: 27.
164. 1: 63.
165. 1: 152–55.
166. See *A Feast of the Nectar of the Supreme Vehicle: An Explanation of the Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*, 4.4.
167. 1: 99–100.
168. 1: 102–3.
169. 1: 105–6.
170. 1: 108–9.
171. 1: 111–13.
172. 1: 115–16.
173. 1: 118–19.
174. 1: 121–22.
175. 1: 124–25.
176. 1: 127–28.
177. 1: 133–34.

178. 1: 136.
179. The “transitory collection,” or rather the view of the transitory collection, is a technical term referring to the innate tendency to take the multiple and transitory aggregates of a person to be a single, permanent, self.
180. 1: 137–46.
181. 1: 35.
182. We have not been able to locate this quotation in the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*.
183. 1: 47.
184. 1: 149.
185. 1: 159.
186. 1: 160.
187. 1: 169–70.
188. 1: 95 and 1: 157–58.
189. See Chandrakirti, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, 11:18, p. 106.
190. 2: 62.
191. 1: 5.
192. *Log sred can*. There are several definitions of this group. According to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, they are those who repudiate the law of causality and, careless of ethical principles, do not follow the teachings of the Buddha. In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, they are defined as those who hate and reject the Mahāyāna scriptures.
193. This is one of the categories of implied teachings (*dgongs pa can*). See TPQ, Book 1, p. 338.
194. See Chandrakirti, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, 6:4–5, p. 68.
195. See *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*, 4:5 and 4:8.
196. 1: 40–41.
197. See *Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras*, 4:7.
198. 3: 11.
199. *slu ba*. In other words, they are not final refuges.
200. 1: 20.
201. 1: 21.
202. That is, the enlightenment of the śrāvakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and the bodhisattvas.

203. 1: 5.

204. That is, karma and defilement.

205. 1: 10–11.

206. 1: 14.

207. 1: 22.

208. 1: 19.

209. 1: 21.

210. Starting with Vijaya through Mahābala, the Tibetan names for these deities are: *dByug sngon can*, *gShin rje'i gshed*, *Mi g·yo ba*, *rTa mchog dpal*, *gZhan gyis mi thub pa*, *bDud rtsi 'Khyil ba*, *Khams gsum rnam rgyal* and *sTobs po che*, respectively.

211. See also TPQ, Book 2, p. 147.

212. See also “The Three Natures,” pp. 179–90.

213. See chapter 10, stanzas 21–23, pp. 120–21.

214. This is a translation of Longchenpa's personal name, Dri med 'od zer.

TEXTS CITED IN *THE GREAT CHARIOT*

- Abhidharmakośa: *Chos mngon pa mdzod (The Treasury of Abhidharma)*. By Vasubandhu.
- Abridged Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra: *Prajñāpāramitāsaṃcāyagāthā, Sher phyin sdud pa tshigs su bcad pa (sDud pa)*.
- Accomplishment of Primordial Wisdom Tantra: *Ye shes grub pa'i rgyud*.
- The All-Creating King Tantra: *Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud*.
- All-Illuminating Sphere Tantra: *Thig le kun gsal gyi rgyud*.
- Aṅgulimālīya-sūtra: *Sor 'phreng can gyi mdo (Sūtra of Aṅgulimāla)*.
- Bodhisattvabhūmi *Byang chub sems dpa'i sa (Bodhisattva Grounds)*. By Asaṅga.
- “Chapter on Concentration” in the Ratnakūṭa: *dKon mchog brtsegs pa'i ting nge 'dzin dam pa'i leu*.
- Classification of Wandering Beings Sūtra: *'Gro ba rnam 'byed kyi mdo*.
- Commentary to the Sūtrālamkāra: *Sūtralamkāravṛttibhāṣya, mDo sde rgyan gyi 'grel bshad*. By Sthiramati.
- Commentary to the Uttaratantraśāstra: *Uttaratantraśāstravyākhyā, rGyud bla ma'i rnam bshad*. By Asaṅga.
- Compendium Tantra of Precious Secret Wisdom: *gSang ba ye shes rin po che'i rgyud kun 'dus*.
- Complete Revelation of the Essence Sūtra: *sNying po rab tu bstan pa'i mdo*.
- Essence of Enlightenment Sūtra: *Buddhahrdayadhāraṇī*.
- Excellent Accomplishment Tantra: *Susiddhi-tantra, Legs par grub pa'i rgyud*.
- Exhaustion of the Four Elements Tantra: *'Byung bzhi zad pa'i rgyud*.
- Expanded Primordial Wisdom Tantra: *Ye shes rgyas pa'i rgyud*.
- Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra: *sDong po bkod pa'i mdo (The Tree-Garland Sūtra)*.

Ghanavyūha-sūtra: *rGyan stug po bkod pa'i mdo (Densely Adorned Sūtra)*.
 Great Exposition of the Generation and Perfection Stages: *bsKyed rdzogs chen mo*.

Guhyagarbha Tantra: *gSang ba snying po'i rgyud (The Secret Essence Tantra)*.
 Heart Sūtra: *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya-sūtra, Shes rab snying po'i mdo*.
 Heruka Galpo Tantra: *He ru ka gal po'i rgyud*.

Hevajra Tantra in Two Sections: *Kye rdo rje'i rgyud brtag pa gnyis pa (brTag gnyis)*.

Immaculate Wisdom of Mañjuśrī Sūtra: *'Jam dpal ye shes dri ma med pa'i mdo*.
 Kāśyapa Chapter: *Kāśyapaparivarta, 'Od srung gi le'u*.
 King of Marvels Tantra: *rMad byung rgyal po'i rgyud*.

Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra: *Lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo (The Visit to Lanka Sūtra)*.
 Light of Primal Wisdom Tantra: *Ye shes snang ba'i rgyud*.

Madhyamakāvatāra: *dBu ma la 'jug pa (Introduction to the Middle Way)*. By Candrakīrti.

Madhyāntavibhāga: *dBu mtha' rnam 'byed (Discerning the Middle and the Extremes)*. By Maitreya-Asaṅga.

Magical Display Sūtra: *rNam par 'phrul pa'i mdo*.

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra: *Yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo*.

Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra: *Theg pa chen po'i mDo sde rgyan (Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras)*. By Maitreya-Asaṅga.

Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti: *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod (Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī)*.

Māyājāla Tantra: *sGyu 'phrul drva ba'i rgyud (Net of Illusory Manifestations Tantra)*.

Middle-Length Prajñāpāramitā: *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag nyi shu lnga pa (Yum bar ma)*.

Net of Precious Peaceful Deities: *Zhi ba rin po che'i drva ba*.

Ocean of Jewels Tantra: *Rin chen rgya mtsho'i rgyud*.

Ornament for the Wisdom of Mañjuśrī Sūtra: *'Jam dpal ye shes rgyan gyi mdo*.

Pañcakrama: *Rim lnga (The Five Stages)*. By Nāgārjuna.

Parinirvāṇa-sūtra: *Mya ngan las 'das pa'i mdo*.

Praises of the Mind Vajra: *Sems kyi rdo rje'i bstod pa*.

Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Lines: *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa*.

Prajñāpāramitā in Twenty Thousand Lines: *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag nyi shu pa* (*Nyi khri*).

Precious Net Tantra: *Rin chen dra ba'i rgyud*.

Question of Brahmaviśeṣacinti Sūtra: *Brahmaviśeṣacintipariṣcchā-sūtra*, *Tshangs pa khyad par sems kyis zhus pa'i mdo*.

Question of Sagara Sūtra: *Sagarapariṣcchā-sūtra*, *rGya mtshos zhus pa'i mdo*.

Question of Susthitamatidevaputra Sūtra, *Susthimatidevaputrapariṣcchā-sūtra*, *Lha'i bu blo gros rab gnas kyis zhus pa*.

Question of Ugra the Householder Sūtra: *Khyim bdag drag shul can gyis zhus pa'i mdo*.

Ratnakūṭa-sūtra: *dKon mchog brtsegs pa* (*The Jewel Mound Sūtra*).

Ratnamegha-sūtra: *dKon mchog sprin gyi mdo* (*The Cloud of Jewels Sūtra*).

Ratnāvalī: *Rin chen phreng ba* (*The Jewel Garland*). By Nāgārjuna.

Root Stanzas on the Middle Way: *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*, *dBu ma rtsa ba'i shes rab*. By Nāgārjuna.

Sacred Golden Light Sūtra: *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*, *gSer 'od dam pa'i mdo*.

Sacred Primordial Wisdom Sūtra: *Ye shes dam pa'i mdo*.

Samādhirāja-sūtra: *Ting 'dzin rgyal po'i mdo* (*The King of Concentrations Sūtra*).

Satyadvayavibhaṅga: *bDen gnyis rnam 'byed* (*Distinguishing the Two Truths*). By Jñānagarbha.

Showing Gratitude Sūtra: *Drin la bsab pa'i mdo*.

Song of Action: *Caryāgiti*, *Spyod pa'i glu*.

Song of Realization: *rTog rtse ba'i do ha*. By Kuddalīpāda.

Songs of Realization: *Dohakośa*, *Do ha mdzod*. By Saraha.

Stages of Luminosity: *'Od rim*.

Stages of the Path: (*Māhājāla*)*pathakrama*, *Lam rim*. By Buddhaguhya.

Suḥr̥llekha: *bShes spring* (*Letter to a Friend*). By Nāgārjuna.

Summarized Wisdom Sūtra: *Samājasarvavidyā-sūtra*, *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*.

Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra: *De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*.

Ten Wheels of Kṣitigarbha Sūtra: *Daśacakraṣṭigarbha-sūtra*, *Sa'i snying po 'khor lo bcu pa'i mdo*.

Treasure Inexhaustible, a Song of Instruction: *Mi zad pa'i gter mdzod man ngag gi glu.*

Triṃśikā-kārikā: *Sum bcu pa (The Thirty Verses).* By Vasubandhu.

Uttaratantraśāstra: *rGyud bla ma'i bstan bcos (Sublime Continuum Treatise).* By Maitreya-Asaṅga.

Way of the Bodhisattva: *Bodhicaryāvatāra, sPyod pa la' jug pa.* By Śāntideva.

Wisdom at the Moment of Death Sūtra: *Atyayajñāna-sūtra, 'Da' ka ye shes kyi mdo.*

Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra: *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i sa'i bstan bcos (Grounds of Yogācāra Treatise).* By Asaṅga.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

- AC *Autocommentary: Longchen Rabjam. Shing rta chen po (The Great Chariot). Autocommentary to Sems nyid ngal gso.*
- TPQ, Book 1 *Treasury of Precious Qualities, Book 1.*
- TPQ, Book 2 *Treasury of Precious Qualities, Book 2.*
- TPQ-YG I *Commentary on Treasury of Precious Qualities by Khenpo Yontan Gyatso, Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel a bden gnyis gsal byed zla ba'i sgron me, vol 1.*
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Mipham Rinpoche

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