

## **SACRED WORDS OF LORD AKSHOBYA**

*A Memorandum on the Visualisations Guide  
to the First Stage of the Path of 32 Deities of Guhyasamaja  
According to the Arya Tradition\**

By AKHU SHERAP GYATSO

Translated by Geshe Thupten Jinpa

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[SALUTATIONS]

[1b] Namō Guru *Shri Guhyasamaja mandala deva ganashranam gacchami*

*May I be protected by the lord endowed with 'seven aspects,'  
the master-magician who permeates the entire space  
with 'oceans of cloud'; you're the spectre of pure and perfect worlds  
born of untainted great bliss, the indivisible sacred body-mind.*

*Even a single hair from your bodily pores destroys an army of evils,  
you perceive all phenomena without ever rising from your equipoise;  
Surely to seek this 'method of attainment' is most worthy of effort,  
Once we've witnessed the great wonder of this path.*

The fully enlightened Buddha—the incomparable master, the king of the Shakyas—first generated the mind of awakening; in the middle, he gathered the accumulations [of merit and wisdom] for over three innumerable aeons; and finally, he attained perfect enlightenment. He then taught 84,000 sets of discourse. Insofar as this is true, there is an agreement between the systems of *sutra* and *tantra*. [2a] However, according to the *sutra* tradition, [the Buddha] is said to have become fully enlightened in the *Sambhogakaya* form in the *akhinishta* [perfect Buddha realm] when he was in his last life as a Bodhisattva on the tenth ground. From there, while residing as a *Sambhogakaya* endowed with the five definite characteristics, the Buddha manifests simultaneously in a multitude of emanations to the billions of world systems. This, then, is the received standpoint.

In contrast, according to the *tantra* system there is an acceptance that full enlightenment can take place both within the human and the *deva* realms—i.e. they can be either a human being or a *deva*, a celestial being. On this view, [it is believed that] when our Buddha Shakyamuni] was in his last life as a Bodhisattva, just before his full awakening in *akhinishta* he entered the path of *tantra* via 'intermediate state'. At that point, at the invocation from all the Buddhas of the ten directions the goddess Thigle Chogma was called forth and the Bodhisattva was conferred the third [i.e.secret] initiation in actuality. Thus he entered the Guhyasamaja path and attained the pure 'clear light' and arose into the illusory body. [2b] Again, he entered into clear light and re-emerged as an 'illusory body' thus

actualising the union of the learner's stage. Subsequent to this, at dawn he was conferred directly the fourth [word] initiation thus leading to his full realisation of the 'union of no more learning', the state of being that is endowed with the seven aspects of [the male-female] union.

Amongst the multitude of emanations that Buddha manifested in realms equal to the limits of space, in our world, i.e. on earth, he displayed such events as entering the womb of his mother, being born, excelling in the athletic skills, engaging in the physical penance, and so on, as mentioned in the *sutra* teachings. Although there is no explicit mention [in the *tantras*] of the Buddha's deeds of sitting under the bodhi tree and conquering the *maras*, the references in some other *tantras* about conquering the *maras* by assuming the forms of "the wrathful deity victorious over all three realms" and the red and black Yamantakas can be seen as the *Tantric* version of this deed.

The following events, (i) the realisation of the 'actual' clear light at midnight as a result of being conferred the third initiation in its nakedness, (ii) the full awakening displayed at dawn on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth month subsequent to the conferment of the fourth initiation, and (iii) turning the three wheels of *dharma* and the four classes of *tantra*, constitute the process by which how the Buddha, in his form as Shakyamuni, taught the *tantras* on this earth. Generally speaking, it is said that as far as the teachings of the *tantras* are concerned there is no period of decline caused by fluctuations for they are being taught throughout all time. For example, the *Ten Grounds Sutra* states:

The Buddhas never go beyond sorrow;  
The *dharma* [sun] too will never set.

**[3a]** Similarly, *The Sacred Names of Manjushri* states:

The Buddhas of the past have taught this;  
The Buddhas of the future too will teach this;  
and it's being taught again and again  
by the fully awakened ones of the present.

So, although it is difficult [categorically] to assert that according to the Tantric teachings there can be no 'dark era', but it must be accepted only provisionally in relation to general conventions. But if we accept these provisional notions too literally, it may lead to all kinds of contradictions and inconsistencies. To put it briefly, all the teachings that the

Buddha has given can be subsumed into the two classes of sutras and *tantras*. For those who are inclined towards the ‘initial’ [path], the conducts of ‘detachment’ have been taught. For those who are inclined towards the ‘vast’ [path], the conducts of the ‘grounds and perfections’ have been taught. For those who are inclined towards the ‘profound’ [path], the conducts of ‘attachment’ have been taught. Of these, the first is the ‘listener’ and ‘self-enlightened Buddhas’ vehicle, the second, the great vehicle of the sutra teachings, and the third, the vehicle of *Tantra*. Amongst these, the discourse about the attainment of Buddhahood in a single lifetime is a concept unique to *Tantra*.

Within the *tantras*, there are four classes corresponding to the levels of the aspirants. Although all qualified *tantric* aspirants are capable of taking attachment into the path, depending on the levels of faculty of the practitioners there are differences. For example, the practices that present the path by emphasising the external such as washing, anointing and so on over the inner *yogic* meditation belong to *Performance Tantra*. **[3b]** These are taught to those aspirants who are capable only of, and not more than, taking into the path attachments generated through exchanging of glances between oneself and the visualised goddess. Similarly, those practices that present a path in terms of an equal emphasis on both the external rituals and inner *yogas* belong to *Action Tantra*. These are taught to those who are capable of, and not more than, taking into the path attachments generated through exchanging of glances and playful games with one’s visualised goddess. Furthermore, those practices that present a path that emphasises inner *yogas* over external rituals belong to *Yoga tantra*. These are taught to those aspirants who are capable of taking into path attachments generated through looking at, laughing with, and holding the hands of one’s visualised goddess but not the attachment generated by actual sexual union with the consort. Finally, the practices that present a path that emphasises only the inner *yogas* and is not dependent at all upon external rituals belong to *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra*. These [teachings] are taught to those aspirants, who are not only capable of taking into the path attachments generated through looking at, laughing with, holding hands of the goddess, but have also the ability to take into the path attachments generated from the bliss of actual act of conjoining the two sexual organs. Since there is nothing beyond this [class], it is called the “unsurpassed *yoga tantra*.”

The *Vajrapanjaratantra* states:

To the inferior, the *Performance Tantra*...

Similarly, the *Tantra of Union* states:

Laughing, glancing and holding hands...

The meaning of these verses and also the passage

Like insects, the *tantras* are of four kinds,

suggest that just as tree-born insects eat away into the tree so, in the present context, the wisdom of simultaneous great bliss generated from attachment and its likes consumes attachment and attendant emotions. Many people misunderstand this idea of ‘taking attachment into the path’ thinking that actual afflictions are *turned* into aspects of the path. This, however, is not the case. Afflictions such as attachment is brought into the path as a source of impetus thereby transforming these into favourable conditions.

As a *sutra* states

As the manure of Shakya town becomes fertiliser...

Although, the transformation of attachment and its likes as aids on the path can be effected at high levels of realisation the Perfection vehicle, on the *Tantric* path this can be achieved even at the beginner’s stage. [4a] The manner in which this takes place is as follows. At first, even when attachment and its likes arise one ensures that they do not fall under the control of ordinary negative impulses. Then due to the power of a surging experience of emptiness negative emotions subside, while the force of the path increases thus acquiring powerful capacity to destroy the opposing forces of the path.

As regards the *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra*, the earlier Tibetan masters list three categories: i) father *tantras*, ii) mother *tantras*, and iii) nondual *tantras*. The Sakyapas identify *Hevajatantra* as an example of the ‘nondual’ *tantra*, while the *Jonangpas* list *Kalacakratantra* as a ‘nondual’ *tantra*. Thus, depending upon what they considered to be their preferred *tantra*, they identify it as the ‘nondual’ *tantra* and hail it as supreme. However, such standpoints are fraught with contradictions. In contrast, the great master Tsongkhapa maintains that the ‘father’ in ‘father *tantras*’ and ‘method’ in ‘method *tantras*’

refer to the illusory body. Similarly, the ‘mother’ and ‘wisdom’ in ‘mother *tantras*’ and ‘wisdom *tantras*’ refer to clear light. Thus, those *tantras* that emphasise the attainment of the first are father *tantras*, while those that emphasise the attainment of the latter, are mother *tantras*. Furthermore, when one speaks of the ‘nondual method and wisdom *tantras*’, ‘method’ here refers to the pristine cognition that is the union of great bliss and wisdom realising emptiness. Hence, there is a great deal of difference between this and the earlier understanding of nonduality. Tsongkhapa has stated that since a *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantric* text must necessarily have its subject-matter the wisdom of indivisible bliss and emptiness, all *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantras* are [by definition] ‘nondual’ *tantras*.

Earlier Tibetan masters maintain that those *tantras* which begin with “*Thus have I heard once*” as father *tantras*, while those begin with the passage “*When the supreme secret is propounded*” as mother *tantras*. [4b] Similarly, some maintain that those *tantras* that involve the descent of the wisdom beings done through [visualising] male deities are father *tantras*, while those done by female deities are mother *tantras*. The great master Tsongkhapa in his Great Exposition of *Tantra* and other works has refuted many of these viewpoints. Once you become aware of this point you will develop great certainty in our [preferred] standpoint.

There are three types of ‘method’ *tantras*. For example, the *Guhyasamajatantra* is a *tantra* of ‘desire[-transmuting]-method’, for when this *Tantra* is enumerated it states “*One thousand Guhyasamaja.*” Then there are those *tantras* for whose wrathful activities there must be the causal motivation for compassion, while for immediate impetus one requires harsh emotions. And the *tantras* that teach the path of such a transformation are *tantras* of ‘anger-[transmuting]-method’. This includes such *tantras* as the red and black Yamantakas. The great master Tsongkhapa has stated that there exist occasions when desire and anger can be taken as aids on the path. However, as far as delusion is concerned, except for the transformation of the attendant factors there are no occasions when delusion itself can be taken on the path. Because of this, Kyapgön Dorjechang has said that the statement that *Aralitantra* is a *Tantra* of ‘ignorance-[transmuting]-method’ should be understood as referring to taking on path the consciousness of sleep and dream states.

Generally speaking, four types of Guhyasamaja have been taught, namely that of the i) literal meaning, ii) general meaning, iii) hidden meaning, and of the iv) ultimate meaning. And, since all *tantric* paths are contained in them, they are called the root of all *tantras*. Also, as the words and meaning of all the sutras converge upon this *tantra*, it is called the ‘jewel ornament of all sutras’. It is said that Segyü Dorjechang once told Künkhyen Jamyang Shepa that if one understands the *Guhyasamajatantra*, he understands all the *sutras* and *tantras*. [5a] Furthermore, whether or not the essences of the Buddha’s teachings survive depends upon the survival of the study and practice of *Guhyasamatantra*. For example, the *Sacred Words of Manjushri* states:

At that time and period  
when *this* essential point can be heard,  
it’s said that at that time  
Buddha’s precious doctrine remains too.

Therefore, it is critical that we all strive hard at this juncture, when we have not only met with the secret *mantra* vehicle but also the teachings of the *Guhyasamatantra*. We are supposed to have had the fortune of encountering the *sutra* and *tantric* teachings of the second Buddha [Tsongkhapa]. But the masters have said that if we do not meet with the teachings of Cakrasamvara and *Guhyasamajatantra*, we have not encountered the complete doctrine of the great Tsongkhapa. Even when one endeavours in the study of the five treatises, it is the *tantras* that one must eventually arrive at. As stated by Tsongkhapa “*Whatever you have taught...*” in *sutra* system all teachings including those on the four truths must finally converge on the teachings on emptiness. This does not mean merely that these teachings must relate to means of understanding and cognising emptiness, but that they must also be understood in terms of perfecting the path of emptiness. Therefore, it is essential that we realise without mistake the ‘limit of reality’s sphere’— i.e. emptiness—on the basis of fusing the innate mind with emptiness as if merging the two indistinguishably into a ‘single taste’. So, the statement that all sutras converge on emptiness must mean that they converge on the attainment of the ultimate aspiration [of the *tantra*].

The long version of the *Guhyasamajatantra* has not been translated into Tibetan. The meaning of this *Tantra* must be explained in terms of the hermeneutics of the ‘six boundaries’ and ‘four modes’. For example, the *provisional* meaning of Vajradhara

[Dorjechang] is said to be the deity who holds in his hand the symbol *vajra*. [5b] Yet, the *definitive* meaning is that he upholds within the *vajra* of pristine cognition, which is an indivisible union of bliss and emptiness. Thus the first level of meaning requires further interpretation to arrive at its final meaning. Similarly, the statement

In the vast plain of wilderness  
ornament [the site] with flowers and fruits...

This can mean that one's place of meditation in the wilderness should be ornamented with flowers, etc. Or, it could mean that one's body—which has been isolated of all *prana* winds due to the dissolution of all winds into the central channel—is beautified by minor and major noble marks of the illusory body. The first is the meaning at the level of generation stage and is thus (1) **provisional**, while the second is at the level of perfection stage and is thus (2) **definitive**. There is also the (3) **literal** meaning when the meaning is understood only within the bounds of linguistic convention. There is also the (4) **non-literal** reading when a specific meaning is stipulated even though there is nothing in the linguistic convention, which suggests such meaning. For example, the Sugathas [the Buddhas] have stipulated the meaning of the ten syllables such as KO, TRA and KHYA. In the context of the *Unsurpassed Yoga tantra*, they are said to refer to the ten winds, while in the context of the *yoga tantras* they refer to the various names of Vajrapani. There is then the (5) **intentional** reading, whereby what is intended is something else [to what is stated on the surface]; i.e. it is said in an elliptical manner. For example, in the *sutras* it has been stated that “Father and mother are to be killed”, etc., and also “Ascertain this as essence, though there is none”, etc. In such cases, the meaning of the *tantras* are taught by means of intentions. Finally, there is the (6) **non-intentional** reading in that what is taught on the surface is to be taken at its face value without any elliptical reading. There are thus six boundaries.

There are four modes of interpretation. There is first the (1) **linguistic** meaning in that what is taught is at the level of conventional linguistics. The level of significance that is common to *sutra* and *Tantra*, to both lower and higher vehicles, and also to both generation and perfection stage, is said to be the (2) **general** meaning. There is also the (3) **hidden** meaning in that both *sutras* and the *tantras* teach topics which are said to be concealed. For



example, there is the ‘concealing the mind in appearance’ referring to the teachings of the ‘three isolations’. Those which present the characteristics of the ‘seal’ [i.e. the consort], and the method of engaging in sexual union with such a seal are said to conceal the principles of desire. And those, which present the illusory body, are said to conceal the relative truth, the illusory body. Thus, there are three ‘concealments’. [6a] The (4) **ultimate** exposition is the presentation of the illusory body and clear light, themes that are not found in the lower classes of *tantra*. This is called ultimate because illusory body is the ultimate culmination of all winds, while the ultimate culmination of all cognitive states is the ‘clear light’ mind of the Buddha’s omniscient wisdom.

‘Disciple-exposition’ is given in private on the basis of a one-to-one instruction, while the “public-exposition” is aimed generally at all members of the targeted audience. Of the five classes of disciples—i.e. (i) *Utpala* flower-like, (ii) *Pundarika* flower-like, (iii) lotus-like, (iv) sandal wood-like, and (v) jewel-like—the first four are eligible as target audience for ‘public-exposition’ but not for ‘disciple-exposition’. The last type is stated to be appropriate for both modes of instruction. These days even a disciple at the level of the sandal wood type is extremely rare. Although the ‘disciple-exposition’ is popular within the Sakya teachings, if there are qualified teachers and students the Gelukpas are also not impoverished of this level of instruction. Sectarian sentiments do not get one anywhere; what is required is to rely on the instructions of the teachers. We need to understand the meaning of the *tantras* through the application of the hermeneutics of ‘six boundaries’ and ‘four modes’ and apply this to a combined study of the five great explanatory *tantras*. The great Tsongkhapa says:

The essential points of the path lie sealed in the root *tantra*  
within [hermeneutics of] ‘six boundaries’ and ‘four modes’.  
By following the explanatory *tantras*’ guide  
and Guru’s instructions they become known, it’s been taught.

There is no separate set of writings called ‘Guru’s instructions’; rather one must rely on the great treatises of Nagarjuna and his spiritual sons for the knowledge of how to interweave the ‘root’ and ‘explanatory’ *tantras*. Therefore, Tsongkhapa continues with the following:

By grasping this point, ...  
I’ve found all essential points of the perfection stage.

It is therefore important to combine the reading of the root *tantras* with its explanatory *tantras* on the basis of Guru's instructions. [6b] For this it is necessary first to develop some [intellectual] understanding of the two stages [of the *tantra*] in order to correctly engage with *tantra*. My teacher, the protector Vajradhara, told me that the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso has stated that this is the significance of Tsongkhapa's point that is made in his summary of the *Four interwoven commentaries* about how one's entry into the *Tantra* must be preceded by a study of the five stages.

There are two sections to my exposition of the path of the two stages: (I) The origin stories of the *tantras*; and (II) the stages of the actual instruction of the experiential guide.

## **I. The origin-stories of the *tantras*.**

There are many different ways in which the present Buddha [Shakyamuni] has taught the *tantras*. The *Guhyasamaja* root *tantra* opens with the following:

Thus have I heard once: The Buddha abided inside the womb of Vajra Queen,  
the essence of body, speech and mind of all *tathagatas*.

The above [passage] relates in the following order the context, the perfect congregation, the *mandala* of the *mantra*, and the *mandala* of *Guhyasamaja* and is [therefore] subject to four modes of explanation. The **literal** exposition must be related to the origin of the teaching of the *tantras*. Thus, [the statement] “*Thus have I heard once*” indicates the time when the *tantra* was heard. There are three ways in which we can understand the time of the hearing of the *tantra*, namely (i) that it was heard at one time, but other at other times, (ii) that it was heard instantaneously within a single instance, and (iii) that it was heard at one time, but never at others. [The expression] “*The essence of the body, speech and mind of all the tathagatas*” is an epithet for Vajradhara, and it is in this sense that the Guru is said to be the ultimate embodiment of all refuge. To “abide in the womb of the Vajra queen” means that the Buddha was seated within the celestial mansion inside the triangular *mandala* of *dharmadhatu* [i.e. the expanse of reality]. [7a] Being within a single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness he has destroyed all afflictions

[hence the word] the ‘womb’ indicates space. This is analogous to [statements we find in the sutras like] “He was immersed in the meditative absorption called ‘the profound illumination’.” [The statement] “Beyond and far beyond description” pertains to the congregation; the first qualification [i.e. 'beyond'] relates to the congregation, while the second [i.e. 'far beyond description'] expresses the immeasurable qualities of the congregation. The [expression] ‘*mantra mandala*’ subsumes the *mantra* goddesses into nine numbers and thus reveals the signs of the essential points of the path of great bliss. The [expression] “*Guhyasamaja mandala*” narrates how the *tantra* was taught by creating a *mandala* in response to [the verses] “*That which originates from the encompassed secret...*”, which make the request to teach the *mandala* of great bliss. This is the literal reading based on the actual words of the *tantra*.

However Butön, in his ‘history’ of *Guhyasamaja*, reports on an origin story [of the *tantra*] as told by the past Tibetan masters, a story that appeals to the Tibetan mind. On this account, Indrabhuti—a king from the Western part of India—saw many monks running back and forth and many unusual animals flying in the sky when the fully Enlightened Buddha turned the wheel of dharma on this earth. In the morning they were going from east to the west, and in the evening, from west to the east. He wondered what the significance of the vision was found that it relates to the ‘hearers’ [disciples], who are part of the circle of congregation around the Buddha Shakyamuni who lives in central India, towards the east from where he was. And the moment [Indrabhuti] had the wish that this great teacher who possesses such perfect congregation appear at this very instant, the Buddha knew this and instantaneously arrived along with his retinue. The King requested the Buddha to teach a method for enlightenment without having to discard the acts of sensuality. The Buddha dissolved his appearance as the one ‘free of attachment’ and assumed the form of a universal monarch. He thus initiated the king into the *mandala* of *Guhyasamaja* and taught him the *tantras* and gave the pith instructions. The king, together with his retinue attained full enlightenment within a single lifetime by following the path of glorious *Guhyasamaja*. The king then revealed the *dharma* to all his subjects each of whom became enlightened and departed to their own Buddha realms. At that very site a ‘naturally-arisen’ celestial palace of Heruka came into being. The land was then overrun by water forming a vast sea filled with *nagas* [i.e. serpent beings]. Vajrapani gave *dharma* teaching to the *nagas* from

amongst whom the males became the heroes and the females, the heroines; thus they became enlightened. Later a town was formed on the site where the sea dried and it is the present-day Udyana [modern day Swat valley in Pakistan] of which Visukalpa was one of the kings. [He] imparted the complete instruction to Naga-born Yogini, who was originally a *nagin* and later became a yogini and a member of the lineage. From her the lineage passed on to Saraha and then to Nagarjuna and so on. The following verses record the lineage:

The compiler Vajrapani who collected all the secrets,

....  
to Chandrakirti and so on, the masters of the lineage...

As the following verses intimate, the personages who are responsible for bringing the transmission of this instruction to Tibet are the great Lotsawa Rinchen Sangpo, Patsap [Nyima Drak], Chak [Lotsawa], etc. [Thus we find in the *sadhana* the following:]

By the force of aspirations to uphold the Buddha's sublime dharma...

**[8a]** Amongst many of these great translators the most reknown [in relation to *Guyhasamaja*] were Marpa Lotsawa and Gö Lotsawa. Lodrak Marpa Lotsawa Chökyi Lödrö sought teachings from such masters as the great pandita Naropa and from him recieved all the *tantras* and their associated pith instructions. Although he received the teaching on the exposition of [Candrakirti's] *Clear Lamp* the transmission of this text never got established. Tsongkhapa takes Marpa as a valid authority [on *Guhyasamaja*] and cites the few passages attributed to him. Marpa had disciples such as the 'four pillars', and if we are to judge by Milarepa's *Hundred Thousand Songs* [Marpa's teachings] are authentic. As regards Ngogtön Chödor and Metön of Tsangrong [region], the *Treatise* [Tsongkhapa's *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Five Stages*] makes a reference to certain 'commentary of the *tantra* by Ronyam Dorje, the Khampa disciple of Tsur,' etc. It also makes such references as "Ngok says this" and "Me states that," thus giving the impression that, on the whole, the works of these masters are valid though they may not reflect a high level of clarity and depth. Marpa was apparently very strict with his instructions so that he gave mostly one set of practices like *tumo* (inner heat) to each of his students, which resulted in his teachings becoming dispersed. It appears that although the tradition of undertaking the practice all five stages on one seat did exist [in Tibet] this was not well known. The tradition became almost extinct until Tsongkhapa wrote his *Completion of the Five Stages*

on [one] Sitting. Further to provide more extensive exposition [of perfection stage] Tsongkhapa wrote *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating*, thus going into great depth and detail the meanings of many of the terms and the practices that they pertain to.

In works such as *The Four Interwoven Commentaries*, although Gö Lotsawa's *Thousand Doses in One* is treated as authoritative [by Tsongkhapa] there are parts [Tsongkhapa's works] where the actual wording of the text is not followed to its letter. So it seems that on the exposition of the five stages Gö Lotsawa does not carry quite the same authority as Marpa Lotsawa. Gö Lotsawa, who is known [also] as Gö Khukpa Latse, was born in Tanak, a region in the Tsang province. **[8b]** He is reputed to have studied with seventy-two Indian masters. On the cycle of texts related to *Guhyasamaja*, he studied especially with the prince Meghavegin, one Nagakoti from the fortress of Nepal, one Cahadu from the city of Nepal, and one Kalasamayavajra. From all of these masters Gö received complete expositions of the root *tantra* and commentary on the two stages. Thus both Marpa and Gö Lotsawa possessed the transmissions of the initiation, commentarial guide, exposition of the root *tantra* and also the exposition of [Candrakirti's] *Clear Lamp*. Nevertheless, owing to the extensiveness of their approaches it has become the received view that the transmission for the commentaries on the two stages came through Marpa, and the exposition of the root *tantra* and *Clear Lamp*, through Gö Lotsawa. Because of this, Tsongkhapa has stated in his *Shoots of Analysis* that Marpa's tradition excels in instruction, while Gö's system excels in exposition. With respect to initiations there are lineages stemming both from Marpa and Gö Lotsawa. Therefore, Butön Rinpoche received both these lineages in their entirety from his teacher Phakpa Ö. The great Tsongkhapa received from his teacher Rendawa and Khyungpo Lhepa, a student of Butön, the transmissions of all the teachings related to *Guhyasamaja* available in Tibet belonging to traditions of both Marpa and Gö. This is not limited to the teachings of *Guhyasamaja* alone; in fact, there is no instruction, which existed in Tibet that Tsongkhapa had either not received, or known about, or subjected to careful scrutiny. Therefore, the tradition of great Tsongkhapa excels in all systems of exposition.

During the early dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, because of the presence of Shantarakshita and his disciple [Kamalashila] the philosophy is believed to be that of

Svatantrika-Madhyamaka. Kamalashila refuted the rhetoric of ‘sudden’ and ‘gradual’ approaches introduced by the Chinese monk Hwashang Mohoyen which led the then monarch [Trisong Detsen] to making a pronouncement decreeing that the philosophy of Nagarjuna be upheld as supreme. [9a] As *tantra* was practised in secret during the reign of Trisong Detsen gradual corruption of *tantras* occurred whereby often the instructions were passed on simply from a father to son. This led to an atmosphere of moral decline such that people had no restraint over indulgence in excessive womanising and alcohol abuse [on the pretext of *Tantric* practice]. The monarchs of Ngari, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö and his nephew, were deeply suspicious of these *tantras* and so began creating new translations of *sutras* and *tantras* from India. The old literature, though adulterated, were not totally abandoned but classified as the *old tantras* and are extant to this day. Although *Guhyasamaja tantra* was translated during the earlier dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet, Marpa and Gö translated it afresh. In the realm of philosophy, Hwashang propagated a false view during this early period. Thus Tsongkhapa writes in his *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* the following: “During the period of early dissemination of the doctrine...”

Even Tsongkhapa himself held this view of ‘non-thinking’ focussed on the ‘indiscernible reality’ during the earlier part of his life. It is said that once at a prayer congregation at Kyormolung, while meditating on the four-fold emptiness from the *Heart Sutra* such as “form is empty”, and so on., Tsongkhapa became totally immersed in meditation. He was found left behind leaning on a pillar even when everyone has departed from the temple. Today one can see this pillar, which is now known as ‘the pillar of meditation.’ That in early part of his life Tsongkhapa was inclined towards the above philosophy of ‘non-thinking’ is evidenced from numerous references to this view in *Golden Rosary*. Gungthang Rinpoche states that there are also similar indications of this other early writings of Tsongkhapa such as his *Expressions of Sadasharudita’s Realisation*. Later Tsongkhapa met with Lama Umapa, who acted as a medium for Manjushri and from whom later Tsongkhapa were to receive many teachings. Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri:

“Does the view of *non-thinking* represent the philosophical standpoint of Prasangika-Madhyamaka or Svatantrika-Madhyamaka?”

[Manjushri replied:] “Neither!”

“What must I do then?”

[Manjushri replied:] “Take what I teach you as a seed. Pray to your Gurus by viewing them as inseparable from Manjushri; [9b] undertake an in depth study of the great Indian treatises, and engage in practices of purification and accumulation of merits. If you combine these three elements well you will attain a flawless view in a not too distant future. And, if they are in conflict with the great treatises, it is the so-called oral instructions which need to be discarded. Never abandon the great treatises.”

Therefore through the combination of the above three factors Tsongkhapa acquired the perfect view of ‘profound emptiness’. However it is said that he did not reach the culmination of his understanding of *Tantra* until he reached fifty. It cannot be the case that Tsongkhapa was not versed in the exposition of *tantra*. Rather this pertains to the statement that a thorough knowledge of the ‘limits of reality’s expanse’ is dependent on *Tantra*. This is because, in order to engage spontaneously in the acts of serving others while abiding unstirred within a meditative equipoise on the ultimate nature of reality, it is essential to cease conceptual thoughts that lead to objectification. This cessation can be achieved by absorbing into the central channel all gross and subtle winds, which cause the occurrence of these conceptions. And it is only in the *tantras*, not the *sutras*, where this process of dissolution is taught. Therefore we can say that Tsongkhapa’s philosophical analysis did not reach its culmination until he gained experiential understanding of *Tantra*. After this, he wrote many works of great eloquence and significance.

The stages in Tsongkhapa’s realisation of the paths of *Tantra* are described in the following verses [in the *Secret Biography of Great Tsongkhapa*]:

The verse “*As chief of the Manjushrivajra mandala ...*” relates the realisation of the practices of Guhyasamaja; the verse “*When engaging in the approximation of Great Bliss Wheel, ...*” relates the story of his realisation of Cakrasamvara; and “*By the yoga of combined tranquil abiding and insight, ...*” narrates the account of how Tsongkhapa received the experiential lineage of Yamantaka practice. The verse “*Manjushri, in person, imparted to you...*” tells us how Manjushri gave instructions to Tsongkhapa on a daily basis. Because

of this Tsongkhapa gained insight into many difficult points of both *sutra* and *tantra*, many of which were not understood by past Tibetan masters. Perfect realisation occurred in Tsongkhapa, which then led to the founding of a new tradition never seen before in this 'land of snows'. [10a] Therefore, as Maitreya was prophesised by Buddha Shakyamuni and the king Candrabhadra by *Kalachakratantra*, Tsongkhapa's coming too has been foretold.

Although the Jonangpa and others have extensive discourse on Kalacakra owing to their shortcomings in the understanding of emptiness they are felt to be lacking. Tsongkhapa, on the other hand, undertook an in depth and comprehensive study and contemplation of both the *sutra* and *Tantra* leading to a settled understanding. However not contented by the understanding alone he put into meditative practice the knowledge he had gained, thus he attained high stages of learning and meditation. Amongst past Tibetan masters there were many who not only had the lineage of the exposition of the *tantras* like Guhyasamaja, Cakrasamvara, Mahamaya, Hevajra, *Den shi*, and so on, but also implemented these into serious meditative practice. There is no doubt that masters like Marpa and Milarepa, who had attained the state of *union* in their lifetimes, had perfect understanding of the *sutras* and *tantras*. Yet owing to certain factors, be it related to the mental faculties of the audience, there are many aspects in their instructions where [at times] clarity and precision are lacking. Thus there is no one like Tsongkhapa when it comes to the presentation of the essential points of the difficult themes in general of *sutra* and *Tantra*, and in particular the instructions pertaining to 'illusory body' and 'clear light'.

Not only did Tsongkhapa experience the vision of Manjushri earlier, also at Ölka where he was immersed in meditative retreat he had the mystical experience of his heart being pierced by Manjushri's sword from which stream of nectar flow into his heart. Tsongkhapa felt satiated by a pervasive experience of pure bliss. Amongst his retinue he saw many faces, some familiar and some not, all opening their mouth to the nectar. There were at the head of the congregation Gyaltsap and Khedrup. [10b] He saw that in the mouth of some large quantity of nectar was received, in some a little, and yet in others none at all. This was perhaps a prophesy about how, if one follows this great master, even the simple generation of profound admiration in the Buddha could lead someone to liberation.



[As *Abhidharmakosha* states] “*The Buddha’s doctrine is of two kinds...*”, the scriptural teachings of the Buddha must be upheld through study and contemplation, while the realisational teachings must be maintained through practice and meditation. Without a combination of these two it is said that the teachings of the Buddha can not survive. A successful perpetuation of this lineage is dependent on the survival of the *sangha* community. It is because of this that Tsongkhapa instructed his disciple Jestün Sherap Senge to establish a tantric community. Thus Sherap Senge founded Gyüme [i.e. Lower Tantric College] in central Tibet, while his student Dulnakpa founded Segyü monastery in the upper regions of Tsang province. Sherap Senge handed his charge to Jinpa Pelwa. It was Gyüchen Kunga Dhöndup, a great scholar and an adept and a student of both the two teachers of Gyüme, whose extensive teaching activities related to *tantras* in the upper regions of central Tibet, which led to the founding of the present day Gyütö [i.e. Upper Tantric College]. According to a popular account, it was the jealousy of some small-minded people, which caused Gyüchen to depart to the upper regions of central Tibet. Coincidentally, the congregation at Gyüchen’s exposition of the *Guhyasamajatantra* numbered exactly the number of deities of the *mandala*! These two colleges came to be known as Upper and Lower Tantric Colleges of central Tibet. Earlier it was the Segyü monastery of Tsang and Gyüme which were known as the Upper and Lower monasteries. The members of these two monasteries - Gyüme and Segyü - used to traditionally observe the rainy season retreat, during the second half of the monsoon, together at Chumik Lung. This custom abruptly came to an end when the ruler of Tsang stirred conflicts [in the region]. The monks of Segyü were unable to visit Chumik Lung, but the monks of Gyüme continue to this day to spend their rainy season at Chumik Lung.

**[11a]** At one time when the monks of the Gyütö monastery were performing certain rites sponsored by a lay devotee, a young boy of the family kept noticing in the chanting a frequent mention of a deity with ‘three faces—yellow, black and white—and six arms.’ He immediately thought that this must refer to a little image, which the family has on its altar that he thought perhaps ought to be offered to the monks. It was the statue of yellow Zampala with three faces and six arms. The family offered the image to Gyüchen Kunga Dhöndup. The monks offered regular ablutions to the image and the financial base of the monastery flourished tremendously. The statue remained as part of the Gyütö monastery’s

icons and was later transferred to Phuphor. It is said that once when Gyütö monastery was based at Ramoche a dog stole the image and dropped it in the garden of Lhalu house! Apparently the VIIth Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso saw a rainbow shooting up into the sky from this site and sent someone to check it. They found the statue, which was then retrieved and reconsecrated by the VIIth Dalai Lama and later returned to Gyütö. Whatever the truth, this story tells us something about the quality of the statue itself.

The great Tsongkhapa grounded his exposition of the *Clear Lamp* on the basis of an interweaving of four explanations, the tradition of which is still alive today. As regards the lineage of the commentary on the two stages he has passed on the transmission to all of his principal disciples so there exist many lineages. In particular the manner in which these teachings were imparted to Khedrup Rinpoche is recorded in the biography [of Tsongkhapa]. During the day expositions of *sutra* and *tantra* were given, while at night the instructions on the stages of generation and perfection were given. This is recorded in the miscellaneous writings [of Khedrup] found listed in the contents of [his collected works]. Therefore Khedrup Je received all the essential instructions as if the contents of one vase was transferred into another. He then compiled his notes on the five stages [of completion] in his *Twenty Short Pieces*, and wrote an extensive work on the generation stage of *Guhyasamajatantra*. With respect to perfection stage, it is difficult for anyone to supersede Tsongkhapa's own writings, especially his *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating* and the *Completion of Five Stages in one Sitting*. **[11b]** From Khedrup Rinpoche, the lineage passed through Se and Ensapa, while from Sherap Senge, the lineages passed through the upper and lower Tantric colleges and thus flourished. It is due to the contributions of these masters that the teachings of *tantra* survive up to the present day without any degeneration. Many successive masters of Segyü appeared, of whom Gyüchen Könchok Yarpel lived well beyond eighty years of age. However no successor emerged amongst his students who could carry on the lineage of oral transmissions and thus Segyü monastery went through a period of decline. It was reported in the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography that once the monks of Segyü were invited to perform rituals at the potala palace. The great Fifth posed several questions to which Gyüchen gave spontaneous responses, which impressed the Dalai Lama, except for one question pertaining to *cakhar* ritual. So the Fifth Dalai Lama

repeatedly spoke highly of Segyü monastery, and this is believed to have contributed to an increase in their renown. Around this time it is said that Gyüchen performed the rites of Kalarupa exhorting the protector to help attract suitable disciples. Gyüchen is said to have exclaimed that unless the time has come for the lineage of Se to come to an end I must have successors for I am already eighty! [Finally] Gyüchen had four disciples, who became known as the ‘four *vajra* brothers.’ Gungthang Rinpoche says that he had heard it from his teacher Yongzin Rinpoche that as Gyüchen did not want many students, he was extremely strict with their number.

Cangkya Rinpoche and the previous Jamyang Shepa [Ngawang Tsöndru] were teacher and disciple around this time. They agreed that if the opportunity is missed to receive the instructions while Segyü Könchok Yarphe and Könchok Gyaltzen — the master of Tashi Lhünpo — were still alive there might be the danger for many of the lineages of the Geluk oral traditions to disappear. Thus Cangkya Rinpoche received extensive teachings from Könchok Gyaltzen and also some instructions related to *Cakrasamvara* and *Guhyasamaja* from Segyü Dorjechang. [12a] The previous Jamyang Shepa took these transmissions from Cangkya Rinpoche; he also went to Gyüme and received the transmissions of the Ensa tradition from the then Ganden Throne-holder Lodrö Gyatso. The year following his trip to Gephel, Jamyang Shepa felt ill on his way to Segyü and stayed at a nearby town. Se Dorjechang sent him food and clothes and asked him to come to see him the next day. Jamyang Shepa left early on the following day [to see him]. At their meeting he offered a scarf with five interwoven colours and bowed at the feet of Gyüchen. Jamyang Shepa then spoke to Gyüchen stating that he is offering this scarf to request for the entire transmission of the Geluk oral tradition. He then went on to make the following statement:

“Everything depends on how one relates to one’s Guru through thought and deeds. Who would listen to teachings given for the sake of wealth accumulation? And the talk about the size of offering is of interest only to the mundane people! Of course, if the disciple *does* have something to offer then certainly it must be offered as in the story of Marpa sending Ngog to fetch even his goat with a broken limb.”

At this meeting Gyüchen asked Jamyang Shepa a number of questions pertaining especially to Madhyamaka philosophy. The responses pleased Gyüchen greatly. When requested to give the entire transmissions of *Cakrasamvara*, *Guhyasamaja*, and *Yamantaka*, Gyüchen said that he can't give all three but only one. He asked Jamyang Shepa to choose one; Jamyang Shepa requested for the teachings of *Guhyasamaja*. This pleased Gyüchen even more. He told Jamyang Shepa that the choice is flawless for if one understands *Guhyasamaja* one understands the whole of *sutra* and *tantra*. "I shall now give you the entire teachings of *Guhyasamaja*," said Gyüchen. Thus Jamyang Shepa received the entire lineage. Although such was the strict instruction of Gyüchen, but because Jamyang Shepa stayed for more than a year [at Gyüchen's] the circumstances were such that he also received teachings on *Cakrasamvara* and *Yamantaka* as attested to by his notes. [12b] He also received the transmissions of many other teachings.

When Jamyang Shepa was leaving, Gyüchen asked him to ensure that there will also be tantric division when he establishes a large monastery in Amdo. Gyüchen gave Jamyang Shepa a yellow robe and a *mandala* base which had the inscription 'offered at the presence of Vajradhara', and was studded with a conch in the middle and many shells around it representing the thirty heaps with the Mt. Meru at the centre. This was a good omen for it symbolised the establishment of a new base. The *mandala* was later given to the Tantric College and used to this day to make the *mandala* offering in the teaching courtyard. The *History of [the Teachings of] Yamantakatantra* states that in Amdo two centres of *Tantra* made great contribution towards the flourishing of the dharma. This is a reference to Gönlung monastery and its tantric division. Jamyang Shepa also requested the dharma king of Midröl to establish a *tantric* centre in Serkhok. It is said that the reason why tantric centres flourish in the branch monasteries of Jamyang Shepa is that he is believed to share the same continuum of mind with Tsongkhapa. It is also due to the auspiciousness of spreading the teachings that unite the view of emptiness with *tantra*. This is, at least, what the tantric master Chogdrup Tsang and Geshe Rinchen Chösang used to say.

Although one would expect Jamyang Shepa to succeed to the throne of Ganden, he concentrated much of his energy in upholding the scholarly tradition of the five great treatises. He therefore assumed only the abbotship of Gomang College and the monastery

at Phabongkha retreat. One of Jamyang Shepa's spiritual sons Gendün Phüntsoḳ, who was believed to be an emanation of Sherap Senge, assumed the position of Ganden throneholder. He was also responsible for committing to woodblock print the four interwoven commentary of *Guhyasamaja*. He also turned the great stupa of Tsongkhapa into a golden monument. [13a] He was also responsible for raising the appropriate funds from the government to institute the rites of *Cakrasamvara* as part of the regular practices of Gyüme monastery. The story of the Segyü lineage can therefore be told through the interrelationship of masters and disciples and how it reflects the wonderful auspiciousness of the bond.

Therefore the lineages of both Se and Ensa are [fully] present in the tradition of 'guide' on the two stages which stems from Jamyang Shepa. In Sera Lobsang Norbu's biography he narrates an account of how he once requested Jamyang Shepa to give teachings on the generation stage of Yamantaka. Surprisingly, in response, Jamyang Shepa who exclaimed "What is wrong with taking teachings on the perfection stage as well" reprimanded him for this? So he requested for the commentary on the perfection stage too. Jamyang Shepa told him that although he himself and the great Kaushri and Thangsakpa all received the transmission from the Segyü Dorjechang, he should impart to Lobsang Norbu certain instructions, which were not channelled through the other two masters. Though Thangsakpa received the teachings on Yamantaka and Guhyasamaja from Segyü Dorjechang, he took Guhyasamaja initiation and in depth *guide* from Jamyang Shepa. There exists the incredible story of how the two masters [Jamyang Shepa and Thangsakpa] revealed to each other the body-*mandala* deities during these teachings. Shok Dönyo Khedrup too went to receive teachings on the two stages of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Cakrasamvara from Jamyang Shepa when Jamyang Shepa was staying at Gephel as an ordinary monk and a hermit. It is said that Jamyang Shepa was rather busy so he gave a short version of these teachings and encouraged Dönyo Khedrup to take more extensive instructions from his student Thangsakpa. We find this story in the biography of Dönyo Khedrup. After Jamyang Shepa's return to Amdo Thangsakpa and Dönyo Khedrup became most well known. So in many literature of lineage masters Jamyang Shepa's name appears to have been left out. [13b] But as clearly attested to in the VIIth Dalai Lama's *Record of*

*Teachings Received* both Thangsakpa and Dönyo Khedrup received their lineage from Jamyang Shepa.

The master who is responsible for subsequent flourishing of these teachings is Pönlop Jhampa Rinpoche. It is said that Jhampa Rinpoche once went to see Jamyang Shepa at Gomang with the thought of taking teachings. However, on that day there were important dignitaries like the Lhasang Tsang paying a visit. So it was only possible to have a meeting but not receive teachings. Yet because of the efforts he put into the seeking teachings he felt deeply inspired and blessed. It is said that because of this experience Jhampa Rinpoche would always offer a cup of tea for any new person who came to attend his teachings. Jamyang Lama Sönam Wangle tells this account. From Jhampa Rinpoche, the teachings were transmitted to Södrak Dorjechang, then through to Nyendrak Dorjechang, and to Jamyang Lama Sönam Wangyal. I did not receive the lineage from Jamyang Lama Sönam Wangyal. My own teacher Kyapgön Dorjechang gave brief teachings on the two stages of Cakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja both in central and Tsang provinces of Tibet, and also at Chin in Mongolia. But in our monastery only the tradition of the two stages of Yamantaka exists but not that of Cakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja. This is unfortunate and we must strive to re-establish these. Nyendrak Dorjechang did give a *guide* on the generation and perfection stages of Guhyasamaja; but as I was in the middle of my *doram* examination I could not go. Apart from this I have not heard of any teaching on the *guide* of the generation and perfection stages being given here at our monastery. This meant that when I became the deputy abbot of a tantric college I had still not received the transmission of the *guide* on the two stages. This was truly embarrassing. So I pleaded Drakar Rinpoche, who was already seventy years old, to come and stay for a period of more than a month to teach. I received many teachings such as the two stages of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Cakrasamvara, especially of the ‘five-deity’ *mandala*.

[14a] Drakar Rinpoche would impart every aspect of the teachings he had received from his own teacher, including the hand gestures and manners of speech, without any omission or exaggeration. He would say that instruction is something that needs to be kept hidden from others. But when being given to others, it must be given in its entirety. He said: “In the past there was no need to actually recite the *sadhanas* undertake the practice

of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Cakrasamvara. It was adequate simply mentally review the stages of meditation to impart the transmission of the *guide*. These days I know neither the *sadhana* nor the *guide* by heart! The meditators living in the mountains will know these by heart.” Saying these he pledged that in his next life he would be a hermit who had dedicated his life for practice. This is how he would tell his own story with such humility.

Drakar Rinpoche had received the transmission of the *guide* on the two stages of all three Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Cakrasamvara three times from Phurbuchok Pönlop Rinpoche. There are notes based on these teachings. Apparently Phurchok Rinpoche quite often followed a custom of teaching *Path to Bliss* in the spring, *Sacred Words of Manjushri* in autumn, and these autumn teachings will be followed by commentaries on the two stages of either Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja or Cakrasamvara in turn. First Hortsang Sertri Rinpoche, who was a classmate of Drakar Rinpoche and knew him well, was asked to attend the teachings. I too began taking teachings at the same time. He [Drakar Rinpoche] lived like an ordinary monk wearing simple clothing, robes and shoes made of rough wool and walking about in halting steps. When approached by strangers asking questions he would simply respond “who knows? But this is what I have heard so.” Since he was not very forthcoming many regarded him as someone who was not learned. Nevertheless when he does teach he would often do so straight from memory. [14b] Thus many of the past scholars and adepts had gained realisations from taking to heart the profound instructions and have also imparted their insights to their disciples. The disciples too attained high levels of realisation and have taught to their students and so on. So not only the lineage of the teachings thrived but also realised masters ornamented the country like pearls strung together to form a rosary. Rik Dratsang, after showing the literature of the Se and Ensa traditions, had once exclaimed “Observe this! There is a rosary of [masters who have attained] the *union of beyond learning*.” So there have been in the Geluk contemplative tradition many great beings who have attained full enlightenment within their lifetime. Also the instructions on the *guide* to the stages of generation and completion were given only to one or two genuinely qualified disciples, who then upon gaining experience, instructed others. This is unlike the present practice whereby such teachings are given in public as if [setting out a stall] in a market. The instructions too were conducted [in the past] according to the level of the disciple’s mind so that what is taught is immediately put into practice.

When certain mastery is gained only then the instruction for the next section is given. This is the appropriate way in which one should receive the *guide*. Today [entire] instructions are given in one stretch so it is very rare to see *guide* being conducted in the ideal way. Manipa Sherap Tashi laments for this situation in some of his songs of experience.

Nevertheless we owe great debt to masters like Cangkyä Rölpai Dorje and Jamyang Shepa who helped disseminate these teachings widely to many students. The transmission of the *guide* on the two stages of Yamantaka, Guhyasamaja and Cakrasamvara all come from the lineage of Jamyang Shepa. According the oral tradition belonging to this lineage there is the following saying: “The instruction should come through a lineage of Gurus uninterrupted such that there are no dogs intervening between human beings, no ghosts intervening between gods The power of the blessings shall be poignant and as fresh as if the breath of the Dakinis is still warm.” So the lineage has come to us through successive Vajradharas.

**[15a]** Today it may be rare to encounter a pure lineage, but then that it is the age when the *dharma* goes from north to north. And it is due to the great kindness of Künkhyen Lama Jamyang Shepa and his spiritual disciples that we have the good fortune to have the opportunity to listen to these instructions to our heart’s content. It is difficult to determine why someone like myself ends with the role of playing verbal games with *tantra*. Perhaps we have truly reached an end of an era! Of course I do not have any profound realisation but due to the blessing received from my teacher Kyapgön Rinpoche, who has instructed me to teach, and due to the kindness of many teachers who are truly enlightened and also due to the kindness of many good colleagues, my ears have been conditioned by the sacred words of the masters. So I am today playing a role similar to a parrot repeating the *mantra* OM MANI PADME HUM!

As the masters say, “It is not adequate simply to be present in the congregation, you must listen well and take to heart what you have heard.” So ensure what you understand here today do not go to waste. You should integrate them within your mind; and through the combination of learning, contemplation and meditation you should make your life most purposeful. It is a fault if you do not listen well for you cannot understand if you do not listen with attention. And if you do not take the teachings to heart you



cannot register anything. The length of the discourse should not matter. It is said when the Buddha spoke the following simple sentence “This is the truth of suffering,” many attained the fruits of realisation. The Buddha himself saw the truth and thereby experienced the entire stages of the path by responding to the simple call “Come here!” from Manjushri. The Buddha was ready for such a call because of the fruition of his past aspirational prayers and also having developed a genuine desire to seek emergence from the pervasive suffering of conditioned existence and seeing cyclic existence to be like an ocean of suffering. So for him the simple instruction “Come here!” signified a call to the shores of *nirvana* and to leave behind the realm of *samsara*. [15b] “These days if someone is addressed ‘come here!’, they will just turn their head and look back!,” said my teacher. Therefore sentient beings’ karma is like the vessel, the Buddha’s enlightened deeds, the clouds. And when right time and conditions are met new shoots will grow. It is this kind of auspicious meeting between the spiritual aspirants’ positive merits and the fruition of the Buddhas’ enlightened aspiration that is called a ‘fortunate aeon.’ There are said to be one thousand such aeons.

This realm [i.e. the earth], which appears negative but is positive and which seemed good but has also negative aspects is a place where the five signs of degeneration are replete. It is said this planet is found to be not capable of being tamed by many Buddhas. Thus it was Buddha Gyatsoi Dul who took it into his care. The [birth on earth now] is said to be inferior in that we are at a time when the lifespan is one hundred years and is on the decrease. Yet it is also [said to be] positive because the present human existence offers the chance of attaining Buddhahood within a single lifetime. Also, the instructions to attain Buddhahood, i.e. the teachings of *tantra*, are unique to the beings of the present era. So our existence has both positive and negative aspects. *Tantra* flourished also in central India; there are many stories of heroes and heroines present in Udyana, northern India. As it is said that the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* emerged from the south and travelled through *paratani*, and from north to north, Nagarjuna spread the teachings in South India. Judging by Milarepa’s songs, *paratani* appears to be a reference to the translator Rinchen Sangpo’s bringing of the *dharma* to the Ngari region [of Tibet]. [16a] From there the teachings travelled further north.

As the line “The supreme object is taught so that supreme subject lies hidden” suggests, the stages of clear realisation remain the implicit subject matter of [even] the *Wisdom* sutras. So there is indeed a great meaning to *Path to Bliss*’ identification of ‘*expansive deeds*,’ ‘*the heart of profound path*,’ and ‘*the heart of hearts*’ with ‘illusory body’ and ‘clear light’. It was Marpa and Gö who brought *tantra* to the north, and when the time came for it to go further north masters like Mindröl Chökyi Gyalpo and the fifth Gyalse Dönyö Chökyi Gyatso brought it to the north of Machu river. Kalden Gyatso spread the *dharma* in the region of Rong; in particular, the successive reincarnations of Künkhyen Jamyang Shepa have propagated the perfect tradition of the union of *sutra* and *tantra* widely in this part of the country. It is truly amazing that we are living in such an auspicious time. You should therefore listen to the teachings with special motivation and make a pledge that in the least you shall not let this teaching session go waste. Your state of mind should not be such that when the qualities of the Buddha and liberation are mentioned you get impatient, but when the causes and conditions necessary for these attainments are mentioned you feel discouraged. Furthermore sealing your deeds with the appropriate dedication at the end is one way of making your existence purposeful; so constantly strive in this. In the past *guide* to the two stages were taught by Kadam masters in fragments and that individuals have gained partial experiences based on the practice of these teachings. However amongst these teachings there were some which did not accord with the instructions of Marpa and Gö, yet many others which did. It was Tsongkhapa who put into words the entire instructions without error; so today apart from few minor instances the scope for misunderstandings remains small.

**[16b]** If these teachings are heard from one’s Guru you are empowered to practice the instructions and you will also receive in your heart the blessings of the lineage masters of the root *tantra*. Segyü Könchok Yarphel once informed his teacher that despite having read many commentary texts many times, when the Guru teaches it feels as one is reading the text for the first time! His teacher, Gyüchen Könchok Gyatso replied that when the Guru gives the instruction it makes a great difference in helping one recognise [the nature of] one’s mind. One saying from the past masters of this oral tradition goes, “Even if you read a text on the *guide* to generation and complete stages hundred times, without Guru’s instruction it all remain mere words.” So by listening to teachings on the *guide* serves two

purposes: It introduces to you the instructions, and you receive the transmission of the blessings. Even if you take only the reading transmission you receive the transmission, which empowers you. It is therefore a source of blessing and inspiration. Södrak Dorjechang has said that as our present age is the era of scriptural reading, even the transmission of reading makes contributions to the *dharma*. It also leaves in us positive imprints pertaining to the understanding of the meaning of these scriptures. Some people, without realising this point, assert things like “What is the use of listening if you cannot understand? To whom is the teaching being given?, etc.” This is like asking to an ordinary worldly person: “Why do you accumulate wealth? Whom do you aim to give all what you accumulate?”

In brief, as an ideal of one’s study, you should be able to discern all teachings of *sutra* and *tantras* as essential instructions. It is not possible to attain Buddhahood within a single lifetime on the basis of the *sutra* path alone. Some early Tibetans discarded *tantra* in youth when they were engaged in the *sutra* practice. In later part of their life when they engaged in *tantra* practices, however, they discarded [the ethical teaching of] *vinaya*. This is reported in [Jamyang Shepa’s] *Great Exposition of Philosophical Tenets* and in writings of early Kadam masters. So the tradition of practising *sutra* and *tantra* in one sitting is a distinctive characteristic of Tsongkhapa’s approach. To this day in central Tibet and in Tsang, there is a discouragement of reading *Tantric* texts in the scholastic monasteries. And in Gyüme Tantric College it is said that monks must not bring philosophical texts in their daily reading text carrier! In this monastery, however, right from the start *Yamantaka sadhana* was made part of recitations so the tradition of a comprehensive union of *sutra* and *tantra*, which is the true intention of the master himself [Tsongkhapa or Thangsakpa?], has been established. So it is important to ensure that the following aspirational prayer comes into reality:

May the monks be immersed in the three higher trainings,  
may they be learned, industrious and their hearts filled with compassion and love,  
may they penetrate well through reason the definitive  
and provisional meanings of the scriptures,  
and may the Buddhas teaching like the two stages flourish in this monastery.

May the face of the earth be filled with learned and adept masters  
who, having trained in the common paths, possess the three vows, a

and whose yogic practices of the two stages become like the king of mountains;

May they be realised through ripening empowerment and liberating paths of generation and perfection stages.

It is said that many of the tunes of the *sadhanas* of Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka were actually sung by the master himself [Tsongkhapa o Thangsakpa?]. My teacher told me that he has heard from senior monks of the monastery about the story of how the master when singing line “may the earth be filled with learned and adept masters” would perform specific hand gestures to go with the tune.

## **2. Stages of the actual instruction of the experiential ‘guide.’**

This has four main sections:

- 2.1. The ‘basis’ of those who undertake the practice;
- 2.2. the appropriate site for the practice;
- 2.3. how to gather the requisite conditions for the yogic practice, and
- 2.4. the procedure of the practice itself.

The first one consists of two sections:

- 2.1.1. Training one’s mind through the common paths;
- 2.1.2. Being initiated through the four empowerment and protecting the vows and commitments as if they were one’s eyes.

### **2.1.1. Training one’s mind through the common paths.**

The first prerequisite that prepares the practitioner is to have one’s mind trained in accordance with the common paths; the second is to have properly received the *four empowerments* and to observe the vows and commitments thereby taken as dear as one’s own eyes. The training one’s mind through the practice of the common paths is indispensable in order to practice *tantra*. “Training one’s mind through the common paths” means that one should be capable of bringing into his or her experiential domain *bodhicitta* [the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment] and the perfect view of emptiness. [17b] In

contrast, if you lack even a degree of lessening of attraction towards the concerns of this life - let alone possessing the appropriate attitudes of a practitioner of uncommon small scope, or [for that matter] a true renunciation of middling scope, which are preliminary [to *bodhicitta* and the perfect view of emptiness] - , there is simply no way that you can be a suitable practitioner of *tantra*. Nevertheless owing to our residual practices from past lives and by the force of pure aspirational prayers today we have encountered the instruction that enable us to attain full awakening without dependence on an accumulation of merits and wisdom for over a period of three innumerable aeons. Also our thoughts are well turned towards such an instruction. Although one may not have the faculty to actually implement into practice such teachings, the very fact that one does not feel sceptical when hearing the clear sounds of the [tantric] teachings is a sign of the fruition of good aspirations.

The training one's mind through the common paths is the foundation of [the practices of] the two stages and if one already has achieved this there is no need to review the path again here. In the distant past spiritual aspirants were of mature faculty and of high mental acumen, the thoughts of dharma remained constant in their minds. Today this is difficult. So it is crucial that one undertakes a careful review of the entire elements of the path on the basis of whatever lengths of texts on overview one may use. One can use [Tsongkhapa's] *Condensed Points of the Stages of the Path*, or even a single verse like the recitation of the refuge formula. The master Sönam Wangal, a Guru Manjushri recommends in his short *guide* that we should cultivate the right motivation on the basis of a reflection on [Tsongkhapa's] *Foundation of all Excellence*. My refuge and mentor Vajradhara often says that one must receive instructions on *lamrim* to cultivate the right attitude for the preparatory initiation ceremony. He also used to give a brief but complete teaching on *lamrim* at the point generating 'the mind of all-encompassing *yoga*' [during an empowerment ceremony], and would say that the same must be done as a preliminary to the instructions on the *guide* to the two stages. Although we may be obstructed now, we have the expectation to receive soon a teaching that is swift and would bring the goal close to us. **[18a]** This is analogous to someone who desires to go to a house that is beautiful and full of riches but is stopped by the outside stone fence. And he keeps on hitting the stone fence but does not analyse how to get to the house and open the door!

Many might have the thought that *lamrim* refers to a volume of text that is appropriate only for some humble meditator up in the mountains, while for those of higher cognitive faculties they must read and study other texts of *sutra* and *tantra*. But all teachings are embodied in *lamrim* and we must understand that all learning, contemplation and meditation are [in actual fact] practices of *lamrim*. If you can at least take the concerns of this life with lesser importance and take the fate of next life with greater seriousness, and if you can entrust your wellbeing with single-pointed mind to the three jewels, and have a little regard to the laws of *karma*, you can make a [genuine] beginning in your *dharma* practice. There is no [immediate] possibility of a *dharma* practice for someone who gets perturbed when the concerns of next life are regarded more important than those of this life. Yet some, feeling that people like themselves simply do not have the faculty to engage in the mental discipline, may therefore put effort into recitation of *mantras*. In such cases too if the *mantra* recitation is done for mundane purposes the deed may become non-virtuous! We learn this from the teachings of Atisha. When one has generated a genuine sense of repulsion towards the concerns of this life then only one's spiritual practice becomes the path of *initial scope*. This, then, is the initial thus the lowest level of *dharma* practice.

The peerless master Atisha wrote his *Lamp on the Path* when invited to Tibet by the Tibetan kings. The uncle and Nephew [Yeshe Ö and Jhangchup Ö] requested him to compose a treatise that would be of benefit for the people of entire Tibet. Thus began Atisha's reform of the *dharma* in Tibet, which led to the establishment of the following convention: "If one's path accords with this [*Lamp on the Path*], it is then a practice of *dharma*. If it doesn't, it is not." In the *Lamp on the Path* all aspects of the path are subsumed under the practices of three 'scopes' as indicated by such lines as "*When someone by means of the following...*"

So if we take into consideration this critical need for seriously taking the fate of next life as of primary importance, we can infer that there are many instances where although externally someone may appear to be immersed in *dharma* yet in reality there is no genuine *dharma*, not even the size of a sesame seed, present in that person's heart! **[18b]** When one has gained realisation of this [initial] level, one may attain higher rebirth in the future life. However one still remains within the bounds of suffering engendered by conditioned

existence, an existence determined by *karma* and mental and emotional afflictions. For such an existence is characterised by transience, dissatisfaction, emptiness and absence of self-existence. Though we regard someone who is powerful, rich and famous as having achieved success, this may only be true to a mind afflicted by attachment and hostility. When you depart to the next life there is [actually] no difference between a universal monarch and a small insect like an ant. Both must follow the path laid by their [own personal] *karma*. So when you have generated a genuine aspiration to seek liberation derived from a deep sense of repulsion towards mundane achievements with the realisation that none of this is reliable, then you have entered the path of the *middling scope*. And since both ‘listeners’ and ‘self-enlightened beings’ belong to this level, so if one’s thoughts and practice do not accord with this level how can one be a practitioner of *great vehicle* when one is not [qualified to be a practitioner] even at the level of *lesser vehicle*?

*Bodhicitta*, the altruistic intention, lies beyond this level. When we do not think deeply, *bodhicitta* may not seem a great challenge. But once you begin contemplating with greater precision *bodhicitta* becomes highly difficult, both conceptually and emotionally. Attainment of individual liberation does not constitute the fulfilment of one’s own self-interest, let alone the fulfilment of other’s wellbeing. Therefore it is the approach of the *great vehicle* to seek the attainment of full enlightenment for the benefit of others and engage in the practice of the six perfections on the basis of generating this altruistic intention. The procedure of this path is stated in the following:

Supreme enlightenment for the sake of sublime beings...

This verse affirms the pledge to presenting the path, while the subsequent verses, beginning from “*With images of the Buddha, drawn and sculptured...*”, set forth the procedure for taking the Bodhisattva vows and also the stages of engaging in the deeds in general and, in particular, the last two perfections. This is then followed by the procedure for entering into the path of *tantra* by first taking the initiations. The text [*The Lamp on the Path*] then addresses in brief some questions raised about the relevance of the third empowerment for a celibate practitioner. **[19a]** Therefore, by examining whether or not one’s thoughts are in accordance with the *Lamp on the Path* one can determine whether or not one’s mind is [firmly] within the dharma. This, in essence, is the significance of [Atisha’s] reform of the

dharma in Tibet. Generally speaking, it is necessary to understand the multitude of Buddha's teachings—be they provisional or definitive—as eventually converging on the means of leading to. For those of lesser calibre of intelligence, the peerless master Atisha showed how all of these teachings can be subsumed into an individual's path to full enlightenment. He distinguished between three levels of capacity—i.e. the three scopes—amongst the practitioners of the path. We must understand that on this model the person who is concerned only with mundane aspirations is excluded from the category of dharma practitioner!

Later, Kadampa's philosophical views suffered degeneration although their practical teachings on the path remained strong. So [once again], Tsongkhapa elucidated the entire paths of *sutra* and *tantra* within the framework of [Atisha's own] *Lamp on the Path*. It is therefore important to undertake an extensive review of the entire elements of the path, say from the beginning of proper reliance on Guru to the training in *tranquil abiding* and *special insight*, based either on the extensive or middle-length versions of *The Stages of the Path*. If that is not possible, one can use shorter texts like *Condensed Points of the Stages of the Path* or the *Foundation of all Excellence*. If we were to examine even the [long] dedication verses of Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka *sadhanas*, we find that a unique feature of Tsongkhapa's approach is to ensure comprehensiveness of *lamrim* and the two stages [of *tantra* in all our meditative practices]. Therefore one should strive to by all possible means to implant powerful imprints within one's mind on the entire path. It would be difficult to find a more effective way of making one's existence meaningful through one sitting. Tsongkhapa himself writes the following:

Thus for the 'causal' and 'resultant' Great Vehicles...

Therefore as the General *Tantra* of all Secrets states

Omniscient masters are rare in the world...

The advent of a Buddha on earth is as rare as the blooming of the *udumvara* flower. It is said that this flower first grew when the Buddha was in his mother's womb, produced buds when he was born, and blossomed when he renounced the world. [19b] When the Buddha became enlightened and turned the wheel of dharma the flower is said to have enlarged into a full, mature flower plant. And when the Buddha entered the final *nirvana* the flower died



and withered. So although one could see the flower when it was present, because the flower appears only when a Buddha arrives in the world it is said to be extremely rare. The *Tantric* vehicle is said to be rarer still. For out of the thousand Buddhas coming into the world during this aeon only in the teachings of the fourteenth Buddha Chenlek and the last Buddha Mōpa—who is believed to have made the wish that may he follow the deeds of all the predecessors—that there could be *tantra*. This last possibility is again only inferred. For all the others there are no prophecies in *sutras* or *tantras* [of any of them teaching *tantra*]. Also [it is said] that although the Buddha taught the dharma in multitude of realms, of the twelve parts of the earth he taught *tantra* only in this world of *jambudīpa*. On this earth too there are beings among the three types of birth, who do not have the appropriate conditions for attaining Buddhahood within a single lifetime. It is therefore only the human beings, who are womb-born and possess the physical constitution composed of six elements, and are endowed with the ideal conditions of leisure and opportunity to attain full enlightenment within one lifetime. Furthermore, we have encountered the teachings of the Buddha. We have had the great fortune to meet with Vajrayana [the adamant vehicle] that is rarer than a Buddha. Furthermore, we have found the teachings of great Tsongkhapa that enables us to engage, in one sitting, in learning, contemplation and meditation pertaining to all [key] aspects of *sutra* and *tantra*. As the saying goes “chew with your gums even if you do not have any teeth left!” we should strive with all our efforts at this juncture when we have been given this once such an opportunity.

There are of course countless beings in countless realms who are objects of Buddha’s teachings, but it is only the ordinary beings of this earth who are endowed with the appropriate conditions for attaining Buddhahood within a single lifetime or six lives. It is only these beings who are said to be capable of practising the teachings that extract the essence of the *dakinis*’ exalted wisdom. [20a] Such a dharma is certainly unique and excellent and possesses a lineage uninterrupted from Vajradhara to one’s root Guru. But it is not adequate for the teachings to be profound, it is vital that your heart is compassionate. One may desire Buddhahood through covetousness but this can only become a part of one’s mundane endeavour. In view of this it is extremely rare to have the three things—a human existence of leisure and opportunity, to meet a spiritual teacher, and to encounter the teachings of *sutra* and *tantra*—come together in such auspicious way. There is a story

about Gya Geshe when he was the disciplinarian of Gyüme Tantric College. It is said that one day when the gong rang he saw few monks running away to avoid having to attend the congregation. He shouted at them: “You don’t need to run away; you might actually soon come face to face with the states of Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka!” There is no real certainty about when one might die. We do not even have the guarantee that we would not die tonight! What use do we have of those worldly riches? Thinking thus we can gradually overcome our attractions to the concerns of this life recognising that there is no security even if one were to be reborn as the gods Brahma and Indra. Through this way we can overcome attraction to the concerns of next life. It is crucial to ensure that one’s practice of dharma does not remain mere words, rather one’s heart and mind should be turned towards the dharma. It is of course due to the great kindness of our spiritual teachers that even at old age we can recite *mantras* and the texts of *tantra*. But without even slightly overturning attraction to mundane concerns it is difficult to turn the thought towards dharma. Because of this fact, the Buddha spoke about the preciousness of human existence, of death and of impermanence.

There may be many human existences of leisure and opportunity about, but as far you are concerned there is only one; the rest belong to others. Who can know whether or not there is going to be a next one? Often, even the dying person departs with the thought that he wouldn’t die on this day! Therefore, you should first combine contemplation on preciousness of human existence and life’s transient nature; this could then be followed by the generation of *bodhicitta*, the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment. [20b] Of all the aspects of the training in the common paths, the most important is the cultivation of the thought to lead all sentient beings to Buddhahood. In fact, all the sets of discourses were taught for the sake of this. Buddhas come to the world also for this sake and by resorting to all kinds of skilful means they teach the *dharma*. All of these teachings are encompassed in *lamrim*. It is due to lack of this [*lamrim*] practice that often prevents us from experiencing the results of practising *tantra*, those positive benefits stated in the texts. Therefore you should strive to generate, even at the level of simulation, *bodhicitta* — the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Whether or not one succeeds in one’s spiritual endeavour and whether or not one’s path is complete depends on one’s motivation. It is stated in the *Abhidharmakosha* that to have the thought “I shall

commit this” is to engage in a ‘mental act’, and its execution is the actual ‘intended act’. It states further that if an act is committed but lacks the preceding ‘mental act’, such an action remains incomplete for the ‘course’ of the action was not completed. This is true also in the case of a virtuous deed.

To sum up: You should consider the fate of next life more important than this life, the state of liberation more important than a higher rebirth, and of the three types of liberation, [you should recognise that] the unsurpassed liberation of the full enlightenment as supreme. You can cultivate the profound thought that you must attain enlightenment within this very life for the sake of helping others. In this way you should endeavour, as much as you can, to make your life most meaningful before this precious jewel [i.e. human existence] goes out of your hands forever.

### **2.1.2. Being initiated through the four ‘empowerments’; protecting the vows and commitments as if they were [as dear as] one’s eyes.**

As a second prerequisite to prepare the practitioner, he or she should receive the four pure initiations from a qualified master, [by means of] an empowerment that is capable of implanting the seeds of the four Buddha bodies. A ‘pure initiation’ is that which possesses the following features: Its [meditative] practices remain undamaged throughout its lineage; that all the elements of the rites are in accordance with the scriptures of the *tantra*; that the motivations of the initiates are pure; and [finally] that the initiates are not simply there sitting in the congregation but that seeds are being implanted within them as a result of having correctly introduced the meaning of the empowerment ceremony. To ensure these [conditions] is important. There could be differing levels of empowerment equal to the number of initiates; that is to say if there were twenty-five initiates there would be equal numbers of initiations. In other words each person receives initiation according to his or her capacity. Therefore, it is crucial that you pay close attention when you enter the gateway of *tantra*. These days right from start—that is when children are literally just able to eat—they are taught various rites and texts; nobody appears to mention anything about the need for initiations. Also many people seems to mistake the sprinkling of water from

consecrated vase at the gathering of hundreds and thousands of people as conferring initiations. Thukan Rinpoche is reported as having made the following statement:

In the *tantras* it has been stated that those who engage in the rites of entering into the *mandala*, either without proper initiations, or though initiated but not having performed the rites of ‘approximation’ etc., incur the downfalls of *bompo*, the secondary transgressions. And it has also been stated that transgression of a secondary precept of *tantra* is more serious than the transgression of one of the cardinal precepts of *pratimoksha*, ‘individual liberating’ moral discipline. I once asked the ‘all-knowing’ Cangkya: “Today, there are so many monks in both the Upper and Lower Tantric colleges who have no initiations yet they participate in the rites of *mandala*, self-empowerment, fire-burnt offerings, etc. Do these acts accrue merits or demerits?” He [Cangkya Rinpoche] replied: “Since the Upper and Lower Tantric Colleges are the custodians of the Omniscient Master’s [Tsongkhapa] *tantric* teachings, there is no demerits in these rites being performed at the congregations. But at the individual level, even the monks of the Upper and Lower Tantric colleges should not engage in such deeds elsewhere.” I too feel this is the case. Sometimes I feel that perhaps he [Cangkya] did not find anything else to say!

In view of this it is vital that once we have achieved real experience from training in the common paths, even if we have already embarked on the practice of *tantra* on the basis of receiving initiations before, we should once again take from a qualified master an initiation that is capable of planting the seeds within us of the four Buddha Bodies. When the predecessor [the previous Dalai Lama] visited Segyü monastery he is said to have told that the initiation which the previous Künkhyen has received is adequate. So if an initiation received in the past by the previous Künkhyen is being subjected to such scrutiny, what need is there to talk about the initiation received by others. Of the initiations, the vase initiation is the preparation for the generation stage, while the remaining three prepare for the perfection stage. ‘Secret’ initiation prepares for ‘illusory body’, ‘wisdom’ initiation, ‘clear light’, and the ‘word’ initiation prepares for the ‘Union’. Therefore, to practice the two stages one needs all four initiations. So if someone has received only the vase initiation he or she is empowered only to practice the generation stage, but not the actual practice of

perfection stage. Yet there is no practice of generation stage that is complete if the essential points of the perfection stage are not contained within it.

Of course, it is not adequate simply to receive the empowerments; one must also protect as dear as one's life the vows and commitments that one has pledged to observe at the initiation ceremony. As regards the actual precepts, if one is abiding within the norms of the 'individually liberating' discipline — the seven restraining precepts of body and speech —, there will be no new transgressions. Of course, the potency of the transgressions committed in the past may continue to increase and carry on its course. In the context of the 'action' and 'performance' *tantras*, there are these seven precepts and the Bodhisattva vows. However there is a multitude of *tantric* commitments mentioned in *Lekdrup*. In the higher classes of *tantra*, there are the fourteen root precepts of the *Yoga* and *Unsurpassed Yoga* classes, eight or ten *bompos*, and commitments pertaining to food, protection and companionships. There is also the requirement to constantly abide within the deity *yoga*; thus there are many mental precepts. As our minds are under the control of afflictions it is difficult even to observe the 'individually liberating' precepts. So how more difficult it must be to observe the two higher vows? But this does not imply that because the observance of the precepts is difficult that it is pointless to practice. We should not think like this.

The teacher Buddha is greatly compassionate. According to the *Mulasarvastivada* tradition the Buddha is said to have proscribed that the damaging of one's monastic vows through transgression of any of the four cardinal precepts if committed with an intention to conceal the act cannot be remedied. That is one cannot restore the vows. However given that the observance of the *Tantric* vows is difficult, he has made provisions so that one can retake the vows even after they become degenerated. Therefore a practitioner, who is within the vows of 'individually liberating' discipline, should on the basis of observing that discipline, identify the individual natures of the precepts. He or she should also determine the boundaries of transgressions so that when they go against the two higher vows they can take initiations from a Guru. If that is not possible, he or she could retake the Bodhisattva vows in the presence of a sacred representation; *tantric* vows [on the other hand] can be restored through self-empowerment ceremony.

To take self-empowerment, it is necessary to have undertaken the rite of approximation [i.e. retreat] in accordance with the proper procedures. Such restoration of the broken vows is not only crucial for the attainment of common and supreme feats, it is also vital for closing off the entrance to inferior rebirths. Of course when the practitioner fails to possess all requisite qualifications and through that causes a gulf between the practice and the practitioner, it is difficult to experience the merits of the practice as explained [in the texts]. However, there will be benefits as stated by Vajradhara if the following factors are present. Namely that your mind is turned towards *dharma* practice, you have suppressed attachments to immediate concerns of this life, you view the excellence of the *samsaric* world as defective, and in addition to these if you are able to review six times a day the precepts of the three vows. In any case, every evening if you review the precepts, take self-empowerment and recite the Vajrasattva *mantra* twenty-one times on the basis of the Vajrasattva meditation, the increment factor of your infractions is prevented because your precepts are blessed. Through this way you should undertake the practice, which ensures that you do not live with broken vows even for a single day. Thus perseverance in the practices of purification and resolution [negative acts] through such practices as the six sessions *yoga* is indispensable. **[22b]**

## **2.2. [Selecting] an appropriate site for practice.**

The appropriate place of practice [of this *tantra*] is stated in the *tantra* [itself in the following]:

In places of great wilderness...

There are both provisional and definitive readings of this passage. Generally speaking the provisional reading relates to the generation stage and the definitive interpretation to the perfection stage. First type of reading is called ‘provisional’ because it does not exhaust the full meaning and that a more profound explanation still remains to be uncovered. In contrast, the reading that relates the meaning to the perfection stage is called ‘definitive’ because such interpretation represents the final meaning. So in the present context [i.e. the passages concerning the place of meditation], although the definitive reading pertains to act of dissolving the five aggregates into clear light, etc., a provisional interpretation would yield

the following. The site should be a solitude and is free of people's coming and going, it should be in the wilderness and separated from any human habitat by at least fifteen *paktse*, a place where wild flowers blossom about. These references suggest the appropriate place of a generation stage meditation. Furthermore, the lines

At cross-points where two roads join, or under a solitary tree...

suggest [appropriate sites]. 'Crossroads' refers to the point where two roads intersect to form four ways, a 'solitary tree' is said to be that whose shadow does not touch another tree nor the shadow of any other tree falls upon it. 'With one symbol' is a reference in India to sites where Shiva's representation [*lingam*] is present. In Tibet, in its place Rva Lotsawa suggests a site called '*tse tup*', which must have some Indian source. These are the places appropriate for a comprehensive practice of the *yogas*. As for the highly realised ones, those who are undeviated from their single-pointedness, meditating in places of great distraction such as a marketplace, etc., can actually enhance the force of one's *yogic* practice. But for the beginners it is vital to have a site that is free from obstacles, where conditions can be acquired easily, and a place that is appealing to one's mind. Therefore it is crucial to choose a place that is conducive not just for a blissful sleep but for meditative absorptions and the practice of the *yogas*. It is for this reason even in the monasteries the disciplinarians, in their pronouncements, strongly object to laughter, loud talk, and playing of music. [23a] Because noise is like a disturbing thorn for those immersed in study, contemplation and meditation, and a cause for the loss of concentration, it is prohibited. So we can see that for a practitioner there is the issue of appropriateness with respect to place, company, actions, and etc. It is for these reasons, it is vital that we follow the advice given by the protector Nagarjuna to King Sukhrella:

Reside in sites that are conducive [to *dharma* practice]...

### **2.3. How to gather the requisites for the *yogic* practice.**

As regards how to gather the requisites of the *yogic* practice, regardless of whether one is undertaking the meditative practice of Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja or Yamantaka, one should be taught from the first stage of the meditative practice. So, at a chosen site — around the midpoint of the mountain, the point where the valley begins and also where the

morning sun light hits — one should erect a small pebbles mount. This is called setting the outer boundary. Inside this, one should consecrate offerings and *tormas*. The procedure for cleaning one's meditation hut and the environment is akin to those recommended in the *Lamrim* texts. However the expression used to describe [this act] is different. In the *tantras* it is referred to as 'cleansing and dusting the *mandala*.' In India, a square or a round platform is built from earth that is anointed with a mixture of cow dung and other substances and thus cleansed. Also in the *Vinaya* texts there is a recommendation to the fully ordained monks to prepare an anointed platform, which are referred to as the *mandalas*. Whatever be it may, one must dust and clean one's meditation chamber and the platform for arranging the offerings. One should sprinkle flowers on the platform. Anointing it with cow dung helps counter obstacles, while sprinkling the mixture of five nectars assists expediency in bringing powerful attainments. Arrange the painting or sculptured images of the Buddhas as objects of worship; set out articles of commitment such as the sceptre and bell, also arrange the offerings and *tormas* for the *mandala*, and the inner-offering should be prepared [as well].

It is stated in the texts that in India this [*torma* offering] can be prepared by using clean water mixed with flour or any other similar substances. [23b] Some say there is no textual basis for the Tibetan custom of making *tormas* of various shapes. In any case, the substance for the *tormas* should be such that for an advanced yogi the 'five meats' and the 'five nectars' should be gathered in actuality and they should be purified, transformed, and enhanced in accordance with the rites of consecration. The beginners can use substitutes such as *amla* for the 'great meat', etc. and thus prepare the inner-offering using the medicinal mixture. Alternatively, one can mix well already prepared 'nectar pills' [in the inner-offering]. You can make dough elephants and visualise it dying of natural cause and then use the dough to make a *torma*. There are different *torma* substances for the differing rites, e.g. of pacification, of enrichment, and so on. As for the shape of the *torma*, according to the customs of the Lower Tantric College and oral tradition coming through Künkhyen Jamyang Shepa, it should be of a round shape. This should be surrounded by thinner *tormas* equal to the number of the retinue deities. But if you wish to be less elaborate, you could also represent the retinue deities by simply surrounding the main *torma* with round



flat pieces of dough attached on the sides. The Segyü [monastery]'s custom also seems to be similar to this.

For *torma* offerings to the directional guardians, general *torma* offering to the Dakinis, *torma* offering to the action Yama deities, preliminary *torma* offering and also the *torma* offering during the 'self-generation', the set of 'offerings for enjoyment' such as the two water bowls etc. should be arranged from the right. And if possible, arrange new offerings such as the four waters at every new session. If this is not feasible adjust according to your convenience. If you wish to generate the boundary mark into a deity, prepare a white *torma* for this together with few flattened round dough disks called 'buttons', or small pyramidal shaped dough pieces to renew the *torma*. Prepare well also the *tormas* for the 'interfering forces' and also a white *torma* [to befriend the local spirits]. A proper accumulation of all the external conditions of a *yogic* practice would ensure that outer auspiciousness reflects the inner auspiciousness, and vice versa. [There is a correlation between the two.] For example, it is said that facial appearances of the human beings of the earth mirror the shape of the physical planet that we inhabit. [24a] Based on these considerations, make sure that these auspicious conditions are created within your own mental continuum.

Prepare a cushion that is slightly higher on the back. Underneath this draw a *vajra*; this accords the liberating deeds of the Buddha. It is all right to draw the 'immutable sign' [i.e. swastika] in stead. On top of this spread out *kusha* grass and 'multi-knotted' *dur wa* grass. In the afternoon when the sun reaches about half-point of the mountain in the front, bless the *torma* for the interfering forces together with the broom. Expel all the negative forces that hover around substances and offerings as if they are sent out as scapegoats. Though this is not essential, but one could [imagine] expelling them in between a white and black doors. Then offer *tormas* to the locally residing constructive spirits, and request them to protect you against obstacles and help accumulate the positive conditions [for meditative practice]. There are two traditions on the question of whether or not to generate the boundary mark into a deity. If convenient, as suggested by Cangkyä Ngagwang Chokden, visualise as the four directional guardian kings either the four signposts placed in the four directions, or those placed at the four outside corners of the chamber, or simply the four

sides of a square post. Alternatively, a single post can be visualised as Pagkyepo, the directional guardian of the south. Although this is more pervasive custom one can also generate the mark into any of the other three guardians too.

When Hortsang Rinpoche was the ‘throne-holder’ [of Tsongkhapa at Ganden], Pari Dhamchö and myself went to do the drawing of *lingam* for the ‘iron fortress’ burning rite. On our way we saw a boundary mark inscribed with a large BAI on top of which was a small flag. On this flag was written a verse beginning with “May the great king Chensang and his retinue...” Damchö remarked that although the verse is eloquent, what kind of a meticulous tradition this is where the name of the King Chensang is associated with a large BAI! [24b] Thus, he made criticism about the sloppiness of the practitioner. It is therefore vital that you carefully research all aspects of the tradition and acquire a full knowledge before you enter into a retreat. Everyone does have access to customs through seeing and hearing about the traditions. But I have also seen cases where people act as if they have never seen these practices before. One should not behave in this manner.

If one follows the custom of generating [the boundary mark] into the action deity or a protector guardian of the appropriate *mandala*, you could generate it into Vignantakrit. Or, one could also generate in the contexts of all three meditational deities such as Camkrasamvara, Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka into the Yama King Kalarupa, the lord over the three world systems, the protector who is bound by a special oath to Tsongkhapa. Thus there exist both of these two systems in the oral tradition. You can leave the deity undissolved until the completion of the entire retreat, or alternatively you can dissolve the deity and visualise it back into a boundary mark and view it thus. In any case, since the nature of the boundary mark has been imagined as a deity one should remember the deity of the boundary post when making *torma* offerings, and also entrust activities to the deity. The boundary post should not be disturbed in any way. If you haven’t generated the boundary sign into a deity, it is vital that you should relate to it as a reminder of your commitments. You must not go beyond the mark, and others who have not been included in your sphere of essential circle of people too should not be allowed to cross beyond the post. You should view it as a reminder that within its boundary there is no room for mundane concerns of this life, or self-cherishing thoughts, or perceptions and apprehensions

of ordinariness. Rather it is a symbol calling attention never to neglect the common and uncommon practices. This is how the tradition instructs us. That this is vitally important is attested to by the stories of Lochen Rinchen Sangpo, Gyalse Thokme, and Kharak Gomchung, who all attached posters [relating to the importance of these points] on their doors.

As regards the scriptural source for this practice of setting the boundary, unless we cite the example of the ‘stake deities’ (*phur la*), no sources exist in the *tantras* of the new translations. [25a] Therefore, the previous Künkhyen [Jamyang Shepa] has stated that erecting the boundary mark is to determine the line between the outer and inner boundaries. Some say that when the great Tsongkhapa was in Lhasa at the Monlam Prayer festival he would insert fifteen flags for the fifteen directional guardians on dough pieces and then make the *torma* offering. They say this is the source of the practice; but this appears to be nothing other than the practice of propitiating the ‘stake deities’. Thus, apart from this there is no explicit scriptural source for the custom.

As is the case both in Sakya and Kagyü traditions some Geluk lamas too follow the practice of collecting some ‘boundary pebbles’. So before you actually enter into retreat, you collect several pebbles and divide them into two groups to represent the transactions of people coming in and going out of the set boundary. Though this is not essential, one can leave these pebbles at the base of the boundary post. So when transactions do occur, at that point, you should cultivate the thought that no obstructive forces from outside penetrate, and no inner attainments are lost to the outside. You entrust this task to the pebbles. So in the above way, set the boundary of your retreat place. Be seated on your cushion and reinforce your deity *yoga* meditation. By sprinkling mustard seeds towards the four directions recite the *mantra* OM SUMBHANI SUMBHA HUM, GRIHANAN GRIHAN HUM, GRIHANAN PAYA GRIHANAN PAYA HUM, ANAYA HO, BHAGAVAN, VIRYA RAJA, HUM PHAT. While doing so, snap with your left fingers in the four directions. For Guhyasamaja practice, circle the snapping clockwise; for Cakrasamvara do it counter-clockwise. By reciting “**From the HUM at my heart ...**”, etc., meditate on the common protection circle. While reciting “**Myself in the form of the**

**deity, at my crown appears from OM a white wheel marked by OM at its hub; ...”**,  
etc.

With your left ring finger touch at your crown, throat and heart and bless your three doors — i.e. body, speech and mind. While holding *vajra* in your [right] hand touch the cushion and recite the *mantra* and imagine the seat and ground beneath you, including the great earth base, turning into the nature of diamond. [25b] Thus recall the liberating deeds of the Buddha when he conquered the forces of Mara at Bodh Gaya. These practices are known as setting the inner boundary. There is also the custom of not performing any other rites other than simply focussing single-pointedly on the deity *yoga* itself when undertaking the retreat of Cakrasamvara, Guhyasamaja or Yamantaka. So either on the 29<sup>th</sup> or the 30<sup>th</sup> of the [lunar] month you should make all these preparations and at noon you should undertake the practice of Guru *Yoga*, the length or brevity depending upon your convenience. You should also cultivate the appropriate mental state through training in the common paths, e.g. reinforcing your practice of going for refuge and so on. You should cultivate the fervent thought: “Before death – the law of impermanence - makes me no more, I shall ensure that this precious human existence does not go wasted. I shall, until I attain the state of perfect union, and in particular during this life, this year, this month, this day and this session, I shall ensure that I do not let myself be led astray by frivolous activities, procrastination, emotions of strong aversion and attachment. I shall commit myself to undertaking the practice as taught in the scriptures.” This is how you should strengthen your motivation during all sessions. Early dawn is said to be the time when the deities of ‘Pure Realm’ visit the world of four continents and observe the sentient beings.. It is for this reason and also since Guhyasamaja *mandala* deities are invited from Akanishta realm, it is considered auspicious to begin the actual *sadhana* practice at dawn on the first day of the [lunar] month.

#### **2.4. The procedure for the actual practice [of the *sadhana*] itself.**

The procedure of the rites of the [actual *sadhana*] practice consists of

##### 2.4.1. Preparatory practices;

2.4.2. The actual practice [of the *sadhana*];

2.4.3. The concluding activities.

The first one, i.e. preparatory practices, is composed further of

2.4.1.1. Common preparatory practices;

2.4.1.2. Special preparatory practices.

The first one, i.e. common preparatory practices consist of

2.4.1.1.1. Instantaneous self-generation;

2.4.1.1.2. Consecration of inner-offering;

2.4.1.1.3 The preliminary offerings and *torma* rite;

2.4.1.1.4. Consecration of the ‘self-generation’ offering, [26a]

2.4.1.1.5. Vajrasattva meditation and recitation.

#### **2.4.1.1.1. Instantaneous self-generation.**

The significance of undertaking an ‘instantaneous self-generation’ at the beginning of a *sadhana* is because right at the beginning [of the *sadhana*], ‘inner-offering’ has to be blessed, and this cannot be done by an ordinary person. It has to be done by someone [who is firmly] within the *yoga* of deity practice. In the *sadhana* rites of Yamantaka and Cakrasamvara the word ‘instantaneously’ is explicit. Though this is not the case here [in Guhyasamaja *sadhana*], the process itself should be instantaneous. In this regard it is mistaken to think that it is this flesh and blood body of ours that is generated into a deity, and that it is this deluded and afflicted mind that is generated into the Buddha’s wisdom mind. What is required is that the continuum of our deluded mind needs to be cut and that our body and its basis, i.e. the psychophysical aggregates, must all be purified into emptiness, the absence of inherent existence. From within that emptiness appears a beam of blue light about an arm's length, which then gradually manifests into a deity with face, arms, etc. in accordance with the process described in the *sadhana*. This is the same even for the shortest version of the generation rite. The aspects of ‘emptiness’ and ‘radiance’ of the blue light represent the ‘illusion-like *yoga*’ and therefore must embrace the practices of both method and wisdom facets [of the path]. This is however not to say that one can

never visualise one's body as a deity body; but at the beginner's stage it is vital to generate into a deity following a dissolution into emptiness. For if one meditates upon oneself as a truly existing deity without any understanding of the view of emptiness, there is no difference between this and [the lustful] who holds illusory woman to be real! This has been suggested in the six chapter of [Candrakirti's] *Guide to the Middle Way*. Therefore all meditations of deity must arise from [an initial] purification into emptiness.

Furthermore, since it is *bodhicitta*, the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, that determines whether or not a deed becomes a cause for the attainment of Buddhahood, it is essential to have at least a simulated generation of this altruistic intention . There are many stories about how when one engages in deity meditations devoid of even a simulated *bodhicitta* and an unshaken conviction in the truth of the view of the nonsubstantiality of all things one can take rebirth in inferior states of existence. [26b] There is thus the danger of creating the conditions for *samsaric* birth even though one may be engaged in the practice of the two stages. Therefore think thus: "In order to lead other sentient beings to Buddhahood, first I need to attain full enlightenment myself. For this purpose I shall engage in the practice of the two stages." Without losing the vibrancy of this thought you then recite "**Instantaneously...**" it constitutes the reinforcement of one's view of emptiness. This is what the oral tradition advises us.

Whatever the case may be, the sense of 'I' arises only in dependence upon our [psychophysical] aggregates, either collectively or individually. There is no way that the thought of 'I am' can arise in a total vacuum, independent of the aggregates. This is attested to by the passage

Apart from aggregates its grasping does not occur.

At our current level of existence, when the gross physical body composed of the elements and when the gross levels of mind like the six consciousnesses operate [in their normal ways], the very subtle consciousness and body remain nonmanifest. But at the time of death, when all levels of the gross consciousness dissolve, the subtle energy and mind, which are the essential natures of the four aggregates, become active. Thus there are two

levels – i.e. subtle and coarse - both within body and our. Since the sense of ‘I’ designated upon the gross aggregates upon the subtle aggregates do not co-manifest at any given moment, there is no consequence of an individual person’s mental becoming two separate streams of consciousness. This pointed is stated in the *Lamp Thoroughly Illuminating the Five Stages* [by the great Tsongkhapa]. At both levels there exists the possibility of perceiving mind and body indivisibly as the mixture of milk and water.

In the current context, however, the sense of ‘I’ that we focus on [in the generation meditation] is not exclusively that which is based upon the subtle mind and body. Nor is it exclusively the one that is designated upon the gross levels of mind and body. Rather, it is that sense of ‘I’ that is designated upon the aggregates without any discrimination between the subtle and the gross. [In other words] the basis of this designation is the indivisible unity of both the gross and subtle levels of body and mind. It is this sense of ‘I’ together with its designative bases that are purified into emptiness. Therefore the previous Künkhyen [Jamyang Shepa] writes the following in his *Generation Stage Guide*:

Having dissolved suddenly into light, without distinguishing between the subtle and gross levels, the sense of ‘I’ together with its designative bases...[27a]

The idea of ‘suddenly dissolving into light’ is the same as ‘disappearance into the sphere of emptiness’. The meaning [of this] is the dissolution of the perception of an autonomous ‘I’. “I did this and that at that time,” “I shall do this and that in future,” “I am doing this and that at present.” All of these acts of past, future and present appear as evident in this one ‘I’. Therefore in the meditational manuals [known as] *Guides to the View* texts one find such expressions as ‘the solitary, discreet ‘I’, ‘I’ that is tangible and real,’ ‘I’ that is self-sufficient,’ and ‘I’ that is the essence or the orb of my being.’

To the innate apprehensions of ‘self-existence’, ‘I’ appears constantly as an autonomous entity, and this perception arises through a conception of mind and body as undistinguished and through the conflation of the designation with its designative bases. Yet we fail to recognise this fact. There are also different instances in which the sense of ‘I’ arises within us. For example, I can have the thoughts that “I did this when I was a child” and “I did that when I was a grown up.” Similarly, I may think “I am going to that place this year,” and “This is what I shall do when I become old.” Thus it is clear that the sense

of ‘I’ can appear undistinguished in relation to this or that state of one’s bodily existence. Similarly, the thoughts “I shall sit,” “I shall eat,” “I shall sleep,” etc. occur in us revealing how the senses of earlier and later ‘I’s are assimilated. Thus the *Ocean of Reasoning* [by Tsongkhapa] states:

Ascertain that the ‘selves’ of the individual states of a sentient being’s existence are instances of that ‘self’ [i.e. the ‘self’ as generality].

Thus without distinguishing between the subtle and gross aggregates, the designative bases, and also without distinguishing between the subtle and gross levels of ‘I’, the designated, dissolve them into light. To assist in visualising the process one can compare this to how a breath is drawn inwards and then completely disappears when you blow on a silver mirror. If one meditates only on the absence of the appearance of ‘I’ there is not much difference between this and meditating on an empty space. Therefore it has been instructed that one must reflect on the absence of substantial reality [of all things]. Of course the ‘melting into light’ is a means to assist in dismantling [27b] the perceptions of substantial reality. But if one possesses the perfect view of emptiness, already all perceptions of the relative world [of multiplicity] have ceased insofar as the perspective of the inferential cognition of emptiness is concerned. This dissolution of perceptions of the relative world is known also as the ‘absence of perception’

As the following [from Candrakirti’s *Guide to the Middle Way*] states

For [your belief in inherent existence] entails that emptiness causes the disintegration of all things;  
but this cannot be right ...

The objects of the relative world are not empty in the nihilistic sense of there being nothing at all; rather the [objects] cease to exist from the perspective of a specific mind state. For example, right now although the perceptions of central and western Tibet, and China may not occur in one’s mind, these places still exist [in reality]. Similarly, what is required here is the perception of mere emptiness within which all appearances of substantial reality of things are absent. A ‘non-implicative negation’ refers to the kind of absence we find when we speak about the absence of a pot in front of us. Here the absence of a pot coincides the



non perception of a pot. Thus such a negation is defined as ‘that statement which simply negates its contrary.’ So to assist your visualisation, dissolve your sense of ‘I’ together with its designative bases into light and place the mind unwavering on that absence. Should one wish to be more elaborate, follow the process of ascertaining the four essential points [of emptiness] such as ‘identifying the object of negation’, etc., as described in the *Guide to the View* literature. When you have arrived at the absence through such analysis imagine your mind as indivisible with that emptiness. Thus you should be able to have the ‘appearance’ aspect [of your meditation on emptiness] arising into a deity form while the essential mind remains [totally] immersed within the expanse of emptiness.

[Generally speaking] every instance of a cognitive act has both an aspect of ‘apprehension’ and an aspect ‘perception’. A good illustration of this is one’s consciousness in dream states. At the level of apprehension what is experienced [subjectively] is only a dream, yet at the level of perception there is the multiplicity of appearances such as a [perception of a] mountain, a forest, a house, etc. Here [in the visualisation] too, at the level of apprehension your mind should abide [single-pointedly] in emptiness while at the perceptual level there should be the appearance of a deity form. Furthermore, there must be the underlying motivation of love, compassion and the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment, even though the immediate impetus may be one’s understanding of emptiness. Your experience should be such that your mind is indivisible from that very absence arrived at through placement of your mind in emptiness, just as water poured into water. **[28a]** This, then, is also the meaning of the passage [from the *Guide to the Middle Way*] that begins with following:

Hence they originate perfectly from emptiness...

At all times one should train in the perception of all appearances as manifestations of pure visions deriving from the illusion-like *yoga* within which the wisdom cognising emptiness arises with a form of a deity. Since the emptiness of mind that has the potential for perfect enlightenment is the ‘naturally present Buddha nature’, when all pollutants are cleansed, the emptiness of everything — i.e. the environment and the beings within it — will appear as deities. Although it is difficult to convey this idea through words alone, I have spoken about this [a little] here thinking that these are the instruction of my Gurus. Throughout

the entire *sadhana* rite it is vital that one proceeds through the various visualisation sequences while remaining undistracted from the awareness of emptiness. In this way, everything will then [naturally] appear as mere ‘constructs’ of thought. If, in contrast to perceiving the deity appearance as illusion-like, empty of substantial reality, your visualisation of the deity takes place while the glue of grasping at substantial reality remains still evident, your meditations cannot be of any help in cutting off the root of unenlightened existence. But, on the other hand, if your visualisation is enforced by the ‘view’ [of emptiness], meditation on the various visualisation sequences can become powerful in destroying the root of cyclic-existence. Therefore, in order to cut off the root of unenlightenment it is essential to have the wisdom that is in direct opposition to grasping at substantial reality [of things and events].

[In view of the above] certainly, the questions raised by the great Indian Pandita concerning the impossibility of cutting off the roots of cyclic-existence through the meditation on the ‘relative’ *mandala* of deities do have great significance. In response, Buddhajnanashri writes in his *Drup thap kun sang*:

Apart from the mind of ‘ordinary’ conceptions  
there are no sufferings of existence and becoming;  
to that which is the embodiment of the ‘profound’ and the ‘vast’  
no conceptions [of ordinariness] arise.

Thus he points out that there exist in the generation stage meditation both the ‘profound’ — the practices pertaining to the ultimate truth — and the ‘vast’ - the practices of visualising the cycle of deities – [dimensions of the path]. **[28b]** He suggests that because of this combination such a meditation is forceful in undermining both the perception and apprehensions of thoughts that grasp at substantial reality [of all things]. This is how we should understand the significance [of the above lines].

Since the mere absence of perception arrived at through the dissolution of one’s body into light is [strictly speaking] not [the final] emptiness, it is vital that there should be the additional factor, namely the cognisance of emptiness. [This is the cognition that] no thing or an event is established inherently and objectively from the designative bases. From within that emptiness appears a beam of blue light, the height depending upon one’s convenience of visualisation. Focus on this and cultivate the thought ‘I am’ and strive to

have as much clear perception as possible. This body is not your ordinary corporeal form composed of flesh and bones, rather it is a body of light, best illustrated by the metaphors of a rainbow, rays of sun, a crystal ball, or the flame of a butter lamp. Once you have this image of the body of light clear in your mind and you can then gradually visualise the distinct shapes of face, arms, etc. This, then, is the basis of a deity visualisation; so ensure to have this well within your mind. When this basic element is lacking it is difficult to eliminate from within one's meditation the [lurking] sense of one's body as corporeal composed of flesh and bones. This is what the teachers tell us and appears to be certainly an experiential observation.

So, the dissolution into emptiness represents *dharmakaya*; arising into a blue light from within that represents *Sambhogakaya*; and arising into a deity form represents *Nirmanakaya*. For advanced practitioners — i.e. practitioners of highest capacity — this much is said to be sufficient in undertaking a complete meditation on taking the *kayas* into the path. For the beginners, however, this is difficult; still the practice *will* leave [positive] imprints. Thus when you say “**I, as Vajra Wrathful, ...**” you should visualise the complete deity form together with the consort as the rest of the sentence states. This is the same also for the visualisation of the remaining deities. [The principal deity is] Akshobhya, who is in a peaceful countenance with a slight expression of fierceness. This indicates his significance as a counter-force to anger and that he is in nature the wisdom of indivisible bliss and emptiness arising into a deity form to eliminate the forces of anger. [29a] The colour of his body is deep sky blue; it is not pure black, rather a blue tinged with blackness. “**Black, white and red**” should be read as [referring] first the root face, second, right face, and the third as the left face. This procedure for identifying the colour of the faces is the same for all the other deities of the Guhyasamaja *mandala*.

The ‘life-supporting’ wind has multiple colours, which are represented by the multiple colours of the faces, while the black root face symbolises the emphasis Guhyasamaja *tantra* places on illusory body. The right face symbolises ‘illusory body’ and right channel, while the left face symbolises ‘clear light’ and left channel. The root face symbolises ‘union’ and the central channel. Again, the white colour symbolises

‘appearance’, the red, ‘enhanced appearance’, and the black symbolises ‘approaching attainment’. Collectively, the three [channels] represent the [perfect] ‘union’.

Of the six arms, the three right arms symbolise the three ‘emptying’ of the sequential order, while the three left arms represent the three ‘appearances’ together with their ‘medium winds’ associated with the reversal order. As one sees multiple heads and arms in some [fine] Mongolian Chinas, or like a spear with multiple handles when reflected in a silver mirror, one should imagine the multiple heads [of the deity] as one not obstructing the other. All of these should be perceived in the nature of light and not composed of flesh, bones and blood. The first right hand holds a five-spoked *vajra* at heart, which is Akshobhya emblem; the second holds a wheel of either eight or twelve spokes, which is Vairocana’s emblem; and the third holds a lotus, Amitabha’s emblem. The first left hand holds a bell at heart, which is Vajradhara’s emblem; [29b] the second holds a jewel, which is Ratnasambhava’s; and the third holds a sword, Amogasiddhi’s emblem. This [symbolism of the emblems] is similar also to [the description of] other deities. For example, in the case of [the description of] Vairocana, “**the right [arms holding] a wheel, a vajra, and a lotus**” etc. shows that he holds his own emblem in the first right arm; but it shows that he also holds the emblem of the six Buddha families. This is to indicate that although in appearance the deities assume the specific form of their own Buddha family, in reality they are all embodiments of all Buddha families and are thus the lords over all [Buddha] families.

“**Consorts resembling oneself**” means the same as ‘consorts born of one’s own natural expression’. They are, like the reflection of one’s body, part of the same single continuum and share similar number of faces and arms and adornment of ornaments. The consort with a peaceful expression is called Vajradhateshvari, and one who possesses a slight expression of fierceness is Sparshavajra. The ‘father’ [male] is seated cross-legged and is embraced by the ‘mother’ [female] in the lotus position, which represents the union of method and wisdom and the union of the Buddha body of reality (*dharmakaya*) and form (*rupakaya*). Both the ‘father’ and ‘mother’ are adorned with jewel crowns, ear rings, necklace, arm bands, garlands, bracelets, anklets and a skirt. These eight ‘precious’ ornaments signal mastery over eight qualities such as generosity and so on. Their hair is

raised upwards and tied in individual plaits with their tips turned inside and tied around with bands at two points forming what is called a ‘top knot’. This can be done also by not having the hair woven in plaits. From the top of the hair are let down pearl strings suspended in loops and half loops forming like a net around. Crowning this at the top is a jewel or a five-spoked golden *vajra*. **[30a]** At the centre of this [ornament] is, like a reflection of a body in a mirror or jewel studded over an ornament, either a thirty-two spoked jewel wheel or a thirty-two spoked *vajra*, which symbolises the channel centres at the crown.

On his head, [the male deity’s] is wearing a crown of eight-spoked wheel, three spokes each in the front and the back, and one each on the sides above the ears. If one were to look from the perspectives of the individual faces it would appear as if there are three spokes above one’s head. Since the three heads emerge out of a single neck trunk only one wheel is needed. On all three heads are jewel ornaments surrounded by the endless knots from which protrude the images of the five Buddha families: Akshobhya in the centre, Vairocana and Amitabha on the right, Ratnasambhava and Amogasiddhi on the left. For those belonging to the Vairocana family, Vairocana [should be visualised] at the centre and in its [usual] place [i.e. east] is Akshobhya and so on. Similar changes apply to other deities as well. This is the reason why there is divergence in the location of the Buddha families in the ‘rites’ pertaining to the ‘entry into the *mandala* with [the giving of] the apparels of deity’. From between the wheel spokes are pearl strings suspended forming full and half loops up to the level of eyebrows covering the wisdom eye. As the youths in India wear flowers over their ears, the deities wear blossoming *utpala* flowers over their ears with the stems facing to the rear. Silk ribbons are let down from them with a knot tied at the front. The hair, wheel and so on do not obscure each other. Earrings are made of round jewels in the shape of white conch rings and studded with three jewels topped with half five-spoked *vajras*. **[30b]** From these hang pearl strings forming a net of full and half loops. Although all faces have ears, it is only the ears of the root face that have earrings.

The jewel necklace is made of three to five rosary of beads; at the front is either a *vajra* or a sixteen-spoked wheel symbolising the [throat] channel centre. It is adorned with a net of pearl strings reaching down to the level just above the heart. There are differing

explanations about how the pearl strings are woven, e.g. that it is woven in a double string, in triple, in strings of five, or strings of eight, and so on. To ensure that the beads do not get loose, there is a knot in the shape of cross at the base at the top. Arik Geshe once said that the crucial point is master the visualisation, but not to acquire the detailed knowledge of a jeweller, which is essential if only one is making the ornaments! For otherwise there is the danger of pretence. At the wrists are bracelets made of pearl strings the loops hanging towards the arms. Around the ankles are anklets made of pearl strings with the loops suspended downwards. One can also visualise similar ornaments around the elbows and above the knees, but this is not necessary. ‘Arm bands’ (*se mo do*), ‘worn to make offerings’ (*cho chir thok*) and ‘*se ral kha*’ all mean the same thing. In vernacular usage it is called *se ro jhe*. So, careful attention to vernacular language can help shed light on the meaning of some scriptural terms. It is made of jewel rosaries with three to five strings; at the front or at the rear is either a *vajra* or an eight-spoked wheel. From this are suspended pearl strings forming a net of full and half loops around both the right and left arms reaching down to just above the elbows. By ‘garland’ is meant a garland made of various jewels and precious stones of various sizes that hang from the neck. [The Tibetan word *do shal* for a garland] ‘*do*’ suggests the equality of both right and left sides, and ‘*shal*’ suggests something suspended downwards. In some Tibetan books there is a mention of two white and red *shals*. [31a] The skirt is made of pearl strings with a *vajra* or a sixty-four-spoked wheel at the front representing the navel channel centre. From this are hanging jewel strings in lines of eight and from which hang sixteen strings.

The upper part of the body is adorned with a silk robe worn like a shawl with the ends over the shoulders. It is also said to be similar to a Mongolian dress that has no collars, somewhat like Atisha’s upper robe. The lower garment resembles the costumes worn by masked dancers, flat squares both at the front and the back with many folds on the two sides. The word ‘with an opening’ (*char wa*) has been given many explanations in the commentaries, but in essence it refers to a way of wearing the garments so that during the union of the ‘father’ and ‘mother’ the garments could be easily opened and thrown to the sides. My Guru suggested this meaning. Because at the time of sexual union the tiger-skin worn, as a loincloth has to be opened, in the hymns to Cakrasamvara entitled *Mixing the colours of space* one reads

he holds suspended an open loincloth of tiger skin.

To signify their nature as that of uncontaminated wisdom, there are varieties of divine garments. Generally, divine garments are said to possess eight distinctive characteristics, such as that when touched they can be held under a finger, when unfolded they can pervade the space, they are soft, thin and light, etc. This is how the oral tradition coming from Segyü Dorjechang describes them; I heard this from Kyapgön Dorjechang when he gave the initiations pertaining to the Maitri cycle [of teachings].

This is a good illustration of how the entire *mandala* and its deities can appear within and can be encompassed inside a seminal point, the size of a mustard seed. **[31b]** Thus by focusing upon the body and the transcendent mind of the omniscient, which are by nature light, clear and transparent such that one can see inside from the out and the outside from within, one should cultivate clear appearance and the identification ‘I am’. While placing your mind thus you should meditate. If you are ignorant of the actual method of deity meditation, you could encounter the same fate as the person who, after meditating on Yamantaka, could not come out of his cave because his [buffalo] horns kept getting caught at the cave’s mouth! This is the story mentioned in the *Mind Training* texts. Therefore it is crucial to dissolve one’s body into clear light and meditate everything as manifestations of that pristine cognition. It is not our current body [of flesh and bones] that is being meditated upon as a deity; rather the conventional notions and perceptions of [everyday] ordinary identity are brought to a cessation and that the mind is placed upon emptiness. In the least, one should meditate on deity from a state of non-perception, i.e. a mere absence. This is true for all four classes of *tantra*.

In order to make it easier to perceive [the deity] in the nature light and light rays, first visualise a blue light. If one wishes to engage in the practice of generation stage meditation one should never be separated from the deity *yoga* during all periods, i.e. both during the actual sessions and during after-session periods. Furthermore, it is not adequate merely to have visualisations of the deity, but internally one must possess (a) the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment, (b) the understanding of perfect emptiness, and (c) the perception of everything as manifestations of the pristine cognition of great bliss. This is vital even in the contexts of brief rites such as making offerings and *torma* consecration. If

one continually cultivates the familiarity with a *yoga* that is an indivisible unification of method and wisdom, it becomes easier to have clear perceptions [of oneself as a deity]. For we know that due to our [long] habituation, thoughts and perceptions of ordinary [everyday] existence arise within us naturally. Throughout the *sadhana* there are many visualisation sequences, but what is most important is never to be diverted from the awareness of everything as a play of the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness. It is therefore profoundly significant to undertake the practice of instantaneous self-generation at the start of a *sadhana*. In the past [there was the custom] that after the instruction on the instantaneous self-generation was given a period of seven days is set aside for the disciples to meditate. Once they gain some experience it is reported to the teacher. [32a] The rest [of the *sadhana*] is taught also in accordance with the level of disciple's capacity such that when the 'commentarial guide' is completed the 'experiential guide' is also effected. After that, the meditation is undertaken in one stretch and in a condensed form throughout the year, months and so on. It is for this reason that there is the custom of giving extensive description of the body colours, hand implements, and ornaments, etc. when the 'guide' is first [given]. These days, however, people simply go through [the *sadhana*] rite swiftly in one stretch during a couple of sessions as if one is riding a galloping horse with a spear in one hand! This is not right. Many oral instructions are today already recorded in letter making them appear daunting. There is thus the danger of making people overwhelmed when too elaborate an explanation is given. In brief, if you train in the [meditative practices of] 'generation stage' through constant reviewing, the knowledge and experience of perfection stage can become almost a by-product. In this way, the seeds for [perfect] 'union' may be implanted within your mental continuum.

#### THE CONSECRATION OF *VAJRA* AND BELL

As a signal [reminding you] never to forget the [need for] comprehensive practice of 'method' and 'wisdom' [elements of the path], you should uphold [the ritual implements of] *vajra* and bell. The right hand the *vajra* [held by it] represent 'method'; to ensure that you do not forget the importance of cultivating all aspects of the path, without exception, pertaining to the practices related to 'method', you should uphold the *vajra*. The left hand



and the bell [held by it] represent ‘wisdom’, and to ensure never to forget the importance of the practices of wisdom, you should uphold the bell. [In general] the ordained monk wears the ‘three robes’ to remind himself of his monastic vows. [Similarly,] the initiates uphold *vajra* and bell during an empowerment ceremony as a signal not to forget the symbolism of the wisdom of method and wisdom. And, as a signal not to be distracted from one’s perception and identity as deities the initiates are given the apparels of the deity. So, with [full] awareness of their [profound] symbolism you should consecrate the *vajra* and bell.

**[32b]**

Thus all the elements of ‘method’ - from a proper reliance on the spiritual teacher at the beginning to the final attainment of the highest ‘union’ of no more learning — are all represented by *vajra*. Similarly, all the elements of ‘wisdom’ are represented by bell. This, in brief, is the meaning of the passage “**Vajra is method and ...**” Furthermore the two elements, method and wisdom, are not isolated from each other; rather one should possess an indivisible union of the two dimensions. Thus the text reads “**Both are in the nature of the ‘ultimate *bodhicitta*.’**” In the Vajrayana system the ‘ultimate *bodhicitta*’ refers to the pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness, namely ‘method’ and ‘wisdom’. Thus the ‘ultimate *bodhicitta*’ in the context here [in Vajrayana] is a name for the ‘EVAM that is the indivisible bliss and emptiness’ or the ‘EVAM that is the indivisibility of the two truths.’

[Circling of] the five-spoked *vajra* upwards symbolise the five Buddhas, and downwards, the five Buddha consorts or the five Dakinis. The lotus petals [on the *vajra*] symbolise the channel centres of the male and female deities; the eight sides of the hub of the *vajra* represent the eight channels inside the ‘spaces’ [i.e. the secret sites] of ‘father’ and ‘mother’. The eight sides of the ‘bell tongue’, i.e. the clapper, symbolise the eight spokes of the channels at the tip of the ‘jewel’ [i.e. the male deity’s organ]. The empty space inside the bell represent the ‘mother’s space’, while the bell-handle symbolises the ‘father’s sign’, and so on. So you should hold *vajra* and ring the bell correctly with full awareness of their symbolism relating to all the essential aspects of the path of two stages as explained in [Khedrup Je’s] *A Delightful Feast for the Yogis*. If you this, you will leave [positive] imprints over the entire path, namely from beginning of a proper reliance on the

teacher to the [realisation] of ‘union’. You will also create the auspicious conditions for leading all sentient beings on the path that is a comprehensive union of method and wisdom. [Otherwise] as the all-knowing Khedrup Je states, ringing the bell with no particular thought or awareness is not too dissimilar from a bell ringing from the neck of a cow! **[33a]** And those who regard a loud playing of symbols and beating of drums as more significant than ringing a bell [at *sadhana* rites] do so out of a false understanding.

[Maitreya’s *Ornament of Clear Realisations* states]

As the person [manipulates] the ropes tied to a water-extracting-wheel...

and as it is stated also in the ‘Far Gone’ [section in the sixth chapter] of [*Guide to the Middle Way*], the yogi’s awareness is instantaneous. In a similar manner, ensure that by reflecting on the symbolism of *vajra* and bell ensure that all the elements of method and wisdom practices are complete in your meditative sessions so that they are perfect from start to completion. In the ‘Perfection vehicle’ system the Bodhisattava’s practice is complemented by wisdom. Such an approach that engages in the path by bring together all six perfections within the practice of each individual perfection is described as an ‘armour-like practice’. This is said to be a synonym for the ‘path of a Bodhisattva’. There [i.e. in the perfection of wisdom literature], it is stated that within every instance all the aspects of method and wisdom such as generosity and so on must be complete. This is the same point [underlined by the symbolism of *vajra* and bell]. In the Sutra system method is identified with compassion, altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings, etc., while wisdom is identified as the understanding of emptiness. In the context of *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra*, ‘illusory body’ is the method, and the ‘ultimate clear light’ the wisdom dimension. [One could say that] great and industrious Milarepa attained the supreme state [of Buddhahood] within a short period of time because he was able to effect the entire aspects of method and wisdom paths within every moment [of the path]. Such achievement of completeness depends on enquiry and meditative practice hence the importance of both learning and contemplation.

The meaning of the *mantra* [for consecration] is as follows:

OM indicates the indivisibility of the three ‘diamond natures’ [*vajra* body, speech and mind]; SARVA TATHAGATA, all those thus gone beyond; SIDDHI, powerful

attainments; *VAJRA SAMAYA*, the diamond-like binding oaths; *TISHTHA*, firm or to obtain; *ESHSTAM*, not transgressing the boundaries; *DHARAYAMI*, I shall uphold; *VAJRA SATVA*, the diamond master; [33b] the three HUMs, the three *vajras* of body, speech and mind; and the five HIs pertain to the five pristine cognitions. To put these together, [the full *mantra* reads as we find in the *sadhana*] “**I shall, right this instant, obtain the diamond-like oath established by all those gone thus beyond and shall never transgress the boundaries of inner method and wisdom. As a signal [reminding me] never to forget this I shall uphold the symbolic *vajra*.**”

While reciting the above, touch your heart with *vajra* by holding it with your thumb and index finger. *VAJRA GANDA*, bell; HO indicates ecstasy. Thus with your left thumb and index finger place the bell at your [left] hip. So upholding the three commitments—that of *vajra*, bell and gestures or that of body, speech and mind—encompasses all the paths. Through [this way] one causes joy in *Vajrasattva* and so on. This is the provisional interpretation [of the *mantra*]. As for the definitive explanation, the joy engendered within as indicated by the symbolism is embraced never to be separated. The definitive meaning of HUM is that it stands for the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness, which is the *vajra* mind. And circling the *vajra* in the eight directions indicate the practice of sealing of all phenomena within indivisible nature of reality by the inner *vajra*, the pristine cognition of indivisible bliss and emptiness. The meaning of [the verse]

**That which frees sentient beings from ignorance...**

is that just as the symbolic *vajra* is being circled [in air] to indicate the act of liberating sentient beings from darkness of ignorance, the upholding of the signified *vajra*, the *yoga* of indivisible method and wisdom, within one’s heart is wondrous. This is achieved by gaining familiarity with the realisation of suchness, which is the virtuous act of the three doors of liberation. In order not to forget this, one should uphold the gesture of *vajra* with joy. [34a] In some texts, it reads “**That which liberates sentient beings linked to ignorance, ..**” According to this reading, the verse would read as “To liberate sentient beings who are linked to the darkness of ignorance, etc.” Although this reading does not appear in Tsongkhapa’s writings there is not much divergence in the meaning. The

intervening verses between HUM and HO were translated into Tibetan by the Lotsawas [translators].

Kyapgön Dorjechang rings the bell in eight directions correlating them to the eight sets of *mantras*, and then at the end rings the bell in the normal way. The eight sets of *mantras* are: *VAJRA DHARMA RANITA*, pronouncing the diamond dharma; *PRARANITA*, thoroughly pronouncing; *SAMPRARANITA*, very thoroughly pronouncing; *SARVA BUDDHA KESHTA*, the field of all Buddhas; *PRACALINI*, shake with tremor; *PRAJNAPARAMITA*, the wisdom gone beyond; *NADA SVABHAVE*, the nature of sound; *VAJRASATVA HRIDAYA*, the heart of Vajrasattva; *SANTO SHANI*, made joyous. The three HUMs stand for transcendent body, speech and mind, while the three HOs, liberation of sentient beings of inferior, medium and advanced faculties thus making them satiated. Thus, circling the *vajra* and ringing the bell in eight signify stirrings within the eight channels inside the ‘mother’s space’ and ‘father’s secret site’, which induces the total experience of great bliss of ‘four joys’ of both serial and reversal order through the process of entering, abiding and absorption. From this one can also understand the meaning of the *mantra* as well.

#### **2.4.1.1.2. Consecration of ‘inner-offering’.**

The consecration of ‘inner-offering’ consists of four parts:

- i) cleansing;
  - ii) dissolution;
  - iii) generation; and
  - iv) actual consecration itself.
- a) *Cleansing of ‘inner-offering.’*

With regard to the actual substance used as the [material] basis for ‘inner-offering’ it can be an alcohol; [34b] or in monasteries with strict regulations and for ordained practitioners for whom the observance of the monastic precepts are vital, [black] Chinese tea can be used. This, in fact, is the tradition of Gyalwa Ensapa. It is also for this reason,

in *Offerings to the Guru* text, inner-offering and tea offerings are found together. This is [at least] what Yongzin Yeshe Gyatsen suggests. During the inner-offering [consecration] ceremony, even if you do not have an actual *torma* prepared, you can imagine one and bless it and offer it. Although it is stated some texts that the *torma* should be anointed with alcohol, water and inner-offering, it has not been the custom since the previous Künkhyen [Jamyang Shepa]’s time to anoint *tormas* with alcohol and water. In the notes taken from Dragkar Kachu Rinpoche, it is written that one should cleanse [the inner-offering] with OM HRIH SHTI but there is no need to sprinkle cleaning water. Since cleansing [of no ritual objects] can be done with an ordinary substance first the inner-offering [itself] is consecrated. Therefore you should not sprinkle from it prior to that [consecration] ceremony.

During the ceremony of cleansing, you should reinforce in your thought the understanding of emptiness. In your imagination [at least] you should visualise yourself as Vajra Wrathful at whose heart is a red sun disc lying in a horizontal position. At its centre is standing a blue HUM, which is the nature of the pristine cognition of the nondual bliss and emptiness. Surrounding this [HUM] are the *mantras*, which are the nature of *vajra* speech. To evoke the ‘all-knowing’ wisdom mind—the mind that encompasses all qualities and is free from all defects —, imagine that your own mind, fused with the HUM, reads the surrounding *mantras*. [With this thought] recite the [consecration] *mantras*. Due to this the sounds of *mantra* resound as loud as a thousand thunders striking at once. Light rays radiate from the *nada* squiggle at the tips of which are innumerable hosts of wrathful deity Amritakundalini or Vighnantakrit, resembling a newly dismantled beehive. Imagine that just as a group of lions would chase away a school of elephants, these deities drive away to the far corners of the great oceans all inner, outer and secret interferences including the obstructive forces associated with the inner-offering substances. In a definitive sense, the obstructive and impeding forces of all sentient beings are present within their own. This, then, is the rite of expelling the interfering forces. This procedure is similar to all rituals of countering obstacles such as making a *torma* offering to the obstructive forces, and so on.

Normally, to pacify obstacles in general and in particular the obstacles that may have been attracted as a result of our inappropriate interaction with sacred images,

scriptures, etc., one could emanate wrathful deities from one's heart while generating oneself as a deity. One can then perform the rest of the visualisations as described earlier and recite few times the appropriate *mantras*. This will suffice. Inappropriate treatments of sacred images and scriptures can constitute transgression of refuge precepts. Countering the interfering forces must not be viewed like being caned by the disciplinarian; rather the [focus should be] on the dissolution of the perceptions arising from clinging to substantial reality.

All that we possess, our body, our wealth, and so on originate from *karma* and are therefore in the nature of suffering. Afflictive thoughts and emotions lie at the root of *karma*, and they too have their roots in the 'fundamental ignorance'. In a way, we can say that ignorance is the 'creator' of all phenomena. So in the context of inner-offering, the definitive interfering force is the conception that grasps at inherent existence of things, and the derivatives of this grasping, namely the psychological and emotional manifestations of the 'three poisons' [attachment, anger and close-mindedness]. **[35b]** It is through the aggregation of these various conditions that external interfering forces come into being. So, the definitive wrathful deity is the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness that cognises all phenomena as empty of inherent existence. The manifestations of this are the wrathful deities that appear with face and arms such as Vighnantakrit and his likes. These deities are [therefore] capable of destroying all levels of conceptions. Therefore Künkhyen Lama writes in his *Generation Stage[Guide]*:

The root of creation and destruction of all phenomena of cyclic existence and liberation resides in the mind. Therefore one should understand the meaning of 'countering' [interfering forces] related to this.

## DISSOLUTION [OF INNER-OFFERING SUBSTANCE] INTO EMPTINESS

It is vital to have the awareness of emptiness both at the 'perceptual' and 'cognition' levels. The substance of inner-offering is the basis and that which is being dissolved is the mind grasping at substantial reality and the objects of this mind. So you should immerse your mind in emptiness, contemplating that everything exists as mere constructs of words and labels based on the congregation of multiple factors including their own constitutive parts, and that nothing exists with inherently real nature. As [Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses*] reads

That which is the nature of one  
is as well the nature of all.

So all phenomena including especially the inner-offering substance, are indistinguishable within the single nature, which is the emptiness of substantial existence. Thus in one's cognition one should bring about the cessation of all appearances of the relative world of multiplicity. Taking the assimilation of one's mind of great bliss with emptiness as the basis of designation one should cultivate the identification 'I am'. This does not, however, imply that inner-offering substance does not exist, or the sense of 'I' does not arise, or that one should cultivate the thought of self-identification with inanimate objects.

If one desires to attain high levels of realisation and genuine experience it is indispensable to have the inseparable combination of the altruistic intention and the 'perfect view' [of emptiness]. However, it is difficult even to achieve the level of spiritual thought that enables one to consider the mundane concerns of this life as being of lesser significance. **[36a]** To have a sense of deep-seated perspective that the events of this life somehow do not matter much is indeed hard. Herein lies one of the greatest hurdles [for a practitioner]. But simply to perform the rites of consecration, be it even in the manner of imitating someone, accrues great benefit. So without these conditions [described earlier] one will feel as if the gateway to all meditative practices are blocked, although there is no one physically doing so. With this [kind of clear] understanding, endeavour to acquire these [spiritual qualities].

#### GENERATION [OF INNER-OFFERING] □

Given that it is not the ordinary substance [that is being offered] but that it is dissolved into emptiness and created afresh through visualisation and [re-]established, it is said to be 'generated'. Like the illusion-like appearance that occurs during the in-between-session periods, the consciousness cognising emptiness emerges as a blue HUM in a horizontal position at the very site where [previously] the inner-offering substance was. On that emerges YAM, standing or lying, depending on one's convenience of visualisation. On YAM is a blue HUM lying flat inside which is [another] YAM which transforms and

becomes a bluish green ‘wind *mandala*’, bow-shaped with the straight side facing towards you. The two HUMs, one above and the other below, transform and become two five-spoked *vajras* adorning the wind-*mandala* at the two sides like studded jewels. Therefore when you say the YAM of HUM YAM HUM, one should know that three letters are stacked one above the other, and that it is the YAM that becomes wind and the two HUMs the *vajras*. Above this [wind-*mandala*], emerging from a RAM, which is in between two HUMs, is a red triangular ‘fire-*mandala*’ with an angular point facing towards you. Behind it, a part of the wind-*mandala* is visible in the shape of a monk’s round gown. From the HUMs, above and below, emerge two three-spoked *vajras* adorning the fire-*mandala*. [36b] As HUM is the seed syllable for the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness inserting the *mandalas* of the elements such as earth, etc. [in between the HUMs] signify their non-transgression of the boundary of the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness. This [point] applies to subsequent visualisations as well.

At the front triangular corner of the fire-*mandala*, [i.e. facing towards you,] is a white OM; on the right, a red AH; and on the left is a blue HUM. They transform into three freshly severed human heads with their faces turned outwards, forming a tri-pod. At the centre of this is a white AH which transforms and becomes a skull-cup, its white exterior symbolising method — the pristine cognition of great bliss — and its red interior representing emptiness. The convergence of two colours in one skull-cup stands for the pristine cognition that is the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness. At the base of the skull, from a red AH emerges a red eight-petalled lotus whose hub is adorned with a red AH. As regards the tri-pod of human heads there appear to be divergent instructions about how to visualise them in terms of their colour, freshness, and so on. For example, some say that they should be visualised as white, red and black [i.e. correspondingly from the front, right and left] and that they should be visualised [respectively] as a skeleton, fresh and decomposed. Even from Segyü Dorjechang alone I have different versions. But as long as you receive the related oral transmissions at the time of actual practice, whichever of the descriptions can be visualised.

In the middle of the skull, arising from HUM — the seed syllable of Akshobhya — are ‘human meat’ and urine marked by HUMs. To have a clearer image the oral tradition



recommends visualising an ocean of urine with the meat in it like clarified butter soup. In the east, arising from BRUM — the seed syllable of Vairocana — are an ‘elephant meat’ and human excrement marked by BRUMs. In the south, arising from AM — the seed syllable of Ratnasambhava — are ‘horse meat’ and blood marked by AMs. In the west, arising from JRIM, the seed syllable of Amitabha — are ‘cow meat’ and white *bodhicitta* [male regenerative fluid] marked by JRIMs. In the north, arising from KHAM — the seed syllable of Amogasiddhi — are ‘dog meat’ and ‘great meat’ (*sha chen*) marked by KHAMs. [37a] The significance of visualising here the ‘meats’ and the ‘nectars’ from seed syllables of the five male Buddhas in the four cardinal directions and at the centre, and not in any of the intermediate directions, is to indicate the emphasis placed on ripening one’s faculties for [the actualisation of] ‘illusory body’.

The ‘meats’ and the ‘nectars’ do not obstruct each other. The ‘meats’ [in the shape of the specific animals] are placed in a way such that they are lying with their heads leaning to the right. Either at the level of their heart or on top of their heads — i.e. animals made from dough of minced meat — are the marking syllables. Pönlop Jhampa Rinpoche states that the meats should be visualised as a lying dog with the marking letters on their back. One can visualise the marking letters for ‘meat’ and ‘nectar’ atop the individual ‘meat’, or alternatively, the marking letter for ‘nectars’ can be placed to the left of the meat while the meat placed towards the west of the nectar. ‘Great meat’ in general is an epithet for human meat; but [in vernacular language] Tibetans also use the word to refer to a meat soup made of beaten meat pieces, which is often eaten with *tsampa* [fried barley flour]. The Sakya master Jestün Drakpa Gyaltzen identifies the expression as referring to refined meat, which I think, is accurate. So the point is to visualise an entity that contains the refined essence of all five ‘meats’. This will then have great significance.

In the *tantras* one reads

Elephant meat and horse’s meat,  
likewise the sublime meat of dogs,  
I shall consume these as nourishment, etc.

Although such expressions are used to describe these, in reality they are by nature the pristine cognition of the five Buddha families. Thus they are not viewed as impure

substances. Above all these substances is a white OM from which ten white rays emit touching the five ‘meats’ and the five ‘nectars’ [below]. Streams of nectar flow and descend [together with the light rays]. Up in the empty space above, on a sun disc is a white HUM, which transforms and becomes a five-spoked white *vajra* whose hub is marked by HUM. The significance of generating all of these from seed syllables [37b] is to indicate that they are all dependently originated and are thus mere constructs of language.

The wind-element at the base [of the entire artifice] stands for the ten primary and secondary ‘winds’. The fire stands for ‘inner heat’; the tri-pod, ‘appearance’, ‘increased appearance’ and ‘attainment’. The skull represents the ‘union’ and the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness; the five ‘meats’, the five male Buddhas; while the five ‘nectars’ represent the five female Buddhas. The great bliss generated through the sexual union of male and female deities is the life-vein of the path to freedom. From this [i.e. great bliss] ensue ‘illusory body’ and ‘clear light’; from these are actualised the ‘union’. In the above, I have, by means of an illustration, briefly shown how the complete elements of the Vajrayana path are represented [by inner offering]. This can be extended to other contexts [of the *sadhana* practice] as well. As it is necessary to understand [the nature of] generation stage by correlating it to the ‘base’ [i.e. ordinary state], ‘path’ and ‘fruits’, if you have gained an understanding that accords with the *tantras*, the meaning of *tantric* teachings have then dawn upon you as personal instructions. So during the commentary teachings detailed explanation is not given; rather, only a general exposition adequate to generate this [basic level of] understanding is imparted. For example, it is said that one must not reveal bare the meaning of the *tantras*, as if showing the interior of a house with a lit lamp. This, the previous Künkhyen says is the meaning of the following passage from the *Root Tantra of Manjushri*:

Place an endless knot on the butter-lamp,...

Dragkar Kachu Rinpoche, triggered by his comments on say, for example, the ‘inner-offering’ would often speak on many aspects of the essential points of perfection stage. But when teaching the actual section [as parts of an on-going guide] he would give a brief exposition and state that he cannot say more. He would cite the verse “*Place an endless knot on the butter-lamp...*” Given restrictions posed by one’s oath of secrecy for too explicit

expositions of *tantric* scriptures, explaining the *tantras* through complex interfaces might have the benefit of averting possible hindering forces. I have heard this and many other related points in detail [from my teacher] connected to the oral teachings of Lama Jhampa Rinpoche. Not wishing to inundate the reader, I shall write about this no more.

#### CONSECRATION [OF INNER-OFFERING]

Light rays radiate from the Vajra and syllable HUM from above, **[38a]** which touches the wind-*mandala* stirring it and causing it to ignite the fire above. The substances inside the skull melt and boil like butter inside a large [burning] copper vessel. The *vajra*, together with its sun-disc standing above in space fall into the [melted] substance; it turns clockwise three times and stirs the melted substance. They melt and become indistinguishably one with the ‘nectar’. Though there are no inherent stains naturally residing in the substances, imagine that all the defects and stains generated by one’s conceptions pertaining to colour, smell, taste and potency are thereby cleansed. The ‘nectar’ [inside the skull] then becomes crystal white. The red lotus together with the letter AH at its hub at the base of the skull melts becoming indistinguishably one with the nectar. They become orange and cause [the substance in the skull] to be cognised in the nature of ‘nectar’. Hook-like light rays emit from the OM standing in space above the five ‘nectars’ and dripping with nectar pervading all realms in the ten directions. They draw forth from the hearts of all Buddhas the nectar of the untainted pristine cognition in the form of the nectar of five ‘meats’ and five ‘nectars’, which is then added into the nectar inside the skull. Like rain falling into an ocean, no matter however much nectars descend no increment [in the nectar inside the skull] can be discerned. Imagine it also to be inexhaustible like the water in a well that never dries out however much you take water out of it. As the venerable Jampelyang has remarked that when the cattle flock of a [nomad] family reproduces rapidly one would say that their ‘nest is enflamed’, so to ‘enflame’ and to ‘ignite’ have the same meaning here as well. The point is that the nectar inside the skull is increased mani-fold.

HUM is the seed syllable of Akshobhya and *vajra*-mind, and Akshobhya is the deity that is the perfected state of the ‘pristine cognition of the sphere of reality.’ **[38b]** Of the five pristine cognitions, the ‘wisdom of the sphere of reality’ is the principal antidote to grasping at substantial reality. Since all defects are rooted in perceptions and

apprehensions of ordinary identity and also the grasping at substantial reality, HUM purifies these pollutants. As AH is the seed syllable of Amitabha and *vajra*-speech, and since Amitabha is the deity who has mastered the nectar of immortality, AH transforms [inner-offering substances] into nectar. As OM is the seed syllable of Vairocana and *vajra*-body, and since Vairocana is the deity who has mastery over forms, OM increases the nectar into manifold. Thangakpa and others have suggested that one recites OM AH HUM three times, and also that there is no definite [figure as to] how many times it should be recited during group recitations, but for one's practice it is better if it is recited seven times.

While reciting one should visualise the following: Either at your heart — i.e. oneself as Vajra Wrathful — or in front of you imagine yourself in ordinary form surrounded by all sentient beings. During the first recitation of OM AH HUM light rays touch all beings, which utterly destroys the negativity of killing, together its [underlying] motives accumulated over many lifetimes since beginningless time. They dissolve into inner-offering and the *tormas* and so on, which when offered liberates all sentient beings including oneself from the negativity of killing and its [underlying] causes. Extend this procedure to the subsequent recitations correlating the second recitation with [the negativity] of stealing, the third with sexual misconduct, the fourth with lying, and fifth with divisive speech, the sixth with harsh speech, and the seventh with frivolous talk. These negativities are destroyed along with their underlying motives, which then dissolve [into inner-offering, *tormas*, etc.] and liberates all beings [39a] from negativity and obstructions. When done this way the practice can have great merits and blessings and act as means of accumulating merits and purifying obstructions. It also has the significance of taming the afflictive thoughts and emotions and protecting against potential negativity in the future. Of course, when the motives are counted the list of negativity encompasses all ten negative actions. Here, however, the seven physical and verbal acts are purified with special emphasis because they are the factors for the ripening of 'illusory body' [attainment].

#### **2.4.1.1.3. Preliminary *torma* offering.**

Starting from the right of the ‘directional guardians’, who are facing towards you, arrange four water bowls separately followed by the other offerings. The offerings may be actually arranged equal to the number of the guardians, or alternatively, only one set may be arranged while imagining multiple in number. The difference in numbers should not matter much. One should imagine all the offerings, *tormas* and incense smoke resembling the thick enveloping clouds over an ocean. Imagine that even a smallest part of this can generate in one’s heart extraordinary bliss of uncontaminated wisdom. To consecrate the *torma*, the two stages, namely purification and dissolution into emptiness are the same [as in the case of inner-offering rite].

However, as for ‘generation’ one should reflect upon the meaning of the *mantra* [for *torma* offering]. From within that sphere — i.e. the indivisible unity of one’s mind and the emptiness arrived at through the dissolution of the offering substances —, at the very sites of the offerings, letters AH corresponding to the number of the offerings appear. These transform and become, inside wide and expansive skull cups, letters AH [the first letter of ARGHAM], PA [the first letter of PADYAM], PU [the first letter of PUSHPE], DHU [the first letter of DHUPE] and so on. They are all adorned with *bindhus* [the vowel AM represented as a circular dot on top of the letters] thus making them AM, PAM, PUM, DHUM, AM, GAM, NEM, and SHAM, each in fifteen numbers. From these appear offerings from ‘water for drinking’ to ‘music’ equal to the number [of the guardians]. Generating the offerings from seed syllables inside skulls is to indicate **[39b]** that they are not outside the boundaries of the play of bliss and emptiness, but that they must be recognised as mere constructs of language. This is applicable to other instances as well.

The [Tibetan] words *jhin* implies majesty or awe-inspiring and *lap* means to ‘transform into something else’. [*Jhin lap* is the Tibetan term that is translated here as ‘consecration’ or ‘blessing’.] In order to effect this [awe-inspiring transformation], *mantras*, hand gestures [*mudras*] and meditative concentrations are taught. So the appropriate *mantras* must be recited and appropriate hand gestures performed. Visualising that the specific transformations take place in accordance with the words of the rite substitutes the meditative concentration. Without training through such a way how can the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness arise on its own accord right at the start? The Buddhas of

ten directions attained full enlightenment through first having undergone this kind of training.

Thus reflect upon the offering substances as being, in their natures, the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness, their appearances as specific offerings such as drinking water, etc., and imagine that they have the distinctive function of generating special untainted bliss at various points in the body. For example, drinking water engenders bliss in the hands [mouth; a printing error in Tibetan?]; water for washing feet, feet; water for washing face, face; water for sprinkling, body in general; flowers, head; incense, nose; butter lamps, eyes; scented water, heart; food, tongue; and music engenders bliss in the ears. The names of the individual offerings are inserted between the three syllables [OM AH HUM] and recited. This signifies the viewing of these offerings as being in the nature of the three *vajras*. One can add AH and HUM after each of the names, or alternatively add it at the end of all the names. However, during the consecration rite one should not add PRATICCHA after them.

Our experiences of pleasurable feelings are caused by underlying motivational factors such as *karma* and afflictive thoughts and emotions. In their actual nature they are true suffering enforced by *karma* and afflictive emotions; and also they function only to increase further contamination. [Generally,] contamination can be understood in terms of being polluted by mental and emotional afflictive thoughts and emotions, or in terms of being polluted by conceptual thought processes. The six-fold description of contaminated phenomena as found in [Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge*] such as, [40a] for example, 'being tied by contamination', and 'being affiliated to contamination', etc. are complete in each of the two ways of defining [contaminated phenomena]. The blissful states of the Buddha-hood are such that both in terms of their essential nature and their origination, they are not tainted by *karma* and afflictive thoughts and emotions; they are by nature [aspects of] the pristine cognition of great bliss. Also, when one makes the offering [to the Buddhas] you should do so free of any contaminated motives; rather your thoughts should be enforced by love, compassion and the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment with aspirations to relieve all sentient beings from their suffering and help attain happiness. There is also no bondage to contamination when the offerings are being enjoyed. The

offerings function exclusively to engender uncontaminated bliss, as its is stated [in Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realisations*]

To him even a savoury food appears delicious...

Thus, extensive explanation was given [by the teacher] on how the above phenomenon is possible because of the [Buddha's long] habituation to the two accumulations. [Again] concerned with lack of space I shall not go into detail here.

The rites for the consecration of *torma* for the directional guardians is the same as that of 'inner-offering.' Although in both cases their [i.e. the offering] nature is that of the nectar of untainted [wisdom], the 'inner-offering' is liquid and the *torma* a [solid] food. The *tormas* are of various shapes such as round, square, triangular, etc. corresponding to the activities they relate to — i.e. the activity of pacification, enrichment, power and wrath. When tasted the *tormas* can be eaten like nectar arranged out in a heap. Kyapgön Dorjechang once said that this is the meaning of the line

Like a mountain, the large red *torma* is arranged in a heap, ...

It is good if one could ensure that even in a single rite like the consecration of the *torma*, the essential points of the two stages such as the *prana* [winds], 'inner heat', 'illusory body', 'clear light', 'union', and the five pristine cognitions', etc. are complete. As we are amongst those who have tasted the essence of a spiritual teacher's oral instructions, it is important to recognise the key points of the teachings and take them to heart.

The dough itself is the material of the *torma* and **[40b]** you should not get hung on to it; rather it should be taken as the basis of your visualisation but dissolved and purified into emptiness. It is also all right to offer a *torma*, even without an actual [physical] entity being there, through your imagination like the offerings that you make of inner realisations. If you do have the *torma*, it is [of course] an article [indicative] of your commitment.

After this one should visualise the directional guardians. Fifteen hook-like light rays emit from the HUM at your heart, yourself as the Vajra Wrathful. The moment they touch the hearts of the directional guardians they draw them forth as a magnetic object would attract metal file. The retinue deities are also drawn forth with no control on their part.

They should then be visualised as being placed around you. They are called from their secret names given to them at the time when the victor Vajradhara conferred upon them empowerments and placed them at the periphery of the *mandala*. The significance of this is to remind them of the oath they have taken at that time.

**Vajra Weapon** is so called because, like Indra, he holds in his hand a *vajra* with hundred spokes. As described in the Vedic myths, he has thousand eyes and rides on a white elephant *Sasung*. (2) **Vajra Illusion** is Vishnu and is [referred to as] the ‘near Indra’. He rides on a Garuda and holds the treasure of Kaustubha jewel. ‘Fire’ refers here to the ‘fire direction’ —i.e. southeast. (3) **Vajra Fire** is the fire-god. His appearance is that of a wandering mendicant with hair tied around like a turban. He holds a consecration vase. ‘Club’ here refers to a small stick. (4) **Vajra Time** is the *yama* who is the lord over the time of the birth, death, life force and life span of sentient beings. (5) **Vajra Baton** rides on a zombie and wears garlands of human bones. (6) **Vajra Serpent** is the water-god; while (7) **Vajra Wind** is the wind-god. Their mounts, the wild animals, signify their athletic prowess.

Like the colour of earth, (8) **Vajra Terror** is yellow. As he is a wealth-granting god he holds a mongoose (in some paintings the animal is depicted as a rodent, but it is a mongoose), and a ‘town of seeds’, which refers to a seedpod of rice, etc. In the collected works of Sakya Masters, this is described as ‘many seeds formed together like a town’. So it refers to a seedpod of various kinds. There is, however, no guarantee that Norgyünma [a wealth goddess] should always hold a rice seedpod. (9) **Vajra Long Nose** is Ganesha. To indicate the auspiciousness of attracting wealth he rides on a rodent, a rat. In the *sadhana* of Ganesha it is also described simply as ‘rat’. ‘Ladoo’ sweet is a delicacy made of eight ingredients; this is clearly described in the Yamantaka’s *Generation Stage* text of the previous Künkhyen. (10) **Vajra Wrath** is Ishvara, the lord of all malevolent spirits. As the desire realm falls within the control zone of the lord of *Paranirmitavashratin* gods, during the consecration rite for the *mandala* site invocation of the protectors begin from the northwestern direction, i.e. the location of Ishvara. Thus there is said to be great significance derived from the correlation of inner and outer factors. (11) **Vajra Swirl** is the



sun, and since he is the friend of lotus he holds a lotus in his hand. (12) **Vajra Light** is the moon. (13) **Vajra Silent** is Brahman. [Vasubandhu's] *Abhidharmakosha* states

In the desire realm and on the first level of concentration,  
Brahma's deception and duplicity taint one.

According to legend, Arya Ashvajita is said to have asked Brahma if it was true as claimed that he is the creator of the universe. He could not lie to the Arya and say yes, that it is true. Yet since it was a popular belief amongst people [that this was so] he was embarrassed to reply truthfully. He thus chose to remain silent. [41b] (14) **Vemacitra** and (15) **Prithividevi** are referred to in their actual names. "Indras and so on" is an indication that we should recognise who these directional guardians are.

In Yamantaka rites the guardians of above and below are visualised in the space above and underground, which is accurate, but here the three guardians of the above are placed between the northeast and southeast directions. The two guardians of below are placed between northwest and southwest. The guardians can be of one face with two arms, or one face with four arms as found in the different *sadhanas*. But the essence of the visualisation remains the same. As for retinues visualise all the worldly deities without exception. If one wishes to abbreviate [the visualisation], one can ignore the *sadhana's* detailed description and proceed here by simply stating " they reside in the cardinal and intermediate directions; instantaneously they melt into light and from this emerges..."

It is said that when the enlightened Buddha manifestly adopts a worldly state of mind, even the smallest insects can 'understand' the Buddha's mind. In the same manner, here one should, after having dissolved oneself into emptiness draw forth the directional guardians together with their retinues and also the body, speech and mind of all sentient beings and dissolve into clear light and contemplate them as manifestations of bliss and emptiness. Due to this the directional guardians and their retinues enter into the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness thus becoming cleansed of all aspects of impurity. They become deities of the Vairocana family, or as Vairocana and his consort. Alternatively they become Vajradharas in embrace with his Wisdom consort. Their tongues dissolve into clear

light from which, from HUMs, the tongues emerge into shafts of light in the shape of red one-spoked *vajras*.**[42a]**

Just as in India, when entertaining a great monarch one offers washing water and perfume, etc. before actually serving the meal, here too four waters are being offered. One should imagine that these perform their specific functions. The *mantra* for the *torma* is inserted between OM AH HUM SVAHA; this [*mantra* is originally] in Sanskrit and has been translated into Tibetan [in the *sadhana*]. This is why there are OM and AH at the beginning and HUM and SVAHA at the end in the Tibetan [sentence at this point in the *sadhana*].

[Densely] “**Arrayed like the clouds over ocean**” is a numerical point that transcends even the so-called “infinite ocean” (*ramjam gyatso*) mentioned in such texts as *Jewel Ornament of Victorious Banner* and in other *sutras*. The calculation for this proceeds as follows: Take as your basic unit universe of all three times, and also the universe systems that lie in all the ten directions of it. Imagine that this is not only one, but countless numbers of such sets equal to the reach of the sky. Take this as a basic unit of calculation and then iterate ‘one’, ‘ten’, ‘hundred’, ‘thousand’ and up to the countless. So, imagine that within each atom of these universes are contained the entire universal systems. Imagine that too as being contained within the atoms of all the universes in the ten directions, and that these universes do not obstruct each other. So imagine all the directional guardians residing in these universes, within one universe, the guardians and earth-guardians residing in specific regions and sites, and [those residing] inside the pores of the body of each of these guardians. They are the *torma* guests of all ten directions and three times equal to the number of “arrayed like the clouds over ocean”. To these guests, infinite but one residing inside another, **[42b]** one should make the offerings by imagining [multiple] emanations of oneself and the offerings equal in numbers. If offerings are made in this way, it is said to have the power of great accumulation of merits. This approach is the same when making offerings to whatever deities.

This is how one draws forth infinite number of directional guardians of both mundane and supermundane, and also infinite sentient beings in the manner described in the following lines [in the *sadhana*]:

...the guardians of the universe;  
Each and every sentient being thus imagined too.

All of them are dissolved into clear light; thus they abide in the nature of the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness. They abide as one taste [occurring] within the sphere of reality in the meditative state that is single-pointedly absorbed and never wavers from its equipoise on the perfect truth. Because of this they [the universes, the guardians, beings, and the offerings] do not obstruct each other. We read [in Candrakirti's *Guide to the Middle Way*]

In space of one atom are universal systems reaching the far corners of space,

...

Atoms do not increase in size, nor the universe become smaller.

As these lines suggest, there is a way of understanding the events of the three times from the unconventional perspective of a union of wisdom and skilful means, which is attained through the meditative absorption that encompasses the integration of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight. Therefore there is no need to worry about the universes not fitting inside the atoms. Of course, if one were to judge this from the perspectives of our conventional awareness, and also if one were to subject this to the logic of 'identity and individuation', it may be difficult to defend. However, as this is a quality of someone who has attained the 'union', those [of us] who are below the tenth Bodhisattva level cannot fully fathom this. Such kinds of inconceivable natures lie beyond our scope of comprehension.

There are some who maintain that the minute instances described in the *Guide to the Middle Way* exists only from the perspective of a yogi and does not exist in reality. But this cannot be right. In fact, compared to the complexity of divisions spoken of here [in the *tantras*] that discussion in the Middle Way is relatively simple. Generally, the word 'hypothetical' is used when one can only assume but cannot make a clear determination. [43a] Hortsang Serti Rinpoche has said that Panchen Palden Yeshe had once made the following remark as a reason why there could be as many Buddhas as equal to the number of atoms on a single atom. He suggested that this could be because there is no difference between the ultimate nature of reality between a single atom and of all phenomena, insofar

as their pervasiveness is concerned. When we think along these lines, it seems we can get a sense of how such a perspective could arise. For example, I can imagine in front of me the entire Tashi Khyil monastery together with its inhabitants, including the images [inside the temple], etc. Also, everyone who lives there can have similar imagination. Now if one individual were to think about this phenomenon surely he would have some coherent idea. This, I think, is somewhat analogous.

So, visualise that all the invited guests emerge as Guhyasamaja father-mother all immersed in the equipoise of bliss and emptiness, the indivisible union of wisdom and method. Their bodies, speech and minds are absorbed in the expanse of reality as stated in the following:

Thoroughly, they're absorbed in the expanse of reality,  
Perpetually in equipoise, single-pointed.

The significance of these lines is the suggestion that they all arise in the forms of the transcendent body of Union.

The colour of skull-cup for nectar, the tongue of the deity, and light, etc. are white for the peaceful deities; it is yellow for deities of enrichment; red for power; and black for activities of wrath. This is the [basic] pattern in the *tantras* in general.

Directional guardians can consist of both ordinary sentient beings and fully enlightened Buddhas; but during the preliminary practices the assembly [of the guardians] should be comprehensive without making any distinction between the enlightened and the unenlightened. As for offering, since the four waters have already been offered, here one needs only offer the five substances of everyday enjoyment and the *torma*. [The guests], while remaining within a state of bliss and emptiness, partake in their enjoyment through specific sense faculties. Thus, ensure that your visualisation of 'offering of the union' is complete. The guests are though arisen in the forms of Guhyasamaja they still assume existence of worldly beings. They are thus exhorted to assist [the practitioner] to obtain mundane *siddhis* [powerful attainments] and eventually help to lead them to the realisation of supreme attainment. [43b] Of the lines "**my gold, jewels, etc.**" the first relates to entrusting [the guardians] the task of dispelling of obstacles, while the second pertain to

entrusting the task of aggregating conducive conditions. As all humans and humans who destroy the favourable conditions like gold, jewels, and so on are made forgetful of their tasks and led to confusion rendering them utterly powerless, they are [said to be] made ‘**ignorant**’. Their limbs are made ‘**frozen**’ and immobile like a standing tree. They are ‘**tied**’ together with a lasso and iron chains; the power of their body, speech and mind are ‘**constricted**’ thus making them incapable of movement. They are thoroughly destroyed thus ‘**shattered**’; this is how the plea is made.

One requests them also in the following manner. May the aggregation of all the favourable conditions such as **gold, jewels**, etc. conditions conducive for the attainment of the ‘supreme attainment’ be not be [limited] only this once; rather this fortune remain throughout until the attainment of enlightenment. May they [i.e. the guardians] be my friends and pacify all forces that obstruct and deprive me of happiness and goodness. May they protect me throughout all times through countless activities. This is how you entrust them with the task; you should imagine that they give their consent. Again, offer to them water for mouth-wash, cool drinking water, *sotsi* [sweet ‘cake’], [the five items of] everyday enjoyment, and inner-offering. At the crown of the individual guardians visualise their corresponding lord of the Buddha family as if they are there naturally. When reciting the hundred-syllable *mantra*, you should visualise that streams of nectar flow within. They purify all shortcomings caused by imperfections on your part such as not gathering the right offering substances, using deficient substances and contaminated articles, and adopting inappropriate manner of offering rites. [In brief] they purify also any [possible] excesses and deficiencies [there may have occurred] associated with making the offerings.

During important retreat situations one should either omit the passages relating to the dissolution of the directional guardians, or alternatively, dissolve the guardians but regenerates them just outside the periphery of the protection circle. This way they ensure that there is no obstacle for the meditation of the *mandala*. **[44a]** Again, alternatively, [you can imagine that] they return to their natural abodes and reside there with faces turned towards you indicating their intention to protect you from obstacles. Any of these visualisations may be undertaken.

#### **2.4.1.1.4 Consecration of ‘self-generation’ offering.**

The consecration of the ‘self-generation’ offering — two waters, articles of everyday enjoyment and music together with five sense objects — is the same as before. For the father *tantras* the self-generation offerings should be arranged from the right, i.e. from the perspective of the practitioner; while for the front-generation, they should be arranged from the right of the objects to whom the offerings are being made. Right symbolises method and thus indicates the emphasis on [the attainment of] illusory body. In contrast, for the mother *tantras* this [arrangement of the offerings] is the reverse. There, left [side] symbolises wisdom and the offering arrangement intimate the auspiciousness of the attainment of ‘clear light’. As for the front-generation deity, if you have many offering sets, you can arrange all the waters for drink in front of the deities and food to the practitioner’s side [i.e. in front of you]. And for the mother *tantras* the arrangement should [again] be the reverse. This is how the oral tradition instructs us.

#### **2.4.1.1.5 Vajrasattva meditation and [mantra] recitation.**

To begin, you should visualise the merit field for taking refuge. Visualise in space in front of you the complete *mandala* of Guhyasamaja — both the residence and the residents — as indivisible from your Guru. The five lords of the families are the Buddhas, the retinues the jewel of *sangha*, the spiritual community. The realisations and cessation within their mental continuum is the realisation *dharma*, while all *tantric* scriptures including even the smallest volume that is inside the crowing jewel of the *mandala* are the *dharma* jewel. Or, alternatively you could imagine the realisations and [levels of] cessation within the heart of the objects of refuge manifesting in the form of sacred volumes heaped like a mountain, well-bound between wooden planks with their title cloths suspending from the front. From these rains of nectar descend and also that they resound the reading of the scriptures. **[44b]**

[With the verse] “...**the play of mind,**” and so on, one takes refuge in the Buddha; [with the verse] “**All conceptions without exception, ...**”one takes refuge in the *dharma*;

and [with] “**From all bondage...**” one takes refuge in the jewel of spiritual community. [With the verse] **When thought and its fruition** etc. one generates the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment both at the levels of aspiration and engagement.

Visualise, in accordance with the [*sadhana*] manual, at your crown a white Vajrasattva who is indivisible from your Guru holding *vajra* and bell; he is in embrace with his consort white Varadhatesvari, who is also holding a *vajra* and a bell. Whatever deities one meditates upon it is important view them as being in the nature of the Vajra-body, Vajra-speech and *vajra*-mind, and also as manifestations of your Guru. It has been stated that

There is not even the name of the Buddha  
at some ‘exalted’ place [out there] where there is no Guru.

The meaning of this is should not be misunderstood as referring to a time when no Gurus were born, or to a time when no Gurus came into being. Rather, it refers to the time before the practitioner has sought a Guru. Alternatively it can also refer to the time before one has recognised the meditational deity as the Guru. The point is this. Before you have gained ascertainment of the body, speech and mind of your Guru as being indivisible from those of your meditational deity there is no possibility of attaining Buddha-hood.

Although [in some actual cases] the Guru may be an ordinary person, while the student is an Arya being, the Guru-student relationship came into being due to the power of the Buddhas. When seen this way, [one can understand that] there are great benefits by relying upon one’s Guru on the basis of acknowledging [his or her] many qualities. That the Guru has entered into a relationship with the student and has shouldered a special responsibility makes him [or her] a source of profound blessing. Whatever external perceptions, in the actual context of the student relying upon his Guru the body, speech and mind of the Buddhas of all ten directions enter into the three doors of the Guru, and through this way nurtures that student. In this way the exalted deeds of the Buddhas of ten directions emerge as that Guru. Therefore, if you view the meditational deity and your Guru as indivisible it expedites the process of your realisation. **[45a]** This is also due to the auspiciousness of the inter-dependence of the actual reliance upon the Guru. As this direct

inter-dependence derives from actual reliance, the length and quantity of the instructions do not make [much] difference.

Although [generally] one can visualise the three letters at the three points of the body of both father and mother, here [in the *sadhana*] for a specific purpose only HUM at heart is mentioned. Light rays radiating from HUM invites ‘wisdom beings’ to whom offerings are made with *mantras* such as ARGHAM, and so on. With JAH HUM BAM HOH they [wisdom beings and commitment beings] merge inseparably. Again, invite Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the form of the five families who are all holding vases in their hands. Make offerings to them, receive empowerment, [and imagine that] your crown is adorned with Akshobhya as a seal. The victorious Buddha and others make request; light rays emitting from their hearts perform the dual functions [purifying negativity and enhancing sentient being’s welfare]. The enhanced power of the exalted body, and its enhanced majesty symbolise the emphasis on ‘illusory body’. As for the visualisations associated with the recitation of the hundred-syllable *mantra*, and how one should cultivate the four ‘forces’ and how, at the end [Vajrasattava] should be dissolved into oneself, etc., I have written in great detail elsewhere.

#### **2.4.1.2 Special preparatory practices.**

This section has two main divisions:

- (1) Gathering merits, the favourable conditions;
- (2) meditation of protection circle, the prevention of adverse conditions.

##### **2.4.1.2.1 Accumulation of merits, establishing favourable conditions.**

At your heart — yourself as Akshobhya Vajra — is a blue HUM on a seat of variegated lotus and a sun disc. From this HUM radiate infinite light rays whose tips are shaped like hooks; they draw forth from their natural abodes the ‘resident’ and ‘residence’ *mandalas* of Akshobhya, who are indivisible from the Guru filling the entire space. All of them dissolve into each other eventually assimilating into one *mandala*, which remains in space in front [of you]. In the context of *Unsurpassed Yoga* class it is important that the



emitted light rays are reabsorbed into the HUM at your heart. [45b] Although in Yamantaka [practice] the Guru is visualised as the crowing lord of the principal deity, and in Cakrasamvara he is visualised in the cemeteries, here he is visualised as indivisible from the principal deity [of the *mandala*]. Also one should not have the notion that light rays have to travel too far; rather it is from the *dharmakaya*, which is indivisible with emptiness, form bodies [of the Buddhas] appear at will. As there is no difference in the emptiness of the substantial existence between sentient beings' minds and that of the Buddha; they are equal insofar as their essential nature is unpolluted. However, because the cognition of the sentient beings operate exclusively through grasping at substantial existence their minds are contaminated by the adventitious pollutants of [mental and emotional] afflictions and their dispositions. Sentient beings always associate with these pollutants and they, in turn, propel the actions. As such, such beings cannot directly perceive the true nature of mind for it remains obscured as the clouds obstruct the vision of a clear sky. Thus we read [in Maitreya's *The Sublime Continuum*]

Like the element water, like gold, and like the sky,  
we accept that it too can be purified and cleansed.

Therefore the mind, which is empty of substantial existence, possesses both the dimensions of natural purity and the purity of adventitious pollutants. The first is [naturally ever]-present; when the second [dimension of purity] is lacking the mind remains veiled by adventitious pollutants. Those who cannot perceive this reality [of mind] directly and has to therefore rely on language and concepts [to understand this nature] are 'ordinary' beings. Even when you have gained direct realisation of emptiness the obstruction to attaining an uninterrupted equipoise on this nature of reality remains until the last stages before enlightenment.

So when one says that the pollutants do not reside in the essential nature of the mind but that the mind's spectrum is contaminated, the nature here refers to emptiness and the spectrum to the mind itself. When one reaches full awakening, the 'natural purity' of mind and the 'purity of adventitious pollutants' merge, and the mind itself becomes totally fused within an uninterrupted equipoise on the nature of reality thus consuming all afflictive thoughts and emotions within the sphere of [ultimate] reality. [46a] This, then, is true

cessation. Just as when clouds dissolve into the sky there is no ‘clear sky’ distinct from the mere absence of clouds, similarly when the pollutants are exhausted within the sphere of reality there is no purity apart from the emptiness [of mind]. Although this emptiness of substantial existence of mind pervades all phenomena, because its ‘purity of adventitious pollutants’ is not present [everywhere] the mind too cannot be said to be present everywhere. However, *dharmakaya*, which is the coalescence of the two ‘purities’, pervade the natures of all phenomena, [one can say that] the nature of *dharmakaya* and the nature all phenomena are intertwined indivisibly. So wherever *dharmakaya* pervades, the pristine cognition too pervades; and wherever this pervades the ‘energy-medium’ of the wisdom pervades too. This ‘energy-medium’ is the [Buddha’s] body, and its resonance the [Buddha’s] speech. So “natural abodes” [in the texts generally] refers to *dharmakaya*, which is a union of the two purities. Since this [union or coalescence] pervades all phenomena, it is said that where space pervades *dharmakaya* pervades too. And where *dharmakaya* pervades, form bodies [of the Buddhas] pervade too. Therefore, in response to the needs and fortune of sentient beings [various] form bodies appear spontaneously.

In the common system [of Perfection Vehicle] the abode of *Sambhogakaya* is said to be Akanishta, a realm that is said to lie beyond the [various worldly] pure realms. Here [in the *tantras*], however, both the Enjoyment Body and its Akanishta realm [are seen as] pervading the entire universe, i.e. both environment and the beings who live in them. As an aside, the Teacher spoke about a debate he and Gungthang Jampelyang once entered into during a formal debate session known as *ling se*. When Enjoyment Body is taken as the natural abodes and [the deities are] invited as Form Bodies, the Buddhas are invited from their specific Enjoyment Body realms in the form of Emanation Bodies. **[46b]** For example, from the heart of Enjoyment Body, the great Vairocana one invites Buddha Shakyamuni, the Emanation Body. A particular realm such as Akanishta of the Enjoyment Body can be taken as the natural abode and then [the Buddhas] invited from there. For example, one can invite, from Sukhavati [the realm of ‘Bliss’] in the West, the lord Amitabha together with retinue his in the forms of Guhyasamaja ‘residents’ and ‘residence’ *mandalas*.

As for making offerings, emanate from the HUM at your heart offering goddesses who share your same continuum of being, countless as the clouds over ocean, each holding

appropriate offering substances. In terms of numbers, they equal the number of atoms that exist within the body of each of the deities of the merit field. This is similar to what we discussed before, and also we read [in Samandrabadra's *Aspirational Prayers*] the following:

Equal to the number of strands in hair and throughout three times,...

And, similarly, as we read [in the *sadhana* itself]

Each residing fully within another, ...

[Imagine that] you offer these substances with devotion and respect; the experience of uncontaminated bliss arise within the hearts [of whom you are making the offerings to]. This blissful mind ascertains emptiness thus engendering the special wisdom of bliss and emptiness. Imagine thus. Although the Buddhas do not attain 'new' qualities that they haven't already achieved, as a result of offering fresh articles to the Buddhas, it can be said that they do experience within fresh instances of wisdom [conjoined with] great bliss.

The meaning of the *mantra* is as follows: SARVA TATHAGATA, all the Buddhas thus gone; ARGHAM, the names of the individual offering articles; PUJA, offering; MEGHA SAMUDRA, clouds of ocean; SPARANA, emanate, SAMAYA SHRIYE, accept as substances of binding. This is enhanced with the three syllables. While reciting OM snaps outwards; emanate light rays from the HUM at your heart and reciting HUM reabsorb them into you. Perform the gesture of 'circling a lotus'; the eight fingers that [together] form a lotus represent the eight petals of a lotus, i.e. the channel centre at heart.

The hand gestures [*mudras*] are performed at the level of heart, and it is from here that the offering goddesses are emanated. The significance of this is to indicate that the root of both *samsara* and *nirvana* is mind. It also represents the fact that the 'three spheres of offering' [the object, the agent and the act of offering] are also constructs of the mind. To prepare for the auspicious occasion when the ten primary and secondary *prana* winds are withdrawn into the indestructible drop at heart, the offering goddesses are absorbed there. This is also the reason why when making prostration one places the folded palms at heart. When performing the *mudras* one should not separate the fingers below the point of the second joints; this is to prepare for the attainment of hands and feet with webbed fingers and toes, [which are parts of the major and minor noble marks]. Gungthang Rinpoche has

said that there is a special significance associated with channels and winds when performing the gesture for butter-lamp whereby you touch the first joint of your two thumbs with the fingers. Therefore all *mudras* have distinct individual symbolism. So it is good to perform these hand gestures and also chant the tunes even when you are practising [the *sadhana*] alone.

As regards individual items of offering, in the case of a flower for example, one can offer its smell as incense, its colour as light, its cool texture as perfume, its flavour as food, the sound of its stirring movement caused by wind as music, and so on. Similarly, even for one offering goddess like Rupa Vajra, one can imagine that she has a beautiful body, melodious singing voice, sweet-smelling body scent, pleasant tasting lips, and the perfect tactile quality capable of causing stirring of inner heat. Thus one should be able to apply the same principle to many contexts. Kyapgön Dorjechang said that the VIIth Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso has stated that since all deities are embodiments of ‘union’, it is good if all offerings can be made as offerings of union. [47b] The essence of turning the object to whom the offering is made, the agent who makes the offering, and the substances offered into that of ‘union’ lies in the indivisibility of Buddha’s body, speech and mind. This is of course difficult to understand. Gungthang Jampelyang has suggested, however, that in [Candrakirti’s] *Clear Lamp* various citations such as the line “*even in the space of a single strand of hair...*” made from *Avatamsakasutra*. All of this relates to the section in [Nagarjuna’s] *Summary of the Four Interwoven Commentaries*, where the text speaks of general offerings and special offerings. These are all to illustrate the qualities of ‘union’. Although there is the word ‘union’ in the *sutra* system, the ultimate intent of the *sutras* must settle upon [the *tantric* teachings of] ‘union’. This point of view represents a rare insight on this earth. The offering *mantra* MEGHA SAMUDRA means the ‘cloud of ocean’; from this too one can understand the essential points about how to make an offering of ‘union’. All of these [reflections] emphasise the practices that prepare you for [for the attainment of] ‘illusory body’.

The prostrations are performed on the basis of the verses found in the *Subsequent Tantra*, for example, like the following lines:

I salute ...including forms, sensations, perceptions and volition...

The perfect purity of the aggregate of form is Vairocana, the aggregate of sensations Ratnasambhava, perceptions, Amitabha, volition, Amogasiddhi; and the perfect purity of the aggregate of consciousness is Akshobhya. Thus the five aggregates are the five families. The perfect purity of material form ‘entrance’ is Rupa Vajra; the ‘entrance’ sound is Shabda Vajra; the ‘entrance’ smell is Gandha Vajra; the ‘entrance’ taste is Rasa Vajra; and the perfect purity of the entrance of tactile quality is Sparsha Vajra. In the system of Manjushrijnana one includes Vajradhatesvari [in the set] thus making the group six. Here, however, Vajradhatesvari is all pervading so one adds Samadhrabdra, the perfect purity of mental consciousness ‘entrance’ as the sixth [member]. [48a] The perfect purity of eye organ is Kshitigarbha, ears, Vajrapani, nose, Akashgarbha, tongue, Lokeshvara, body organ, Sarvaniranaviskambini; and the perfect purity of mental organ is Maitreya, thus [there are] six members in the group. The perfect purity of earth element is Locana; water element is Mamaki; fire element is Pandaravasini; wind element is Tara; and the perfect purity of space element is Manjushri. Although they all assume such appearances as Bodhisattvas and goddesses such as Vairocana and so on, they are all by nature *bodhicitta* drops. “**Vajra**” is an epithet for Vajradhara and it indicates that they are equal to him in terms of level of realisation and abandonments. To this deity assembly—the wisdom that realises emptiness, the ultimate truth, which has arisen as the residents and residence *mandala* constituting the ‘vast’ aspect [of the path]—one prostrates through the three doors [body, speech and mind]. This is done so as found in the *stages of the path* texts by multiplying one’s body to the infinite as the ‘clouds of ocean’. This is also the meaning of the scripture cited in the section of Maitreya’s authorship [of *Ornament of Clear Realisations*] in the perfection of wisdom commentarial literature.

Similarly, the perfect purity of delusion is the wrathful deity Yamantaka of the Vairocana family. The perfect purity of pride—here a generic name is given to a specific emotion—is the wrathful deity Prajnataka of the Ratnasambhava family. The perfect purity of attachment is the wrathful deity Hayagriva of Amitabha family. The perfect purity of jealousy is Vignantakriti or Amritakundalini of the Vajra or Amogasiddhi family. These are the wrathful deities of the four cardinal directions. “**Endowed with *dharma***” [in the *sadhana*] implies that both the residence *mandala* and its inhabitants are accomplished in all the qualities of scripture and realisation. As they perpetually partake in great bliss of

spontaneity derived from entering into union with the four ‘knowledge-consorts’, they are accomplished in realisation and abandonment. From the [fundamental] perspective that views everything that appears - the objective world of multiplicity and diversity - [48b] within the joyful experience of bliss and emptiness, [it can be said that] one’s level of realisation and abandonment equal that of Vajradhara. This is the same as before. “**Withdrawal**” refers to Takiraja; “**joy**”, Niladanda; and “**forms**” refer to Mahabala. Similarly, “**unchanging**” refers to Acala. In some commentaries this is read as “likewise forms.”

“**Upholding the mind as a cause**” refers to Sumbaraja. The sharp point of the triangular ‘*reality source*’ facing downwards indicate that on the ordinary state realisations grow from small to great through a process of familiarity. It thus symbolises the process by which the levels of attainment increase from the beginner’s stage of ‘engagement through simulation’ to progressively advancing path actualising the final fruition. Thus “upholding the mind as a fruit” refers to Ushnishacakravarti and he represents the total fruition of all levels of realisation and abandonments. The line “**All those of ignorance, anger, lust, obstruction, and vajra**” tells us what Buddha families these wrathful deities belong and to what perfect purity each of them represent. [For instance] Acala is the perfect purity of ignorance or delusion, and belongs to Vairocana family. The wrathful deities of above and below are perfect purity of anger and belong to Akshobhya family. Niladanda is the perfect purity of attachment and belongs to Amitabha family; Takiraja is the perfect purity of pride and is of Ratnasambhava family. Mahabala is the perfect purity of jealousy and belongs to Vajra or Amogasiddhi family. As stated before, all of these [protectors] resemble the ‘Enlightened Vajra.’”

## CONFESSION

[The meaning of verse in the *sadhana* is the following.] [49a] I shall confess and purify all my negativity and transgressions, the dirt accumulated through committing deeds negative by nature or so by transgression of precepts. I [may] have committed such deeds in this ocean of existence through the three doors [body, speech and mind], motivated by thoughts polluted by every kind of affliction, and throughout all times since beginningless. I

confess and purify them in proper accordance with rites taught by the Buddhas within the framework of the four forces of antidotes and with full awareness of the non-substantiality of the three spheres [the object, agent, and the act].

## REJOICING

[The verse means:] I shall joyfully admire all virtuous deeds accumulated through pure motivation by the fully enlightened Buddhas, the Arya beings of the three vehicles, and all ordinary beings regardless of whether or not they are on the path. I shall do so with full awareness of how such deeds bring wondrous results as their fruition. I shall dedicate all my virtues of three times, together with others' virtue, to become causes for the attainment of supreme enlightenment. This is similar to the verse "All Buddhas of ten directions and their children ..." found in Samandrabadra's *Aspirational Prayers*.

## TAKING REFUGE

[The first verse in the *sadhana* means] I shall go for refuge to the *sugathas* [those gone to bliss] who possess within the ultimate realisation of wisdom and method. Their "minds are immersed in the play" of insight into emptiness, awakened through analysis of hundred-fold reasoning. This refers to the realisation of the path and suggests that on the paths of accumulation and preparation one cognises emptiness through concepts. On the tenth level, like the waxing moon in a clear [night] sky, direct realisation of emptiness undergoes a process of enhancement such that at the time of full enlightenment one's realisation [fully] culminates. This resembles the rising of the full moon. As stated in [Nagarjuna's *Hymns to the Sphere of Reality*]

As the new moon of the waxing stage ...

*Dharmakaya* too can appear in its totality.

Thus the above refers to the dimension of a culminated wisdom of the stage of no more learning. [This is accompanied by] the 'method' accomplished through immeasurable deeds of the Bodhisattva encompassed by the five perfections such as generosity and so on all of

which are enforced by the altruistic mind of awakening induced by the compassion that shoulders the responsibility of bringing about others' welfare. [49b]

[The second verse.] I go for refuge to the *Dharma*, which is the union of abandonment and realisation. [I go for refuge to] to the 'true path' such as the pristine cognition of meditative equipoise, the source of all accomplishments of abandonment and accomplishments that are present within the hearts of the sublime beings who are thoroughly free from all dualistic conceptions including especially apprehensions of substantial existence. [I go for refuge to] to the 'true cessation', that nature of reality within which emptiness of all phenomena and the mind immersed in it share the same identity and are of single taste,

[The third verse.] I go for refuge to the masters of accomplished conduct such as those who are on the Bodhisattva levels like the 'joyful one', etc. levels which result from a comprehensive union of method and wisdom, which is principal discipline of these levels. In that they are liberated from the corresponding level of bondage these Bodhisattvas are endowed with qualities of abandonment. In that they possess the altruistic mind of awakening produced from supreme compassion the Bodhisattvas are endowed with glorious realisations.

GENERATING THE ALTRUISTIC MIND                      The combination of "aspiration" and "purification" indicates the 'mind generation of pure motivation'; while "thorough ripening" refers to the 'mind generation of thorough ripening.' The second line presents the 'mind generation of the elimination of the two obstructions'; while the third line presents the 'mind generation of pure motivation.' This is because on the stages of 'engagement through simulation' [i.e. paths of accumulation and preparation] since emptiness is cognised only through concepts, whatever realisations one may have remain only at the level of thought and concept, and not objects of direct experience. On the seven 'impure' levels [i.e. first seven Bodhisattva grounds] compassion [50a] increases rapidly and is enforced by the experience of direct realisation of emptiness; one attains thus the 'mind generation of pure motivation.' On the 'pure' levels [i.e. eighth, ninth and tenth] manifest apprehensions of substantial existence no longer exists and the fruition of the total elimination of grasping at substantial existence by 'thoroughly liberating path' of the eighth



level begins to take place. This includes, amongst others, entering into and arising from meditative absorptions and the attainment of *vajra* body. Thus one attains the ‘mind generation of thorough ripening.’ At the stage of Buddhahood, since traces of dualistic appearances, including the subtle most inner propensities have been exhausted, one attains the ‘mind generation of the elimination of the two obstructions.’ There is no ‘altruistic mind of awakening’ that does not include in any of these [four] categories. Therefore, you should ensure that even within a single instance of the generation of the altruistic intention the aspects of all *bodhicitta* are present and thereby cultivate [both] the ‘aspirational’ and ‘engaging’ aspects of the altruistic mind of awakening. Should you do this, it is possible to encompass the points of the entire path in one’s practice of *bodhicitta* alone.

#### PLEDGING TO RELY ON THE PATH

The six perfections such as generosity and so on and the practices of the ten virtues are the sole path traversed by the enlightened Buddhas and their children. Through the enhancement of the ‘ten paths of virtue’ belonging to the ‘initial scope’ spiritual endeavour, the practice of the three [higher] trainings [moral discipline, meditation and wisdom] of the ‘middling scope’ emerges. From this and through the progressive enhancement of *bodhicitta*, the altruistic intention and the six perfections such as generosity one attains full awakening of Buddhahood. Since the *tantric* path takes result on the path itself one can generate in one’s mind, right from start and that too in a single sitting session, aspects of the environment, body, resources, and activities of the fully enlightened Buddha in terms of the ‘four thorough purities.’ All the virtuous paths such as *bodhicitta* and the six perfections like generosity and so on are encompassed within such a practice of taking results into the path. **[50b]**

UPHOLDING THE VOWS While upholding the vows, when you say “I, by the name of ...” it has now become a common practice to use ‘Akshobhya Vajra’ for Guhyasamaja and Vairocana Vajra for Sarvavidya Vairocana. But Drakar Rinpoche states that if you do this even though you yourself have a different *tantric* name the act is negative, as it constitutes

lying to the deities. There is no explanation in the oral tradition as to why one should conceal one's *tantric* name. However, the teacher said that he heard from the attendant Tenpa Dhargye that some people in central Tibet say that after one's death, in the intermediate state, the person is called by his *tantric* name by both their meditational deity and also the spirit born simultaneous to oneself. So, if the name is not concealed it is said that during that time it is possible that the negative 'innate' spirit can also call by this name!

There are nineteen precepts specific to the individual Buddha families. As for the precepts of Amitabha one upholds all sacred doctrines without exception, those belonging to the 'external' Performance and Action *Tantras*, 'secret' *Yoga* and *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantras*, and also the Perfection vehicle. So to read [the *sadhana* line as] "outer, inner and secret" is an error. In stead, it should be read as "**the three: outer, secret and the vehicle**". For the precepts of Amogasiddhi, in some texts it is stated that "one should uphold all vows through enhancement". This is similar to the vernacular expression where one speaks of "enhancement" when one exchanges younger horses for older ones. The meaning here is that the vows one has taken previously are enhanced and upheld in elevated forms. When you recite "**I shall [maintain] all vows without exception,**" you should bring to your mind all the general and specific precepts such as the fourteen root precepts, eight 'heavy' precepts, and the various commitments pertaining to [daily] observance, company, eating, etc.

"**I shall liberate those not liberated**" indicates that you wish to liberate such as [the worldly gods] Brahman and Indra – the sentient beings who are not liberated from unenlightened existence and mental and emotional afflictions. I shall free 'Hearers' and 'Solitary Buddhas', beings who are not free from obstructions to knowledge from such obstructions. **[51a] "I shall deliver those in need of relief"** refer to sentient beings who are afflicted by such sufferings as heat, freezing, hunger, thirst, and ignorance [and are thus chained] in the three unfortunate realms of existence. [And you state that] in brief, I shall place all sentient beings to the state of Vajradhara, the state of non-abiding *nirvana*. This, then, is the meaning of the verse.

As for dissolution of the merit field, in *Kunrik* one imagines it disappearing [into nothingness] while in Yamantaka one dissolves it into emptiness. For Cakrasamvara it is all

right to also dissolve the merit field into yourself. In any case, it is better to follow the procedure suggested by the founding lineage masters. So, here imagine that the merit field returns to its natural abode.

#### **2.4.1.2.2 Meditation on protection circle, averting adverse conditions.**

### GENERATING THE WRATHFUL DEITIES

While reciting OM SVABHAVA and so on place your identity on *dharmakaya* and contemplate thus: “I am the natural purity of all phenomena encompassed by subject and object.” The sense of ‘I am’ in a meditative equipoise on emptiness partially resembles the sense of ‘I am’ in sleep. The passage [in the *sadhana*] “**Since no things exist, no meditator exists....**” can be related to the cause, effect and the thing itself, or alternatively to object, agent and the act. Of these two interpretations, the Teacher suggested that here [at this point in the *sadhana*] the passage is read in the former way while in the context of meditating on the pristine cognition one relates the passage to the second reading.

Generally speaking as the following verse reads

The profound mode that is taught to be subtle  
It's of single taste, like the [uniform] taste of honey.

there are no differences of kind insofar as the ultimate nature of reality of all phenomena is concerned. Nevertheless, because there exists multiple ways in which things are conceived of as substantially real there is indeed great effect and consolidation in one's realisation when many different forms of analysis is applied with relation to different objects upon which emptiness is being ascertained. It is for this reason emptiness is divided in terms of sixteen classes, twenty classes, and so on. So, here too one should encompass the entire phenomena into the classes of cause, effects and the thing themselves. **[51b]** Even those which are uncaused [for example, the space] come into being in dependence upon their designative bases or ‘causes’ so they too can be viewed in terms of effects and [thus be] meditated upon [accordingly].

The non-substantial existence of the thing itself is [said to be] the ‘door of liberation’ known as ‘emptiness’. The non-substantial existence of cause is called ‘signlessness’. This is because generally speaking the term ‘cause’ can connote a cause, a reason, a sign or a symbol, and since one is engaged in eliminating the grasping at the substantial existence of cause, here cause is being referred to as a ‘sign’. As fruits [of action] are normally objects of yearning the elimination of grasping at the substantial reality of effects is called ‘wishlessness’. The analysis to negate substantial existence from the point of view of causation typically operates through examining whether or not a thing comes into being from itself, from other, from both, or from no cause. Further, it analyses whether a solitary cause produces a solitary effect, or whether multiple causes produce multiple effects, and so on. These modes of analysis can also be extended to the other two [the effects and the thing itself]. You should thus place your mind upon emptiness, the absence of the substantial existence of cause, of effects and the nature of all phenomena and take these as the focus of your [meditative] attention. Although when enumerating one speaks of ‘three doors of liberation’, in actual meditation there is no difference at all between the three insofar as there is experience is concerned. This is analogous to the fact that although one speaks of the ‘absence of pillar’ and an ‘absence of pot’ with separate linguistic expressions, but when actually conceived by the mind there is nothing other than the mere absence.

So, while immersed in the indivisible fusion of your mind and the emptiness of inherent existence of cause, of effects and of the identity of all phenomena, you should imagine that at your place the syllable PA, the first letter of the name lotus, emerges. It is marked with the *bindu* [dot], making the letter PAM. From this arises a variegated lotus; its four cardinal petals are red, while the petals in northeast and southeast are yellow, southwest green, and northwest black. The hub of the lotus is green, and its pistil is yellow. [52a] At the centre of this emerges, from AH, a sun disc on which stands a yellow BHRUM sized about the width of a *mandala* door. This [letter] transforms and becomes a yellow wheel with ten spokes, the edge of the spokes are razor sharp. The point where the two vertical spokes, one facing above and one below, meet, looks like the ends of two spears touching each other. From this point branches out the eight cardinal and intermediate spokes that look like swords lying flat and horizontally, all of which have handles of five-

spoked *vajras*. At the centre, in the space inside is the principal deity Akshobhya. Since he is a peaceful deity he sits on a cushion of variegated lotus and a moon disc. Visualise ten seats of variegated lotuses and sun discs at the tip of the eight spokes in the cardinal and intermediate directions, and above and below the principal deity, one slightly to the front and the other slightly to the rear.

Of course the ten wrathful deities of Yamantaka [*mandala*] are fierce [in appearance] but have cushions of all three, sun [moon and lotus]. This difference is due to the fact that a different text is being used [here]. Although the actual wording of the *sadhanas* of both Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka suggest so, Gungthang Jampelyang says that the visualisation of the wheel actually spinning is not necessary for daily practices. This can be performed in specific meditations where exclusive emphasis is placed on protection and averting obstacles. If the wheel is visualised as not spinning it can be imagined as touching the seat, if, on the other hand, it is visualised as spinning then it should be imagined as not touching the cushion. Imagine that every atom of the wheel emits fire sparks in the shape of fierce *vajras* with their spokes open. These sparks are so intensely hot that even the slightest contact could destroy malevolent forces of all three realms without exception as if a stack of hay has come into contact with a flame of a fire at the end of an aeon. The sparks fly around uninterrupted forming a cloud-like ring.

As the [Guhyasamaja Root ] *tantra* states

Lights resembling, and akin to Vairocana...

In the middle seat is white Vajradhara with three faces and six arms [52b], who is embraced by his consort white Vajradhatesvari, again with three faces and six arms. This, then, is the ‘commitment being.’ At his heart, seated on a cushion of variegated lotus and a moon disc, is a red ‘wisdom being’ with one face two arms holding a *vajra* and bell. At the level of ‘commitment being’s’ throat, and up till the point where hair-knot begins is a wisdom consort that is his natural expression. She is a ‘resonance’, or the ‘appearance of deity’s own identity’, or a ‘projected image’ of the deity. She is in embrace with the ‘father’ who is identical to her in terms of face, arms, etc. At heart, on a moon disc, is a blue five-spoked *vajra* at the hub of which is the ‘concentration being’, a blue HUM. The three points of

your body are marked by the three letters OM AH HUM, which are the natures of the *vajra*-body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas. In the *Subsequent Tantra* it reads

Endowed with the four resources of *vajra*.

These are the resource of *vajra*-body, the resource of *vajra*-speech, the resource of *vajra*-mind, and the resource of ‘wisdom being’. Thus one speaks of ‘Vajradhara being endowed with four resources’.

Yourself as Vajradhara in union with consort, you radiate countless light rays from the concentration being HUM at your heart, which emerge out from the point where the father and mother’s sexual organs meet. The light rays pervade all realms in the ten directions.

As [in the *Sadhana*] one reads

The *mandalas* that are born of extremely subtle atoms...

you invite from each of these realms Akshobhya surrounded by ten wrathful deities forming a multitude of deities like a ‘cloud of ocean.’ They all dissolve one into another eventually leaving only one Akshobhya surrounded by ten wrathful deities, which remains present in space in front of you. They enter through the father’s mouth and melt at his heart by the fire of great passion and, passing through the *vajra* path, enter the mother’s lotus. [53a] At mother’s heart, at its centre, at above, at below and in the cardinal and intermediate directions are eleven drops reflecting the colour of their related deities. They transform and become eleven long HUMs, which in turn transform to become Akshobhya in the middle surrounded by ten wrathful deities.

Akshobhya is drawn forth through the consort’s ‘space’ and through your secret place up to the heart where it remains present. Focused on him, call out by his ‘near-essence’ *mantra* VAJRADHIK thus stirring his heart. He exists from your heart and begins to multiply one to two, two into four, four into eight, eight into sixteen, and so on manifesting multitude of emanations towards all ten directions equal to the number of sentient beings. Buddha Shakyamuni simultaneously manifested billion emanations in billion world systems and performed [throughout these world systems] the twelve great deeds, leading beings to the paths of fruition and liberation. In the same manner, you should

imagine leading sentient beings, without exception, in all universe systems, their numbers equal to the reach of space by engaging in whatever deeds that appropriate to their needs. The twelve deeds such as ‘turning the wheel of dharma’ and so on are deeds common to all Buddhas of Emanation Body, while the cleansing of sentient beings’ anger, its cause and effects is a deed specific to Akshobhya. This is because Akshobhya is the deity, who is the perfect purity of anger. The manner in which cleansing takes place here [in your visualisation] should embrace the entire range of [possibilities] such as the practice of loving kindness that undermines manifest anger to total eradication of anger from its root.

Generally speaking it is through a gradual process of hearing, contemplation and meditation that one traverses on the path. So to attain the state of Akshobhya too first [53b] the aspiration to attain it, if that is not already present, must be generated. If already generated, this should be reinforced and enhance further. So all of these essential points should be complete during each cycle of visualisation. This is why the training in the common practices of ‘stages of the path’ is said to be critical. If examined with deep understanding, it may be adequate to focus only on the single sentence “I shall lead them to the state of Akshobhya”. But the success of this depends [of course] upon one’s level of understanding, learning and contemplation. For example, in the case of anger, there are [in addition to the emotion itself] the various modalities of consciousness and their expressions that accompany anger, all of which must be overcome. Then there are all the [negative] acts such as killing, and so on, including the ten negative actions which are motivated by hostile emotions. But all of this complexity does not occur to our mind [normally] when we utter the injunction “purify anger,” because all this cannot be expressed [in a single sentence].

It is said that even when eating a mouthful of food [your state of mind makes a great difference. For example, if you are not touched by some altruistic thought to be of benefit to others, and instead, if the food is eaten with attachment, then the atoms that exist in that food and also whatever originates from its form, sound, smell, taste and tactile quality, [are thought to] remain within the confines of afflictions. This is stated in [Vasubandhu’s] *Treasury of Knowledge* in the following:

In the desire realm are the [egoistic] ‘view of the perishable’ ...  
the rest are here non-virtuous.

So if you were to reflect carefully on how the continuum of non-virtue enhances uninterruptedly once the seed has been planted out of a negative intention, it could shatter your heart. Thus reflect upon the force of negativity. [The verse in the *sadhana*] **“The way of the virtuous qualities like the ten ‘white’ deeds such as generosity...”** states the practice of the ten virtues and six perfections as taking results into one’s path. So by cleansing anger and its cause within all sentient beings, and leading all beings to the path of ten virtues, the practice of six perfections is brought about within oneself. **[54a]** For example, ‘turning the wheel of *dharma*’ is the giving of *dharma*. Placing all sentient beings on the state of happiness and benefit is the giving of loving-kindness. Ensuring their prosperity is the giving of material aid, and protecting them from dangers and pain is the giving of freedom from fear. This can be applied in the similar way to the ‘three ethical disciplines’ and other [perfections] too.

Therefore simply saying aloud the sentence [from the *sadhana*] **“Light rays emit from HUM and fulfil the welfare of sentient beings”** is not sufficient. If examined in depth what is meant by bringing about the welfare of sentient beings, it is possible to ascertain that how even on the basis of a single *mantra*, the practice of taking into the path as results the ‘ten virtues’ and ‘six perfections’ can be effected. It is from these kinds of understanding that *tantra*’s efficacy and its swiftness should be made evident. If, on the other hand, these things are treated with little importance but great emphasis is placed upon the cultivation of deity’s identity and perception, it may be possible to attain some results such as visions and other signs. But these [experiences] will still remain as further causes for unenlightened existence. In [Potowa’s] *A Scripture of Similes* there are stories of “*Mother tiger, a skeleton, a goat and a mountain*” [that relate to this essential point]. Lhodrak Drupchen has also said

If not enforced by the altruistic mind of awakening,  
even repeated *mantra* recitations can cause rebirth as malevolent spirits.

He narrates the story of a creature with nine goitres. This is the story of someone who, though having attained some power of *mantra* in this life, was later reborn as harmful,



interfering spirit. There is also the story of Canaksha in the *Root Tantra of Manjushri*. There are also many similar stories told by Atisha such as the one in which how a *yogi* of *Hevajratantra* ends up attaining the level of a ‘stream enterer’ [i.e. a level on the lesser vehicle path]! Therefore one should not be enamoured by mere visualisation; rather it is crucial to make efforts to gain [genuine] ‘ascertainment’ on the basis of a comprehensive [approach to] path, especially emphasising the generation of the altruistic mind of awakening and the cultivation of the perfect view of emptiness.

So, [as explained before] the emanated deities dissolve one into another merging eventually into only one Akshobhya. He merges inseparably with the ‘wisdom-being-Akshobhya’ who is residing in his natural abode. In other *sadhanas* it is the wisdom being that enters into the commitment being; here, however, [54b] the commitment being departs to merge inseparably with the wisdom being. The deities return and dissolve into you thus transforming you into a ‘triple being Vajra Wrathful father-mother’, as described in the *sadhana*. Since the deities are in wrathful forms here, your Akshobhya cushion, which was previously a moon disc, is now changed into a sun disc. Focused on this [deity form] you should cultivate the identity ‘I am’. To indicate the combination of peacefulness and wrath the colour of your body is black with a reddish tinge; you possess the countenance of both wrath and passion. Although for peaceful deities the hand implement *vajra* has spokes which close at the tip of the central spoke, for wrathful deities the side spokes remain open. As for the identification of what the ‘nine’ spokes are [of a nine-spoked *vajra*], [Khedrup’s] *A Feast to Please the Yogis* makes the following observation. He suggests that in actuality the *vajra* has only five spokes, but one counts four side spokes at both ends separately and the central spoke as one thus making it nine. However in the previous Künkhyen [Jamyang Shepa]’s commentary on Yamantaka generation stage, he identifies the nine-spoked *vajra* to be the one which we normally see. I think we could follow this interpretation. But the teacher remarked that his own view on this remains undecided as he can’t recall exactly what his Guru’s oral was on this question.

As for the consort’s ‘half-knot’ hair, there are two ways of imagining this. One is to see half of the hair forming a knot, while the other half is let loose over her shoulders. Or, alternatively the entire hair is turned inwards on the crown which lets the hair loose over her

back with its half length. The consort is in her prime of youth; she is beautiful and has a melodious singing voice, sweet body odour, delicious lips, and soft body texture. Thus she is immersed in the bliss of five sense objects. Her jewel ornaments are as mentioned before. The Teacher enumerated ear ornaments and *utpala* ornaments separately. In this sense, we can conceive a gold earring with a precious stone studded in the middle; on this is an *utpala* flower hanging over it. [55a] There are also commentaries where ear ornament and *utpala* are identified as one. So one should not read “ear ornament” [the Tibetan *nyengong* means ‘over the ears’] literally to mean that it refers to something on top of the ears.

The peaceful deities are in a halo of light, while the wrathful ones are surrounded by red light of enflamed and blazing fire. Although you are already in the form of a triple being as generated earlier, here as you are turning into a wrathful form it is mentioned once again to reinforce your visualisation as a triple. The [visualisation of] wisdom being and the concentration being are same as before. Both in the *Root Tantra* and here [in the *sadhana*] the second reference to Yamantaka and so on may seem like placing two steps on a doorsill. But the significance of this is that the former indicates engaging in an absorptive meditation at the end of an analysis, while the latter is to indicate the start of a further analytic meditation such as the thought “I shall now generate the wrathful deities on the spokes, etc.” Thus there are traditions different to both the Upper and Lower Tantric colleges; all of these are related to the actual wording of the *Root Tantra* and its commentarial instructions. They are all therefore significant.

Here although one has already visualised the ten wrathful deities at the consort’s heart one should reinforce the visualisation of the colour of their bodies, their hand implements, etc. in their proper sequence. As Yamantaka is the wrathful deity of Vairocana family he has Vairocana naturally as his crown ornament. These can be easily understood if related to earlier explanations about the following verses.

Close-mindedness, faults, lust, endowed with *vajra dharma*, ...

Ignorance, anger, lust, obstruction, and the *vajra*...

In the *Root Tantra* it reads “in appearances of black, red, and white...”, which suggests all deities to be with three faces and six arms. Like the definitive meaning of the ‘*vajra* folded palms’, these [colours] have the significance of representing ‘illusory body’, ‘clear light’ and

‘union’. It is easy to understand the description of other hand implements; [55b] club and baton appear similar. Pistil refers to that thing that is used for beating rice to peel off its husks. The HUMKARA gesture is performed by first touching the two *vajra* fists together and then bending the two thumbs inward and stretching out the two index fingers. When the tip of the two index fingers are slightly bent it becomes the *mudra* of Takiraja. So, although here it is stated that one should perform the HUMKARA gesture, actually it is the gesture of Takiraja that is appropriate. Press the two thumbs upon the tip of the ring fingers with the two middle fingers touching each other at the tip. And with the two index fingers slightly bent touch at the mid-point of the middle joint of the middle fingers, while the two little fingers are stretched out like needles. This [hand gesture] is described in *Stages of Pure Yoga* as the gesture of ‘crown protrusion’.

Yamantaka is drawn forth from the consort’s heart, and coming out through the ‘space’ and ‘secret place’ of the father-mother, he is invited at one’s heart. Calling out by the name “Yamantakrit” it stirs his heart; he exists from your heart and emanate multitude of replicas performing both common and specific deeds, which cannot be described even by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for aeons even if they were to do so. He situates himself on his seat at the tip of the eastern spoke swirling with his left leg stretched out. So at this point [in your meditation] there are nine wrathful deities at the consort’s heart, and Yamantaka alone on the tip of the eastern spoke of the outer wheel. Apply this same procedure for the remaining wrathful deities and visualise them located on their specific seats on the spokes. Ushnishacakravartin is within the vertical spoke facing upwards, slightly in front of the principal deity; while Sumbaraja resides inside the vertical spoke facing downwards, on a seat slightly at the rear of the principal deity. The principal deity and the two wrathful deities on the above and below should be visualised as not touching the spokes. [56a]

Although the colour of their bodies and their hand implements are different, their ornaments and appearances are uniform. Hence in both Yamantaka and Guhyasamaja the wrathful deities are mentioned in one stretch as “the ten wrathful deities”, etc. Their hair, yellowish red, is not bound in a knot, rather it is standing upwards. Above the eyes are eyebrows, at the rim eyelashes, and around the mouth moustache, all of which are like

flames of fire. The faces being “totally transformed” suggest that the facial expression is thoroughly ‘other-worldly’. The “belly-home being large” means that their stomach has a wide circumference; “suspended downwards” implies that the rounded belly is ‘hanging’ downwards. They are adorned with previous jewels and wear a tiger-skin loincloth. The hair is tied, though not the whole, with blue Ananta snakes as if woven around into a plait. “*Serelkha*” is identified in the Yamanataka [texts] as an ornament with a knot made of snakeheads at the level of one’s heart. Here [in this *sadhana*], however, it refers to a cross-band made of green snakes with their head and tails tied together around a jewel ornament in the middle. White snakes, the colour of Vasuki nectar, tie around the waist as belts. The remaining [description] can be understood on the basis of earlier explanations.

Generally, these [snakes] symbolise the exercise of mastery over the eight *nagas* [serpents]. Their uncommon significance is to indicate the overpowering and purification of the five poisons [of mind], and that it is the pristine cognition, which is free of the five poisons that manifest as snake ornaments. They destroy all malevolent forces amidst a heap of blazing fire formed of light rays radiating from their bodies. Thus in every single instance their myriad activities reach out to sentient beings equal to the extent of space leading them to paths of fruition and freedom. This visualisation should be applied to all the deities. [56b] “Generating a deity inside the ‘womb’ of the consort” should be understood really to mean womb of the consort as suggested by Tsongkhapa and his immediate disciples. In the Yamantaka *sadhana* although it reads “emanating from the consort’s lotus”, however it emerges from the consort’s heart and descends through the ‘space’ and ‘secret place’ of father-mother and is then drawn forth to one’s heart. From there it is emitted outside. Thus to underline this point, it is the custom of Lower Tantric college to omit the word ‘consort’ [from the *sadhana*’s wording of this part], and simply read it as “**emanating from the lotus.**”

## DRIVING THE STAKES

Yourself as Vajra Wrathful, with piercing eyes, look at Sumbaraja below. This makes him aware that he is being summoned; he emanates a replica, who sits in front of you and asks, “What should I do?” Drakar Kachu Rinpoche, while imitating Pönlop Jhampa

Rinpoche, says that when the Proctor points his staff to the north during an assembly at Drepung he mistook it as a call for fetching tea and instantly stood up to ran! This is how you should imagine the wrathful deities responding to the summons. So he [Drakar Kachu Rinpoche] performs the gesture with his hands and suggests that thinking like this can help to have a clear visualisation.

The meaning of the *mantras* is the following: OM is the embodiment of the indivisible identity of the three *vajras*; SUMBHA, taming or ‘beautifying of harms’; NISUMBHA, definitely taming or definitely beautifying the harms without exception; (Kyapgön Dorjechang suggests that we read it as NISUMBHA, beginning with the particle NI.) GRIHANA, uphold this; GRIHANA PAYA, exhort others to uphold this; HUM, to entrust this task; ANAYA, draw forth; HO, Oh!; BHAGAVAN, one who has overcome and is transcendent; VIDYA, knowledge; RAJA, king; and HUM PHAT suggests an injunction to kill.

In brief, the *mantra* means this: “Oh, One who has overcome and is transcendent, arrest the principal amongst the interfering forces and draw them forth; exhort your retinue too to catch them.” [57a] Thus, when the principal deity utters this *mantra* and summons, the *vajra* in Sumbharaja’s right hand becomes a *vajra*-hook. (Take this as an illustration of how in the case of other deities the *vajra* in their hands become the hand implements appropriate to the activities you are engaged in.) There are now ten Sumbharajas holding hooks and lassos; they depart to the ten directions and pierces with hooks at the hearts of the principal amongst the obstructive forces, i.e. ten directional guardians who support the negative force, and tie them with lassos around their neck. Like a magnet attracting metal objects, they are all drawn forth instantly forcing also their subordinates to follow them against their will. As they arrive within the vicinity the wrathful deities turn to face them. They confront their corresponding interfering forces and shout HUM; in this way HUMs are placed at the cardinal and intermediate directions, one each at east of east and west of west, and so on. These transform into ten deep wells — narrow at the mouth but wide at the bottom—like deep pits, and borne of the unwholesome *karma* of the individual interfering forces. With their faces looking outwards, they are caught from their heads and

thrown into the well; their subordinates follow suit. Imagine that they are all now in the pits.

The Amritakundalini emanated by Amritakundalini at north becomes ten stakes with their upper part as a wrathful deity but below the navel assuming the shape of single-pointed spears. Without depending upon any other agent for the act, they pierce through the crown of the interfering forces as if ‘lightening poles’ have been erected. The teacher instructed that one should visualise the holes for the stakes as being indivisible from the bodies of the interfering forces. Earlier it was suggested that they were thrown into the wells, while here [57b] the stakes are being visualised as piercing through their crowns. There need not, however, be contradictory. Placing the stake on the crown is a helpful step in the visualisation. While reciting GHA GHA, and yourself as Vajra Wrathful, you order the stake thus causing the *vajra* hook in the hand of Sumbharaja to now become a blazing *vajra* hammer. He [Sumbharaja] lifts the hammer gestures hitting it in the cardinal and intermediate directions and also up and downwards. (You need not necessarily hit on the stakes.) Instantly, like driving a stake into a mass of wet clay, imagine that the stake pierces from the [malevolent forces’] crown to the heels of the feet. Pönlop Jhampa tells us this is how the visualisation should be done. Vajra fire rages intensely from the wrathful deities and the ten stakes shooting towards above, below, cardinal and the intermediate directions, burning into ashes those forces in the entourage who are not within the stake-holes. Imagine that those still left behind run far away. The following lines in the Root Tantra suggest this [visualisation].

The malevolent forces are burnt and scattered here and there,  
Also, they run away with intense fervour.

As the stakes were driven in, the peg holes become wide at the mouth and narrow at the base. Both [the stake and the hole] are alike in being triangular in shape the difference is where they are wide and narrow. In [Khedrup Je’s] *Ocean of Attainments being a Commentary on Generation Stage*, citing the *sadhana* of Vajrasattva, he writes that the *mantra* for driving in the stakes is uttered by Sumbharaja, while Vajra Wrathful, through intention, summons the stakes. According to the previous Künkhyen’s *Generation Stage*, however, Vajra Wrathful issues the order to Sumbharaja, who has emerged from the merging

of the ten Sumbharajas, to exhort the stakes. And it is this single Sumbharaja, while facing outwards, utters the staking *mantra* and drives in the stakes one after the other. Although the teacher explained the meaning of the *mantra*, I shall not write it here. You can find it in [Tsongkhapa's] *Four Interwoven Commentaries*, [Khedrup Je's] *Ocean of Attainments*, and in the *Generation Stage* texts by Dakpo, and so on. **[58a]**

Perform the gesture for staking towards the east of east for the interfering forces from above; and, perform the staking gesture towards the west of west for the interfering forces from below. As for the *mantra* for driving in the stakes, although in congregations one recites the *mantra* twice for Cakrasamvara, and here [i.e. in the case of Guhyasamaja] three times; during one's personal practice it is good to recite it ten times. Arik Geshe has opined that in the present context the interfering forces [can be said to] attain full enlightenment. He argues that this is because their body, speech and mind are drawn into an uninterrupted equipoise on emptiness. At that point, although from the point of view of the yogi it has been only an instance, for the interfering forces, however, they have accomplished the accumulations of a three innumerable aeons. So from their point of views it has been aeons! He further states that the reference to "without movement" is a reference to 'non-moving' from within clear light. "How can one just leave them after having 'beaten' them so much?" he asks. He has thus argued extensively along these lines. There is much to think about in all of this.

Apart from one's own *karma* and afflictions manifesting in the form of interfering forces there are no external forces with terrifying horns on their heads! So if Vignanakrit, which is the deity of wisdom, cannot destroy thoughts grasping at substantial existence and its derivative *karma* and mental and emotional afflictions, how can the 'uninterrupted path' eradicate afflictions of thought and emotion? Therefore, as we say

May obstacles to my Guru's life and deeds —  
harms caused by malevolent forces and ill-meaning spirits be averted.

The application the 'rite of staking' against all harmful spirits and malevolent forces undermining the doctrine and its upholders, and the objects, agents and acts associated with

the two obstructions, is a wonderful method of averting obstacles to one's practice of the two stages.

The scriptural source for the [visualisation of] ten wrathful deities in both Yamantaka and Guhyasmaja is the following passage from the *Subsequent Tantra*: **[58b]**

The wheel that is thoroughly swirling is  
... [they] originate from ten embodiments of wisdom.

As for the 'ten consciousnesses', although it is enumerated in the *Four Interwoven Commentaries* as found in [Vasubandhu's] *Treasury of Knowledge*, there must be a difference in terms of their identification because of the common and uncommon contexts. In any case, there are no objects of abandonment that cannot be eliminated by them. And, as far as the manifestations of the objects of abandonment are concerned, there is nothing that is not included in the ten wrathful, interfering forces. Thus, with the knowledge that there are no antidote deities not encompassed in the ten consciousnesses and ten wrathful deities, if you strive in the meditation and recitations, there can be no better rite for promoting wellbeing. It is a mistake to remain ignorant of one's own treasure, and open mouth to others [with envy]. If the section for driving the stakes is not done, one can [simply] recite the *mantras* and do some clapping, or alternatively, one can perform the rite after 'putting on armour'. Up to this point is [visualisation of] the uncommon protection circle.

That in Yamantaka the common protection circle comes first and here it comes after is due to the difference in their sources. As the principal deity says TAKKIRAJA HUM JAH and so on one after the other, there emerge, outside the uncommon protection circle (leaving aside the stake holes), an iron *vajra*-fence, outside it, a water-fence with melted cast iron throwing off fire sparks in all ten directions. The sparks are so hot that the slightest contact can instantly burn all malevolent forces. Outside this is a fire-fence made of the fire that resembles the one that exists at the end of the universe. Outside this is a fence of whirlwind made of dark swirling winds like that at the end of time; this wind, which is a mixture of fire and wind rage with terror. Again, as the principal deity utters HUM a letter HÚM appears on the fences from which appears a fence of five-spoked *vajras*, round with at the top of which is a stupa-like Vajra-tent. Again, as HUM is uttered, at the base



emerges from letter HÚM, *vajra*-ground. [59a] Outside this is a ring of arrow net composed of either arrows with five-spoked *vajra* tips, or five-spoked *vajras* shooting out sparks of fire towards all directions — east, south, west, north, up, down, and the intermediate directions—leaving no space in between the arrows. This ring enveloped in a blazing wisdom fire such that the malevolent forces cannot even dare to look. This, then, is visualisation of the common protection circle.

Now, place the three letters [OM AH HUM] at the three points of the wrathful deities' bodies. Do the recitation [of the *sadhana*] and ensure that the five essential points suggested by oral instructions [pertaining to this practice] are complete.

(a) *The essential point of transferring [the identity of] the principal deity.*

For this, if the meditation is done with the purpose to counter malevolent spirits and spells, visualise Ushnishachakravartin in the above. If, on the other hand, it is done with the purpose to pacify interferences, one's own identity should be transferred from Vajra Wrathful to Vignantakrit. At the heart of both principal deity and his retinue are HUMs standing on cushions of sun discs. The HUM is surrounded by the specific *mantra* [of the individual deity]; focus upon this and do the recitation. It is also appropriate to engage in the practice of the [many of the various] rites as suggested in the *Four Interwoven Commentaries*. This is same with respect to the remaining wrathful deities too.

Although in the *Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* there are *mantras* for only nine wrathful deities, the tenth is hidden to indicate the importance of relying on Guru's instructions. The great Tsongkhapa has stated that one should recite the *mantra* for Ushnishachakravartin by using the one mentioned in the *Vajra Tent Tantra*. For the protection wheel of Yamantaka, the principal deity is Sumbharaja, and at its place [59b] is visualised a replica which is placed under the *vajra* base. So although the Sumbharaja at the centre is not at its location anymore; but this is similar to taking Vajra Wrathful as the principal deity here [in *Guhyasamaja sadhana*]. Thus, whichever wrathful deity is visualised at the centre it is essential to visualise a replica of that wrathful deity as well.

(a) *The essential point of concealing the intended beneficiary.*

Visualise on right of HUM at the principal deity's heart your two parents, on the left your spiritual colleagues and benefactors, at its rear your relatives and friends, on the vowel U your possessions, inside the *bindu* [dot of HUM] visualise your personal Guru. Since it is hard these days not to have any degeneration in one's bond to the Guru perhaps one should visualise someone other than one's Guru seated on a cushion of moon disc in one's front. One could also 'conceal' them inside the protection wheel. If one wishes to 'conceal' oneself, you could visualise yourself in the ordinary form and imagine it to be either in front of yourself as Vajra Wrathful, or in front of the letter HUM. Imagine that you are placed inside the 'light tent' formed from the light rays radiating from both the body and heart of the wrathful deities and imagine that you are thus guarded against obstructive forces and hindrances.

(c) *The essential point of experiencing the vision of the wrathful deities.*

For protection rites the wrathful deities are visualised as facing inwards to observe the objects of protection; for averting rites they are [visualised as] facing outwards. Especially to avert 'possessor forces' coming from above visualise that all wrathful deities, especially Ushnishachakravartin are looking upwards throwing fierce glances.

(d) *The essential point of enlightened activities.*

For this, when you undertake the recitation of *mantra* emanate from the principal deity's heart offering goddesses appropriate to specific activities all holding varieties of offerings in their hands. They make offerings to the wrathful deities. Recite the *mantra* to make supplications to them to accomplish entrusted activities. Visualise that from the heart of the wrathful deities emanate countless numbers of white goddesses holding vases filled with nectar. They intermingle with the offering goddesses and together they [60a] empower you or your intended beneficiaries. Due to this all negativity including their underlying causes – the unwholesome *karma*, mental and emotional afflictions, [the two] obstructions and the [ingrained] propensities - are cleansed. Any degeneration of channels, winds and *bodhicitta* drops is restored. All adverse conditions such as the accumulation of pus, poisoning of blood, water or mucus in the body of flesh and bones caused by

imbalances are overcome; and all hindrances are eliminated. Visualise nectar descending from the bodies of the wrathful deities; and imagine that the light rays [being emitted from their bodies] purify all diseases, possession-type harms, and. Seal this [visualisation] with awareness of the non-substantial existence of the 'three spheres' [object, agent and the act]. Light rays fill your entire body thus permeating all parts of body with diamond particles, which are in their actual nature wisdom. Imagine, in this way, to be victorious over the forces of evil.

Similarly visualise yellow goddesses who empower your intended beneficiaries with yellow nectar; the yellow light rays and nectar being emitted from their bodies enhance their life, merits, *dharma* practice, and wealth. Red goddesses pour water of ablution on the intended beneficiaries thus purifying obstructions to power and influence. Imagine that red goddesses holding red hooks are emanated from the nectar, or one could imagine the light rays themselves in the form of hooks, which draw forth all whom one wishes to gain control over; imagine that they absorb either into one's heels or into one's meditation seat. By pouring water of ablution the black goddesses cleanse obstructions and hindrances like ignorance. Imagine that wrathful male and female deities holding weapons are emanated from the nectar, or one could imagine that hosts of weapon are emanated which engage in the relevant deeds of wrath such as killing, dissemination, and so on. They are then consumed by the male and female wrathful deities, in the form of body's diseases, addictions, and so on, with bloods dripping [everywhere].

(e) *The essential point of rotating the wheel.*

For 'protection' purpose the wheel is rotated clockwise, while for rites of 'averting' it is rotated anti-clockwise. The wheel should not be imagined as rotating in a wobbly or halting way. Rather it should be imagined as spinning [fast and smoothly] like a 'wool spinning wheel', or a fire circle [that you see when you spin a burning incense in the dark] such that no gaps are visible in the spinning ring. **[60b]** For averting interferences, as explained before, in both Yamantaka and here [Guhyasamaja] either [yourself as] Sumbharaja or Vajra Wrathful can summon and emanate Sumbharaja. Imagine the obstructions, hindrances, and bad dreams as embodied. 'Ill-meaning spirits' are those that deliberately

plot harmful acts against you, while the actual harming agents are called *bö tong*. Visualise that they are captured and drawn forth by Sumbharaja with his hook; or if you haven't emanated Sumbharaja, imagine that the hook-like light rays emitting from the bodies of the wrathful deities draw them forth and are presented to the wrathful deities who are facing outwards. To help to gain easier visualisation you can imagine that under the soles of all these forces are iron stupas—about four finger widths high—made of their evil thoughts. They clutch at these stupas with their two hands thus all of them are standing on their heads. The wrathful deities together with their seats lift up in the space; the obstructive forces are placed on the wheel spokes and as the wheel spins anti-clockwise violently these forces are pulverised into dust. This is then burnt by the sun disc, and its ashes blown away by wind. Imagine that the consciousnesses [of the obstructive forces] abide in the sphere of *dharmakaya*; place your mind single-pointedly on emptiness. One could also imagine that the even the mere sound of the wheel spinning creates terror in the hearts of malevolent forces such they faint. This [particular visualisation], however, used to be only part of an oral transmission; today I have seen this written [on paper] too.

This practice of emanating wrathful deities from the 'womb' of the principal deity, the peaceful Vajradhara transformed into the Wrathful, is stated in the following lines in the *Root Tantra*:

The wrathful deities are born from the site of anger...

This practice is called the 'wheel of summons' as the wheel rotates in accordance with the principal deity's summoning. Within this there are different types of 'wheel of summons'. For example, there is the 'wheel of summons' for killing; that of 'separating' sexual partners, and so on. These are explained in such texts as the *Four Interwoven Commentaries*. [61a] The teacher referred to these works. He, however, underlined the importance of not revealing in naked the oral instructions pertaining to these practices. But by providing references to the sources the Guru is in fact giving the authorisation to receive commentarial instructions on these practices and also to undertake them. "This is the view coming from the oral teachings of Segyü Dorjechang", said the previous Künkhyen [Jamyang Shepa].

In the fourteenth chapter of the *Root Tantra*, in the section pertaining to the activities of Sumbharaja summoning the girls, it reads:

Supreme is the summoning of girls  
With *vajra* lasso and a hook.

This is the basis for the instruction of transforming Sumbharaja's first hand implement into a hook and summoning the obstructive forces. [Similarly, the lines]

“Vajra nectar is the great Wrathful one”,  
thus shall I meditate on Vajra stake...

and, similarly

With blazing spark-like fire  
I shall make the *mandalas* of ten directions descend.

Thus the practice of Amritakundalini driving in the stakes [is mentioned]. In the thirteenth chapter, the following lines

He who is in the pledge derived from concentration...

and so on presents the meditation on protection wheel. The details of all of this can be found in the commentary on the *Root Tantra*; so learn them from there. Up to this [part] is the preliminary practices.

Let us now relate [the *sadhana* up to] this [point] to the aspirational prayer. The first two verses from

Thus from within ... like magical illusions...

identify the virtues that are aimed for dedication. The verses which read

Just as I have fallen into the ocean of existence...

present the method of training in the path of the three scopes and engaging in the [Bodhisattva] deeds, and how to observe purely the vows and commitments taken during initiations—the entrance to the *Tantra*— following the preparations through the common paths. The lines beginning with

All perceptions and conceptions of ordinariness...

present in brief the generation stage. The lines beginning with

The supreme field...

present the visualisation of the merit field. “Heart *mandala*” here refers to the *mandala* of Akshobya. The lines beginning with

The glorious Vajra Wrathful ...

present the meditation on the protection circle. [61b] It is beneficial even to undertake a reviewing meditation on the basis these verses. Although in the Yamantaka *sadhana* the visualisation of merit-field is correlated to the accumulation of [positive] *karma*, which come into fruition after successive lifetimes, here merit field is not correlated to any aspects of the basis of purification. This approach is based on the literal interpretation of the *Root Tantra* itself and also the instructions of individual Indian adepts.

#### 2.4.2 The actual practice [of self-generation].

The actual practice [of self-generation] is composed of the following sections:

1. The meditative absorption of ‘initial engagement’—the means of realising the fulfilment of one’s own interest;
2. The ‘supreme victorious *mandala* [rite]’ —the means of realising the fulfilment of other’s interests;
3. The meditative absorption [celebrating] the ‘supreme victorious activities.’

The first is composed further of the following parts:

- 1) The *yoga* of ‘specially imagined class’ - taking death as *dharmakaya* into the path;
- 2) The generation of the ‘primordial Lord’ - the *yoga* of taking intermediate state as *Sambhogakaya* into the path;
- 3) The *yoga* of taking birth as *Nirmanakaya* into the path - transformation into the ‘Emanation body Vajrasattava’ and placing *mandala* within the body; the consecration of the three doors and assumption of the ‘triple being’ form;
- 4) The ritual of [entering into] union with consort indicating that the attainment of such trinity of embodiments is dependent upon the path of desire.

The first consists again of the following:

- (1) Meditation on ‘the ground of pristine cognition’, which shares parallels to an empty aeon following the dissolution of an earlier universe;
- (2) Generation of the celestial mansion together with the seats from the four elements *mandalas*, which shares parallels to the formation of a new universe;
- (3) Dissolution of the ‘specially imagined’ [deities] into clear light — the process through which the deities, the forms in which enlightenment takes place, are generated and attain Buddhahood.

**2.4.2.1.1.1 Meditation on ‘the ground of pristine cognition’, which shares parallels to an empty aeon following the dissolution of an earlier universe.**

Prior to the actual practice of taking death as *dharmakaya* into the path, first the environment where one is born — i.e. the earth — must exist. And just as the intervening period of empty [space] that follows the disappearance of an earlier universe serves as the basis for the emergence of a new universe, [in a similar manner] one should meditate on the emptiness of three ‘doors of liberation’. This serves as the basis for the [62a] establishment of the environment and its inhabitants within one’s imagination. Thus this [meditation on emptiness] is called the ‘the ground of pristine cognition.’

As universe dissolves, sentient beings in such realms as from the avici hells to the first stage of concentration stage generate spontaneously within the causal meditative states that lead to rebirth in the second concentration stage. In this way even the beings within the environment also disappear. This is followed then as we read [in the following from *Treasury of Knowledge*]

Seven [are destroyed] by fire, and one by water...

and again

Earth, Mt Meru, ocean and the seven suns...

As suggested here, the seven suns—the latter ones more intense in heat compared to the earlier ones—consume in flame the entire world from the plants, forests, and so on to the level of the *deva*-realm *Paranirmitavashratin*. Because of this, the fire of the first level of concentration consumes the environment of the first form realm including its celestial mansion. All the flames merge into a single heap of fire culminating in their disappearance into nothingness, like the nature of empty space. This, then, is the basis of purification. Here [at this point in the *sadhana*] one meditates upon a process that resembles this.

The following verse in the *Root Tantra* lends itself to the ‘four modes’ of interpretation.

Since no entities exist, there is nothing to meditate on...

Of these [four modes], here only the reading in terms of the ‘literal’ and the ‘general’ meaning will be provided. During Kyapgön Dorjechang’s second visit to central Tibet apparently Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltsen asked him a question about whether or not the pre-fix ‘*ba*’ should be in the verb [for meditation] here. [This is a reference to the Tibetan verb *gom pa*, meaning ‘to meditate’ that occurs in the first line of the verse.] He responded in the following manner: “Here, there is the pre-fix ‘*ba*’ because it refers to the object of meditation. In the other context, there should not be the pre-fix because it refers to the agent of meditation.” Thus he gave his response by drawing clear distinctions between contexts. Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltsen was greatly pleased, and with his hands folded gave compliments [to Kyapgön Dorjechang] for mastery of grammar and linguistics. I heard this from an attendant.

[As we read in the primer of grammar]

Masculine is for past tense and the ‘other’ [unintentional verbs]...

the agent, i.e. the meditator in this case, is referred to as the ‘self’ [i.e. intentional verb], while the object of meditation is labelled the ‘other’. So to ‘meditate’ becomes an intentional verb. That which is to be meditated is the object of meditation, while that which meditates is the agent, the meditator. **[62b]** Therefore in the first it seems we require the pre-fix ‘*ba*’.



Be that as it may, if one contemplates upon total non-existence of entities—i.e. all phenomena—there can be no meditation upon emptiness for such contemplation does constitute a meditation on emptiness. Similarly, contemplating upon substantial existence of one’s object of meditation too is not a meditation on emptiness. Thus both the meditation on utter non-existence of entities and substantial existence of entities cannot be considered as meditations on emptiness. Although only [the verbal form] ‘to meditate’ is explicit in letter the other two forms [i.e. the verbal forms for agent and object of action] are implicit. This is because the proposition states that meditations upon the non-objectification of that which is meditated upon, he who meditates, and the manner in which the meditation takes place do constitute a meditation on emptiness. This, then, is the ‘literal meaning’ exposition [of the following verse], and the reading follows the letter closely.

Since no entities exist, there is nothing to meditate on...

[We can read the verse also in the following manner.] Once one has negated substantial existence with relation to all phenomena through such reasoning as the ‘absence of identity and difference’, there is no room in such emptiness meditation to grasp emptiness itself as substantially real. This, then, is the door of liberation known as ‘emptiness’. “That upon which one meditates” suggests that to meditate while grasping causes and effects — the bases of designation for all phenomena — too does not constitute a meditation on emptiness. Thus the non-substantial existence of cause is the door of liberation called ‘signlessness.’ “**Thus by non-existence of both entities and nonentities**”... suggests that effects too are not worthy of yearning and that their lack of substantial existence is the door of liberation called ‘wishlessness.’ In brief, this states that all phenomena are constructs of language and symbols, and that no inherently existing object of meditation can be perceived anywhere. This, then, is the reading [of the passage] at the level of ‘common meaning.’

So, taking the absence of substantial existence of all phenomena - encompassed within [the entire] universe and its inhabitants - as your premise, you should fuse your mind with the three doors of liberation: the emptiness of the inherent existence of the act, object and the agent of meditation. Although you may have not yet gained direct realisation

of emptiness, you should imagine that you have done so. Similarly, though your mind may not be immersed single-pointedly on emptiness you should think that this is so. Also, your mind may have not yet become fused with emptiness to become of ‘single taste’, as water is poured onto water, you should cultivate the thought that is so. Pönlop Jhampa Rinpoche emphasises this point repeatedly. In Nyingma and other traditions, one finds deity meditation that is not preceded by purification and dissolution into emptiness by the [recitation of] SVABHAVA *mantra*. For example, we find to be the case with the Vth Dalai Lama’s *sadhana* of Hayagriva titled *Primordially Pure*. These traditions state that all phenomena are primordially pure, and that the [enlightened] qualities are primordially present. However, since adventitious pollutants obscure us we do not recognise this [to be the case], hence the need for ‘introduction’.

Some [teachers] assert that if, with purification and dissolution meditations, one contemplates upon mere nothingness whereby both the environment and the beings within have [totally] ceased to exist, there is a danger of sliding into a nihilistic perspective. They argue that, therefore, it is not that phenomena [actually] lose their existence and become nothing. Rather, this is somewhat similar to the fact that although no relative phenomena [can be said to] exist from the meditative perspective of the ‘uninterrupted path’ [i.e. a direct experience of emptiness in a meditative equipoise], yet this non-existence of relative phenomena *co-exists* with emptiness. Furthermore, it is vital to understand that this non-existence of relative phenomena from within such a perspective *is* [actually] their emptiness. In any case, since perceptions of relative phenomena arises in us uncontrollably, we have no choice but to imagine that they do not appear to us [during dissolution into emptiness meditation]. Thus to have some understanding of how relative phenomena do not exist from within the perspective of the ‘uninterrupted path’ of the Bodhisattva on the path of seeing can be of help to those on the beginner’s stage. This observation is from the oral tradition.

**2.4.2.1.1.2    Generation of the celestial mansion together with the seats from the four elements *mandalas*, which parallels the formation of a new universe.**

**[63b]** From within emptiness, emerges instantaneously the common protection circle [made of] *vajra*-base together with fence, tent, canopy and a fire ring. Although this is not explicitly stated in the *sadhana*, the oral tradition suggests that, should the practitioner perceive high level of hindrances from obstructive forces, it is appropriate to visualise [here at this juncture in the *sadhana*] also the protection circle of the wrathful deities together with the ‘stake’ holes. This can be done both during ‘self-generation’ and ‘front generation’ rites. You should then visualise source’ inside this [protection circle] a triangular ‘reality as suggested in the following in the *Root Tantra*.

While abiding amidst space’s centre  
meditate on the *mandalas* of the Buddhas.

As regards its shape the following is stated in the *Subsequent Tantra*.

Question: How should one meditate on the ‘source of reality’?

Response: Because of the divisions into body, speech and mind,  
meditate thoroughly upon a triangular form.

The ‘reality source’ is white on the outside representing ‘method’, which is the pristine cognition of great bliss; it is red inside to indicate wisdom realising emptiness. As both of these are complete in one ‘reality source’, it represents the union of bliss and emptiness. The three angles symbolise the body, speech and mind; or alternatively, they symbolise the three ‘doors of liberation’ and their objects. The wider part of the [upturned pyramidal] ‘reality source’ facing upwards indicates the ever-waxing nature of the good qualities on the higher levels. The sharp point of the pyramid facing downwards indicates the limited nature of the qualities at the initial stages of the paths of ‘engagement through simulation’ [i.e. paths of accumulation and preparation]. Since every aspect of the residence *mandala* and the deities within are contained inside, it represents all of their origination from the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness. That pristine cognition is the antidote to all objects of abandonment; hence [it is said that] even a [brief] meditation on that ‘reality source’ in the fashion of simple reviewing can have great beneficial impact.

Inside the ‘reality source’ is a variegated lotus whose petals are, starting from the southwest point, white, yellow, red and green, and so on in a repeating order. The number

of petals could be sixty-four, or sometimes it is also described as countless. The hub of the lotus is green and its petals yellow. Then, as suggested in the following lines in the *Root Tantra*,

While abiding in the centre of space  
visualise the origination of the entire *vajra mandala*., [64a]

imagine, emerging from blue HUM YAM HUM, a green bow-shaped wind *mandala* with its straight side facing to the east. On this emerges, from red HUM RAM HUM, a red triangular fire *mandala* with its point facing to the east. On this emerges, from white HUM BAM HUM, a white circular water *mandala*. On this emerges, from yellow HUM LAM HUM, a yellow square earth *mandala*. The letters HUMs are in horizontal positions with their heads facing to the west, while the seed syllables of the elements are standing vertical between two HUMs. The five-spoked *vajras* on the above and below, which have emerged from HUMs and are of the colours of the associated elements, are also in horizontal positions. They symbolise the indivisible nature of bliss and emptiness, and also indicate that all the elemental *mandalas* are not outside the parameters of the ‘creative play’ of bliss and emptiness. You should meditate upon them thus and seal them with bliss and emptiness. You should imagine the earth as Locana, water as Mamaki, fire as Phandaravasin and wind as Tara, and imagine that all of them are in reality the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness. (The visualisation of the elemental *mandalas* with one stacked above another in Yamantaka has its sources in its *Root Tantra* and the commentarial instructions of the great Siddhas.)

The four element *mandalas* merge together to become a double, crossed *vajra* of three or five spokes. The colours of the spokes are variegated, that is they are the colours of the corresponding directions. The hub of this crossed-*vajra* is a blue square block with twelve ‘door units’ [i.e. cubic] in size. The meditation on this [section of the *sadhana*] is found in the following lines from the *Root Tantra*.

If one wishes to uphold the peaceful *vajra*,  
engage thoroughly in those acts of withdrawal.

On the hub of the *vajra*, visualise a white BHRUM—the seed syllable of Vairocana, who is the perfect purity of the aggregate of body—about three ‘door’ units in size. (One

could adjust the height of the letter in accordance with one's convenience of visualisation.) As for the meaning of “**from this emanate lights rays of the ‘cloud of Buddhas’**”, Dom Yeshe Gelek once asked about this to the Tantric monk Samten Senge Tsang. [He was told in response] that as light rays emanate from the letter BHRUM, [64b] amidst these rays are hosts of the Buddhas of the five families who pervade the entire space as clouds cover the sky. In the same way the entire space on the hub of the *vajra* should be imagined as being filled. In the *Root Tantra*, we read

While emanating and creating the cloud of *vajra*,  
visualise there the letter BHRUM.

The teacher said that because of this significance [of this visualisation] the monks of the Lower Tantric College utter the letter BHRUM in a prolonged way at this point in the *Root Tantra* to allow time for reflective meditation. Also in his *Generation Stage* commentary, the previous Künkhyen mentions that one should emanate hosts of the Buddhas of five families. Cangkyä Rinpoche, on the other hand, writes that as you emanate together with light rays hosts of Vairocana with three faces and six arms, you should imagine that the spaces in between the spokes [of the crossed *vajra*] are filled. The letter BHRUM, together with the hosts of ‘the cloud of Buddhas’ melt into a single heap of light from which emerges the celestial mansion with all its characteristics such as its square shape, four doors and so on, along with thirty one seats complete. You should visualise each of these elements [of the *mandala* evolution] in their sequential order.

[Vasubandhu's] *Abhidharmakosha* states

Formation begins first with wind,  
and from there proceeds to the realms of hell.

[According to *Abhidharmakosha*] there are twenty ‘medium’ aeons for the period of the formation of a physical universe and living beings within. So, if the preceding universe has been destroyed by fire, [it is said that] a slight wind descends from the second level of ‘concentration’ [form] realm. This, then, leads to the formation of the mansions and so forth of the first level of concentration to the realm called ‘freedom from conflict’. And, beginning with a slight arisal of wind from the first concentration realm, the wind *mandala* of the base emerges. Rain pours on to this to form the water *mandala*; and by the force of

*karma* the water is contained within and does not spill out. On this pours the rain of ‘gold-like’ dust forming the ‘gold *mandala*’, like a thick cream this covers over the water. This ‘gold dust’ rain, when stirred by the wind, gives rise, from the coarse, slightly refined, and the finely refined, to Mt Meru together with four continents and the eight smaller planets with an iron parameter-fence. [65a] At this [point] sentient beings are yet to emerge. (Speculations are made [by some] as to which of the three realms [i.e. desire, form and formless] this would belong to.)

Once when Kyapgön Dorjechang visited Gönlung, he and his attendant, the learned scholar from Tsang named Tenpa Dhargye, discussed with Sumpa Yeshe Paljor questions pertaining to the demarcation of phenomena belonging to the different realms. He [Yeshe Paljor] admitted that he has a doubt that he could never fully resolve. He stated that, yes, this pillar in front of me is a mere conceptual designation. But he asked “when there is no one inside the house whose conceptual designation is it?” The learned Tsangpa conceded that this is a problem, but suggested that this is not unresolvable by any means, but acknowledged that it is indeed a difficult question. On the way back he argued that if [it is asserted] that ‘my uncle Dechen’s sharp tongue’ is a conceptual designation, this does not entail that the designating mind has to be attached somewhere near it!

So, in a similar manner, although the beings may not exist yet the environment, which they may inhabit, can be accepted as belonging to that particular realm. Thus by generating gradually - from the initial wind *mandala* through to the full evolution of the complete *mandala* including the celestial mansion together with the seats —, a process parallels the gradual evolution of universe, one purifies the stains of *karma* and afflictions born of experiencing impure environment [in the past]. The meditation ripens the virtuous roots that prepare you for the attainment of the pure realms of *Sambhogakaya* and *Nirmanakaya* of the path. Imagine that this visualisation also implants within you special seeds for attaining ‘resultant’ celestial mansion born from the self-resonance of Buddha’s pristine cognition.

During a ‘guide’ [instruction] on the *mandala*,\* if you can follow the specific measurements and especially in the form of its three dimensional structure, it is very good. It is a way of imparting the blessing of the oral tradition to at least, [65b] to demonstrate by gesture using incense sticks tied together as a pointer [to indicate the structure of the *mandala*]. It is mentioned in Pönlop Jhampa’s notes taken from Jamyang Dewa’s teachings that Segyü Dorjechang, when giving the ‘guide’ to the previous Künkhyen, would gesture to introduce the *mandala* by using few straws of hay tied together, even at the age of eighty. He would do this with his hand trembling insisting that it is the tradition of his teacher.

The colour of the layers of the walls and directions correspond to the deities from Vairocana to the principal deity of the *mandala*. Thus they are [in their proper order] white, yellow, red, green and blue. In other *mandalas* such as that of the Guhyasamaja of Manjushri Vajra lineage, the colours may correspond to the lord of the families. Although some earlier Tibetan masters make walls of five colours here [in our tradition] the walls are made of five layers like silk curtains of five colours one standing behind the other. The walls are transparent so that one can see through to the other side unobstructed. The height of the wall is 13 units and its length 32 units [when measured] from the inside. The vestibules on the two sides of the doors are left open and have no adjoining walls thus the four parts of the wall are not connected to each other.

Running along the walls above, like a row of windows beneath the roof, is a red jewel frieze made of four levels, which are made of red precious stones like rubies carved into long strips of square. These are studded with jewels of various shapes such as square, round, crescent, and triangular. On this is a colonnade of pillars made of seven kinds of gems standing two at a time in a row. [This is known also as the golden colonnade.] (The pillars are said to have four layers of gold or alternatively, two each thus making four layers of gold.) Above these pillars are rafters arranged in rows with their ends extending outside. These protruding ends are carved into heads of the sea monster *marakas* [66a] from whose mouth are suspended jewel nets made of garlands of full or half loops of three to five lines thus covering the golden frieze like a drape hanging over it. On top of this, running all along, is a lentil made of rafters resembling the upper part of a double-layered window frame. The

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\* Please note that the translation of the entire section on the description of the *mandala* mansion requires

lentil is called 'bird's wing' perhaps because it resembles the extended tail end of the wings of a bird in flight. At the tip of the extending rafters are white dentils, which are shaped like upturned thin water-pots without the mouth. As these represent individual points for drainage, they reach out slightly beyond the boundary of the red plinth [around the mansion]. On top of the lentil is a parapet wall made of half lotus petals arranged together. This wall is called 'archer's hide' because on the castles the parapet wall used by the archer's to shoot their weapons while not exposing themselves [to the enemy]. Atop the parapet wall, in the eight directions are eight or sixteen golden vases with victory banners hoisted in them. In the four cardinal directions are four parasols held by monkeys all facing inwards.

Running along the walls outside the mansion is a square red plinth on which stand offering goddesses all of who hold offering articles in their hands and make offerings to the *mandala*. Outside the doors and the in the vestibules, and also in the corners of the walls both inside and outside are crescents atop with *vajras* [which gives lighting]. In front of each of the four doors is a gateway made of eleven layers. Each gateway stands on four pillars emerging from four vases, which in turn stand on square platforms. The first layer is made of gold, second of 'white dentils', third of precious stones, fourth of 'horse hoofs'. On these stand small posts thus forming an open layer called the 'dark layer'; on this is the layer of '*varenda*', a pattern resembling many multi-coloured flags stacked one upon another. Above this, again is a 'dark' layer, on which are three layers such as the white 'dentils' and so on, finally atop with a parapet wall. Slightly protruding inside the door is the doorframes on which are hinged the actual door planks that open inwards. Measuring four units from the door is the corridor (*go khyu*); and extending four units each both to the right and left [at the end of] of the corridor is a vestibule (*go dram*), the walls (*go lok*) from this extends four units each in the two sides. Thus, here [in *Guhyasamaja*] it is the custom to have uniform measurements of four units each for doors, corridors, vestibules and the walls on the two sides of the door. According to some interpretation, vestibule is referred to as *go lok* from the inside and *go dram* when looked at from the outside. However, such differences are matter of semantics with no real difference in meaning. On top of the

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substantive verification based on consultation with other commentarial literature.



gateway is a wheel with eight or ten spokes standing on a lotus; a male and a female antelope flank it. This represents the auspiciousness of perpetual turning of the 'wheel of *dharma*' and uninterrupted, continued presence of spiritual trainees and their aspirations. This recalls the past event of the Buddha's first turning of the 'wheel of *dharma*' at Sarnath. At that time, the great god Brahma offered a golden wheel of eight (or ten) spokes to the Buddha, to which were attracted a male and a female antelopes, which remained gazing unwaveringly at the wheel. Those two animals were not ordinary creatures; rather they were emanations and their behaviour indicates the importance of developing deep interests in the *dharma*. So, the above visualisation brings parallels to this event.

All of this [visualisation] must be viewed simply as dependent origination and constructs of one's own mind. It is on the basis of such consideration that one should understand the claim that there exist in the *tantras* much more varied means of searching for the attainment of the view of emptiness compared to the *sutra* system. On the two sides of the gateways are vases from which emerges 'wish-granting trees' whose branches are adorned with the seven royal emblems – one in the middle and the other six around it. **[67a]** In between the royal emblems on the branches are Mahasiddhas [realised *tantric* adepts, who have attained 'powerful feats' on the basis of the two stages of the Guhyasamaja path. They can be visualised either in their normal forms [as depicted in paintings], or the ones in the east can be visualised as Vairocana [those in the south as Ratnasambhava] and so on. Above them in the clouds are goddesses, with their half body emerged, make offerings [to the adepts]. Inside the mansion, a door-size inwards from the four cardinal directions are, eight pillars - two in each direction and placed five units each to the right and left of the central line. The pillars are sixteen units long and on them are placed four main beams. On the beams are rafters, which extend their outer ends to the golden layer [of the 'jewel frieze'] and their inner ends facing towards the interior [of the mansion]. This, then, forms the flat part of the mansion's roof. On top of the corridor, both to the right and left, are the 'inner' and 'outer' beams. Outside the two sidewalls of the corridor are two pillars each supporting beams that are twelve units in length. Together with the width of the pillar, the beams are sixteen units in length. On these beams are placed rafters that support the roofs of the 'entrances' and the 'vestibules'.

Inside, in the middle of the mansion, is a circular platform that measures in circumference half the size of the full mansion. In other words, it measures sixteen units [in circumference]; this is the standard measurement of a circular platform inside a *mandala*. The platform has a *vajra* ring that measures one unit in width. Dividing along the two sides of the central line [on each cardinal direction] every two units apart are ‘compartments’, which number all together nine. On this [circular platform] stand ‘small’ pillars complete with the top decorative parts, two in each direction. Above these pillars stands a circular beam [with four rafters forming a double cross]. This [circular beam and rafters] supports the roof of the interior section [of the mansion]. This is known as ‘Sumbaraja’s chamber’, or the ‘circular structure’; it is six units in circumference. On top of this, again in the four cardinal directions are pillars complete with the decorative tops on which stand another circular beam, which has nine compartments. Its measurements equal that of the other beam that is already standing atop the eight pillars. So, as if the reflection of the uppermost circular beam is extends downwards, the three circular units are one above the other. Although patterns such as wheels are painted on the pillars, in actual visualisation one should imagine that even the smallest particles [inside the pillars] are made of wheels and so on. On the circular beam, above the two pillars each in the north and south, are two slanting pillars each with heads leaning slightly towards the northeast. On these is a flat beam, which is sixteen units in length and a door size [i.e. four units] in width. Together with the pillar, the beam extends to six units in width; above the pillars on the flat roof are beams running all along the pillars forming a square base. In the east are long rafters whose ends are supported by the square base beam and the upper ends attached to the [flat] beam at the top of gilded roof. There is a bar between slanting pillars in the south and north from which further extend rafters reaching to the [square] base beam. All of this gives a shape of a gilded roof [at the top of the mansion]. On the flat [beam at the top of the gilded roof] is a small square room of two cubic units, which houses the text of the [root] *tantra*. This is atop with a nine-piece jewel that is one unit in size, above which is a one unit sized five-spoked *vajra*. This decorative ornament is referred to as the ‘precious crown ornament of *vajra* and jewel.’ There are divergent accounts on how to construct the roof and the laying of the beams of various sizes. As for greater detail, there is a separate memorandum based

on instructions on how to construct a three-dimensional *mandala*. So, you can learn them from there.

Around the circular platform [inside the mansion] is a circle of light, which is although one unit is actual size must be imagined in one's meditation as being reaching out to infinity. Taking this circular platform as the first level [of the *mandala*], on the second level [you should] visualise on both right and left sides each two vases filled with nectar of *bodhicitta*. For it is the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness that has arisen as such, [68a] the nectar is endowed with qualities that excel all material substances of human and celestial realms. The mansion is crystal clear so that one can see through, with out any obstruction, from east to west and from the centre to the light circle outside. The pillars and so on, both upper and lower parts of the mansion, in the east are all white, in the south all yellow, in the west red, in the north green, and in the centre blue. In the *Perfection Stage [Guide]* by the previous Künkyen, we find the following:

At the sites of the five Buddhas, one should visualise square bases [for the seats], and crescent ones for the consorts, triangular ones for the four offering goddesses, rectangular ones for the eight Bodhisattvas and the ten wrathful deities (three units in diameter). Visualise the same size and shape also at the sites of the wrathful deities of the doors...

In addition, there is the variegated lotus seat for all the deities. Thus, in all, there are thirty-one seats. Although [in actual fact] there is only a single seat for the father-mother union, because they are generated from distinct seed syllables their seats are also enumerated separately. Again, there are divergent explanations [of these visualisations] based on different source *tantras* and commentaries. Furthermore, one must visualise the seats specific to the deities such as sun cushions for the principal deity and the wrathful deities, and so on as described in the *sadhana* rite. The [sun cushions] can be visualised as an embroidered pattern on a piece of cloth.

#### **2.4.2.1.1.3 The generation of deities, the form in which enlightenment takes place.**

This section has four parts:

1. Generation of the ‘specially imagined’ deities;
2. the deeds of the ‘specially imagined’ deities;
3. withdrawal of the ‘specially imagined’ into the body; and
4. dissolution of the ‘specially imagined’ [deities] into clear light.
5. Generation of the ‘specially imagined’ deities.

#### **2.4.2.1.1.3.1 Generation of [the deities of] the ‘specially imagined class’.**

First, the stages of the process for the evolution of the physical universe and the beings within it are as follows. Beginning from the point when a being in the second level of concentration [form] realm dies and is reborn in the realm of the great Brahman to the first three levels of form realm, and then through to the six levels of the celestial desire realm evolve. [68b] Thereafter evolve human beings of the northern, western, southern and eastern continents. Then evolve animals, hungry ghosts, and the hell beings of the hot and cold hell realms. When one sentient being is born in the ‘endless’ hell realm, [it is said that] then is completed the stage of the ‘formation’ aeon. Thus the formation of the habitat takes one medium aeon, and the formation of the beings within nineteen ‘medium’ aeons. Together the whole process takes twenty medium aeons.

On this earth, the first human beings are [said to be] ‘spontaneously born’. They are thought to have body of light and were capable of flying. They seek nourishment in [sensual] pleasure and have immense life span. They are also thought to have similitude of the major and minor noble marks; everyone was free of defective sensory organs and that their entire bodily faculties are thought to have matured simultaneously. Gradually, propensities for attachment to material food became activated and people began to depend more and more on coarse food. This caused the loss of their natural body light and led to the decreasing of their life span; it also led to formation of male and female sexual organs culminating eventually leading to the beginnings of a process of womb-birth. So here [in our meditation], corresponding to the human beings of the first aeon having their entire bodily faculties complete simultaneously, the deities of the ‘specially imagined’ class do not require to be generated through the gradual process of evolving through the seed syllables, hand implements, and so on. Rather, like bubbles in water, you should visualise in a single

instance the entire host of thirty-two deities of the ‘specially imagined’ class to emerge simultaneously. You should then bring greater clarity to the visualisation in a sequential order.

At the centre of the raised circular platform, a nine-part platform formed by crossing of four straight lines, on a cushion of sun-disc is Vajradhara, the lord of the sixth family, together with his consort. In the four directions are Vairocana and so on [i.e. the Buddha families corresponding to the four cardinal directions]; in the four intermediate directions are [the four female Buddhas] Locana and so on. On the second level, inside the *mandala*, in the four intermediate directions are the goddesses Rupa Vajra and so on. At the eastern door, facing inside the *mandala*, are to the right Maitreya and to the left, Khitigarbha; at the southern door, facing inside are on the right, Vajrapani, and to the left, Akashgarbha. At the western door, facing inside are on the right Lokeshvara, and to the left, Manjushri; at the northern door, facing inside are on the right Sarvaniranaviskambini [69a] and to the left, Samandrabadra. At the four doors are the four deities Yamantaka and so on; while at the four corners are the four deities Acala and so on. Under the central circular platform slightly on the back is Sumbaraja, who is facing in the same direction as the principal deity. Above the circular platform and slightly to the front is Ushnishacakravartin who is facing the principal deity. Generate these deities in accordance with their descriptions as found in the *sadhana*.

Each of the deities carries in their hands the implements of the six Buddha families. For example, those deities who belong to the Vairocana family carry wheels as their first implement. (Although lotus is the symbol of Amitabha, but the colour is white when held by deities of Vairocana family.) As Locana is a consort, she holds, in place of a lotus, an *utpala* flower [i.e. a blue lotus] to symbolise the auspiciousness of the union of method and wisdom. Here [in the text] the distinctive characteristics of individual deities are explained; the characteristics that are common to all are described only once generally. This ensures that the presentation [of the deities] is comprehensive but economical in terms of word length. It is vital to appreciate that the characteristic feature of Tsongkhapa’s works is that they open our eyes even to the minute aspects of the instructions of the authoritative [Indian] commentaries.

### **2.4.2.1.1.3.1 The deeds of the ‘specially imagined’ deities.**

The deeds of the deities of the ‘specially imagined’ class should be visualised with parallels to the activities of the human beings of the first aeon. Visualise that, from the seed syllables at the heart of all the deities, infinite light rays in the shape of hooks emanate. They draw forth all sentient beings, who enter into the *mandala* from all directions — i.e. from above, from below, and from all sides. [Imagine] yourself in the form of Vajradhara in union with consort, you radiate rays of *bodhicitta* equal to the number of sentient beings from the point where you and your consort’s sexual organs meet. At the tip of these rays are Vairocana, who is in embrace with his consort Locana. They engage in sexual acts at the crown of each sentient being causing the descent of *bodhicitta* thus filling the bodies of the sentient beings. The negativity and obstructions of sentient beings purified, [69b] the sentient beings experience bliss and joys and become Vairocanas. Likewise emanate infinite numbers of Ratnasambhava and his consort Mamaki, Amitabha and his consort Pandaravasin, Amogasiddhi and his consort Tara, and Akshobhya and his consort. They descend on the crown of individual sentient beings; they empower them and purify obstructions. The sentient beings attain the pristine cognition of bliss and emptiness; they are thus led to the paths of ‘ripening’ and ‘release’ and are finally transformed into the corresponding Buddha families. The light rays are then withdrawn into your heart.

The sentient beings, who are led to the states of the five Buddha families, are then absorbed into the heart of the Buddhas of the *mandalas*. For example, those in the east are absorbed into the heart of Vairocana in the east. Those in the south [are absorbed] into Ratnasambhava in the south, those in the west into Amitabha in the west, those in the north into Amogasiddhi in the north, and those in the middle are absorbed into Vajradhara at the centre. This is the meaning of them departing to the Buddha fields. So ‘departing’ here should not be understood in terms of departing outside. The distinction between ‘bliss’ and ‘joy’ is made in [Vasubandhu’s] *Treasury of Knowledge* and in [other] works on ‘concentration and form realms’ as that between a physical sensation on the one hand and mental feelings of joyfulness on the other. Similarly, when the pristine cognition of bliss

and emptiness is engendered, first a physical sensation of bliss is experienced. This causes one's consciousness to generate into pristine cognition suffused with great bliss, which then enters into absorption on emptiness.

There are four ways of entering the *mandala*: (i) The 'Vajrasattva's entry' is the way described here whereby all sentient beings are drawn forth, who then enter the *mandala* from all directions including both from the above and below. (ii) There is 'the entry of the wisdom being' found in general *sadhana* rites whereby the wisdom beings enter into the commitment being from its crown. (iii) There is then the 'entry of the Vajra disciple' as found in the rite of Kunrik whereby the wisdom being enters from the eastern door. (iv) Finally, there is the 'entry of Vajra Might'. [70a] This is the mode of entry followed in the section on 'opening the *mandala* door' whereby the walls are lifted and one enters from underneath. Here [at this point in the *sadhana*] the first way is followed.

[As for the scriptural source] the principal deity of the 'specially imagined' class is mentioned in the following in the *Root Tantra*:

Then the lord of the *vajra* body, *vajra* speech and *vajra* mind of all Bhagvan  
Tathagatas resides at the centre of the great *mandala* of all Tathagatas...

As for the generation of the deities of the 'specially imagined' class, the following is stated in the first chapter of the *Root Tantra*;

The nature of that which is clarified is ...  
That is the site of all Tathagatas...

Again in chapter eleven we read

By meditating with the letter BHRUM on the sites,  
meditate on the source of the three *vajras*.

These above sources [from the *tantra*] present [the meditation on the deities of the 'specially imagined' class].

#### **2.4.2.1.1.3.3 Withdrawal of the 'specially imagined' [class] into one's body.**

From this point [in *sadhana*] where you place the deities of the ‘specially imagined’ class [on your body] the actual practice of taking death into the path as begins. You should now emanate thirty one hook-like light rays, which draw forth the deities of the specially imagined class, from Vairocana to Sumbaraja, who are then placed at the appropriate points of your body such as your crown and so on. So light rays draw forth Vairocana from the east, who resides at your crown indivisibly from your aggregate of body. Likewise, Amitabha resides at throat resides, indivisibly from your aggregate of perception; Ratnasambhava resides at navel, indivisibly from the aggregate of feeling; and Amogasiddhi resides at secret place, indivisibly from your aggregate of mental formations. Locana, who is facing Ratnasambhava, is your earth element. Mamaki, who is at the heart facing to the back, is water element. At your throat is Pandaravasin, who is indivisible from fire element and is in embrace with Amitabha; and at crown is Tara, who is indivisible from your wind element and is in embrace with Vairocana. [70b] Khitigarbha divides into two; placed at the two eyeballs of the principal deity, they become indivisible from your eye organs. Likewise, Vajrapani divides into two becoming indivisible with ear organs on the two ears. Akashagarbha becomes indivisible from the nose organ; Lokeshvara, tongue; Manjushri slightly at the rear, is your mind; and Sarvaniranaviskambini, at your secret place, is indivisible from the body organ. Samandrabadra is at the joints indivisible from them; at the crown is Maitreya who is indivisible from the nerves and the tendons. At your two eyes are two Rupa Vajras in embrace with the two Khitigarbhas. They are indivisible from the sensory object of forms. At your two ears are two Shapda Vajras in embrace with two Vajrapanis. They are indivisible from the sensory object of sound. At nose is Gandha Vajra, in embrace with Akashagarbha, who is indivisible from the sensory object of smell. At your tongue is Rasa Vajra, who is in embrace with Lokeshvara, who is indivisible from the sensory object of taste. Sparsha Vajra, the consort of the principal deity is drawn forth by light rays; she is in embrace with Sarvaniranaviskambini, who is indivisible from the sensory object of touch. Touch. On your right arm is Yamantaka and so on. They [all the deities] are indivisible from the corresponding parts of your body as will be explained later in the section on ‘body *mandala*’. These are presented in the *Root Tantra* in the following:

Then Tathagata Akshobhya and...

They reside within *bodhicitta*, the *vajra* mind.



#### 2.4.2.1.1.3.4 Dissolution of the ‘specially imagined’ [deities] into clear light.

The dissolution of the deities of the ‘specially imagined’ class into clear light is referred to as the ‘entering of the specially imagined class into the ultimate *mandala*.’ The human beings of the first aeon began from ‘spontaneous birth’ and gradually became ordinary beings. They inherited from their father the three constituents: bone, marrow and regenerative essence. From mother they inherited the following three constituents: flesh, blood and skin. They have thus acquired a body that is endowed with four ‘elements’ and six ‘constituents’ associated with ‘channels’ and *bodhicitta* drops [or drops]. So you should withdraw, in accordance with the actual sequence of a dissolution process, the deities of the specially imagined class, who are indivisible from your aggregates, elements and sources. This you should undertake by correlating to the dissolution of the ‘twenty five gross phenomena,’ which culminates in the experience of the clear light of death. [71a] The principal deity [too] dissolves into clear light. This dissolution procedure constitute the generation stage *yoga of dharmakaya*, which effects the experience of ‘clarification through suchness.’

The twenty-five gross phenomena are five aggregates, four elements, six sense faculties, six sensory objects, and the five basic pristine cognitions. According to the oral tradition, the twenty-five are enumerated as follows to assist in having easier recollection: five phenomena subsumed in the category of body aggregate, five subsumed in the category of the feeling aggregate, five subsumed in the category of perception aggregate, five subsumed in the category of mental formations aggregate, and the five [phenomena] subsumed in the category of consciousness aggregate. It is vital to cultivate strongly the thought to make your aggregates and so on as indivisible from the deities. Drawn forth by light rays, each group of the deities melts into light in their proper order. As they near the HUM at your heart the deities become the size of mustard seeds, and when they dissolve into HUM your recitation of the *sadhana* here should coincide with the statement “**they [all] dissolve into clear light.**”

If you can also remember the external signs [associated with dissolution] you would have the advantage of being able to recognise them in future. So, when Vairocana dissolves the earth element too dissolves; as Locana dissolves [imagine that] water element dissolves; and as Khitigarbha dissolves eye faculty dissolves. As the forms inherent within your continuum dissolves, Rupa Vajra dissolves. As Maitreya, Yamantaka, and Acala dissolve, the five phenomena subsumed in the category of body aggregate and the basic wisdom of ‘mirror-like’ awareness that enables us to perceive colours such as white and blue as reflections in a mirror, simultaneously dissolve. As an external sign of this dissolution of the body aggregate, your limbs and their parts become narrower than before. Due to the dissolution of your earth element you may experience the sensation of being pulled down into the ground. Due to the dissolution of the eye faculty you may lose vision; due to the dissolution of the sensory object forms you may lose body lustre and strength. **[71b]** As the ‘mirror-like’ wisdom has dissolved your vision loses its clarity as if [your eyes are] covered by cataracts. Imagine that you also undergo the experience of the internal signs like ‘mirage-like’ visions and so on. Place your mind thus absorbed on this dissolution with total absorption.

Likewise as Ratnasambhava dissolves, your aggregate of feeling dissolves. Together [with him], Makaki and water element, Vajrapani and ear faculties, Shapda Vajra and the sensory object of sound all dissolve. As Prajnataka and Takiraja dissolve, the basic wisdom of ‘equanimity’ — i.e. the five phenomena subsumed in the category of the aggregate of feeling — simultaneously dissolve too. As an external sign of their dissolution you may lose cognisance of pleasurable and painful sensations that [usually] accompany sensory perceptions; saliva and nose mucus dry up, the whirring sound inside the ear ceases, and you may fail to hear sounds at all. You may also lose awareness of feelings of joy and unhappiness that accompanies mental thoughts. Imagine that you undergo the experience of the internal sign such as the ‘smoke-like’ vision. Place your mind [single-pointedly] on this vision and meditate on emptiness.

As Amitabha dissolves, your aggregate of perception [too] dissolves. Together, Pandaravasin and fire element, Akashagarbha and nose faculty, Ganda Vajra and the sensory object of smell all dissolve. As Hayagriva and Niladanda dissolve, the basic wisdom of

‘discriminatory awareness’ — i.e. the five phenomena subsumed in the category of the aggregate of perception — dissolves. For their external sign, gradually you begin to forget the names of your family members and friends. It becomes difficult to digest food; gradually respiration comes to an end, and you can no longer smell with your nose. You may also not recognise friends and family members. Imagine that you also undergo the experience of the internal sign of ‘fireflies-like’ vision. Place your mind [single-pointedly] on this vision and meditate on emptiness.

As Amogasiddhi dissolves the aggregate of mental formations [too] dissolves. Together, Tara and wind element, Lokeshvara and your tongue organ, Shapda Vajra and the sensory object of taste, Sarvaniranaviskambini and your body organ, Sparsha Vajra and the sensory object of touch all dissolve. Also, as Samandrabadra, Vignantakriti and Mahabala dissolve, the basic wisdom of ‘accomplishment of deeds’ — i.e. the five phenomena subsumed in the category of the aggregate of mental formations and the remaining two remaining phenomena — dissolves. For their external sign, gradually your body loses its ability to move, and the primary and secondary ‘winds’ exit from their associated points of the body. [72a] Your tongue becomes heavy and short, and turns bluish at the root; you can no longer taste anything with your tongue, and the body no longer feels any tactile sensation. You may lose consciousness of any external events, and you can no longer remember their significance either. Imagine that you also undergo the internal sign, the ‘glow of a burning butter-lamp’ vision. Place your mind [single-pointedly] on this vision and meditate on emptiness.

Then Ushnishacakravartin dissolves, which gives rise to the vision of ‘whitish appearance’; and as Sumbaraja dissolves, the vision of ‘reddish enhanced appearance’ dawns. As Manjushri dissolves, the vision of ‘blackish approaching attainment’ is experienced. Imagine that you undergo these experiences. At that point, your aggregate of consciousness, the basic wisdom of the ‘sphere of reality’, and your mental faculty all dissolve. Since there are many levels of subtlety to consciousness it cannot dissolve instantly; rather its dissolution occurs in a gradual process. Since the coarse phenomena have already dissolved earlier, and also that the subtle ones have dissolved at the point of [the vision of] blackish ‘approaching attainment’, there is no need to correlate them to each

of the deities. More detailed presentation of the dissolution processes can be found at the end of [Tsongkhapa's] *Shoots of Jewel: A Detailed Analysis*. With regard to the 'element of phenomena', one cannot speak of their 'dissolution' with regard to those that are [by nature] non-composite. And those that are composite have already been included in the other categories. So the dissolution process of this [element] is not enumerated separately [in the *sadhana*].

Then [yourself as] the principal male deity, who is the only one left at this juncture, too dissolves. He does so from both above and below into his heart, where he dissolves into the [vision of] blackish 'approaching attainment' and finally merging into 'clear light'. Imagine thus and contemplate on the meaning of the *mantra* SHUNYATA [JNANA-VAJRA-SVABHA-ATMA-KO-HAM]. In total meditative equipoise fuse your mind indivisibly with *dharmakaya*. Such is the *yoga* of taking death as *dharmakaya* on the path at the level of generation stage. This purifies ordinary death that one might otherwise experience at the 'basic' [i.e. ordinary] level of existence. On the path, this meditation becomes a factor for ripening the virtuous roots effecting the attainment of both 'metaphoric' and 'meaning' clear light at the level of perfection stage. The meditation leaves within you a special potency that enables you to achieve the embodiment of Wisdom-*Dharmakaya* of the resultant state, i.e. Buddhahood. You should thus meditate thus with full recognition of the 'bases of purification' and the [nature of ] actual 'purifying paths'.

So cultivate the understanding of the bases of purification and their purifiers in all occasions within the framework of the two *bodhicittas*. [72b] Cease all perceptions and identification with ordinary existence in your thought. If you meditate on deity *yoga* on such a basis, whereby the perceptual aspect of your wisdom is visualised as emerging into a deity form, then your meditative practice becomes a [genuine] generation stage meditation. Reciting the words [of *sadhana*] by mouth alone is not adequate. The monks of Lower Tantric College take a brief pause here as they reach the end of the *mantra* ATMA KOH HAM [at this juncture in the *sadhana*]. Then, in unison - that is without a lead from the chant master- they will proceed with the following recitation [from the *sadhana*] “**on the central cushion...**” This is to indicate that you will arise into *Sambhogakaya* form uninterruptedly from within clear light, which [here in this context] is your meditative

equipoise on *Dharmakaya*. Drakar Rinpoche told me the story of how Lobsang Tenpa, a student of Kalden Gyatso, established a Tantric monastery, which later came under the charge of Ngap Sangye Gyatso. There a tradition of engaging in long silent meditation at this point in the *sadhana* with adopting the seven body postures was established. In the long version of the *Guhyasamaja sadhana* the seats of the deities are not mentioned at this point but this does not suggest they have been dissolved into emptiness.

During the meditative absorption of ‘initial engagement’, all the deities, except for the principal deity, are dissolved together with their seats. Alternatively, as you arise from the *yoga* of *dharmakaya* you can visualise the seat of the principal deity but not the seats of the retinue deities. The process of taking death as *dharmakaya* into the path becomes real at the level of the [attainment of] ‘isolation of mind.’ Prior to this, although in actual fact it is your ordinary birth, death and intermediate state that you experience, there is [still] the possibility [at the level of imagination] to have the experience of ‘mixings.’ So you should habituate yourself repeatedly with the [dissolution] signs. As a result if, at the point of death when you actually undergo the visions, you are able to maintain a degree of visualisation dissolving deities such as Vairocana there can be the advantage of being able to affect your virtues for the benefit of your next life. It is said that as he approached his death, the Tantric monk Samten Senge Tsang engaged in the *sadhana* rite of Cakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja for seven days and Yamantaka for five days. Before that, he is said to have listened daily to a reading from Dakpo’s *Generation Stage Guide*, the section on the dissolution of the specially imagined deities into clear light. [73a] Just before going to bed at night [it is said that he would undertake the ‘instantaneous self-generation’ and then place the deities upon his body, i.e. from Vairocana at crown to Sumbaraja at the two soles. He would then slowly **recite** “*My body is Vairocana... The principal deity too dissolves into clear light.*” In this way, he would go to sleep. It is certain that at night during the dream state he arises into ‘illusory body’, and during the waking state maintains the *yoga* of Emanation Body. It is said he would often state that if one engages in the visualisation of these stages of dissolution, even if one does not attain the Buddha bodies one can be certain that the practice ensures that one is not reborn in the lower realms [of existence].

[As for the scriptural sources] The withdrawal of the specially imagined class into clear light is [presented in the following] from the *Root Tantra*:

As in the ritual of taking an oath,  
drink this, O those who seek the fruits.  
If you kill an assembly of Tathagatas  
you shall gain attainments most supreme.

Furthermore, the dissolution of the deities in [associated] groups is presented in the explanatory *tantra Vajramala* in the following:

The body aggregate, conceptions and the mirror...

As regards the correlation of the external and internal signs [of dissolution] described in the *Root Tantra*, there are some divergence between Panchen [Sönam Drakpa]’s *Generation Stage* and [those written by] others. The Teacher said that here, however, the presentation has been based on Dakpo’s *Generation Stage Guide*.

#### **2.4.2.1.2 The generation of the ‘primordial lord’, the *yoga* of taking intermediate state into the path as *Sambhogakaya*.**

The extensive presentation of the generation of the ‘primordial lord’ through [the process of] five stages of clarifications, which is the *yoga* of taking intermediate state into the path as *Sambhogakaya*, indicates here the emphasis on ‘illusory body’. The *yoga* of death as *dharmakaya* has been presented earlier, which is the stage of ‘clarification through suchness.’

[Visualise:] On the central seat is a HUM on a sun disc. On this, emerging from OM, is a moon disc upon which emerges, from a red AH, a red lotus with eight petals. At the hub of the lotus are, stacked from below to top, [the letters] OM AH HUM. The sun, moon, lotus and the letters all merge, from this [fusion] appears a moon. **[73b]** Light rays being emitted from this moon draw forth the entire universe and the sentient beings within, all of which dissolve into the moon. While reciting the *mantra* you should cultivate the thought “I am this [union of] ‘wind’ and ‘mind’ that manifests as a moon.” You should thus identify [yourself] with the moon, which is the basis of the attainment of illusory

body, [in other words] the [perfection of subtle] winds. This, then, is the stage of ‘clarification through moon.’

On the moon, emerging from the moon itself, is a blue HUM. At its right is a red AH at whose left is a white OM. Light rays from these three letters invite the Buddhas of the five families, who all dissolve into the three letters. The two side letters dissolve into HUM causing its colour to change [from blue] to white. This, then, is the stage of ‘clarification through seed syllables.’

From this emerges a white five-spoked *vajra*, which is marked at its hub by OM AH HUM, the letters stacked one above the other. This is the stage of ‘clarification through hand implements.’ From this when you [finally] emerge into the primordial lord in accordance with the sequence [of visualisation] unfolding in the *sadhana* it marks the ‘clarification through the full emergence of form.’ In this enumeration, the ‘clarification from sun’ is not listed.

*Sambhogakaya* is referred to as the ‘primordial lord’ because he [is said to] attain full enlightenment first in the *akanishta* realm. It is stated in the *Yoga tantras* that when the Buddhas first become enlightened a five-spoked *vajra*, which is the nature of ultimate *bodhicitta*, appears at their heart. This is why the five-spoke *vajra* is referred to as the ‘primordial *vajra*.’ The teacher said that the method of correlating the intermediate state with *Sambhogakaya* here [in *Guhyasamaja sadhana*] is unique. And this must be learned well on the basis of the words of the text of the *sadhana* itself. The sun, moon and lotus represent on the ordinary level, the ‘[whitish] appearance’, the ‘[reddish] enhanced appearance’, and the ‘[blackish] approaching attainment’, all of which occur when an individual comes out of the clear light of death. On the path they represent ‘appearance’, ‘enhanced appearance’, and ‘approaching attainment,’ which precede the dawning of ‘metaphoric’ and ‘meaning’ clear lights. And [finally] on the resultant level they represent the ‘appearance’, ‘enhanced appearance’, and ‘approaching attainment’ that immediately precede the attainment of Wisdom *dharmakaya* of a newly enlightened Buddha. The three letters represent the conditions that lead to their experience [of the three ‘appearances’] and the *prana* winds that serve as mediums [for the appearances]. [74a]

The stage of ‘clarification through moon’ represents, on the ordinary level, the fact that consciousness and *prana* winds - the basis of the origination of the intermediate state -

are united in one nature. On the level of path it represents the ‘metaphoric’ and ‘meaning’ clear lights; and on the level of fruition it represents wisdom *dharmakaya*. The dissolution of the physical world and the beings within it into the moon indicates that the root of all phenomena is the very subtle consciousness and *prana* wind. The three letters above the moon that have emerged from ‘clarification through seed syllables’, represent on the ordinary level the speech of the intermediate state being. On the path they represent the speech of the illusory body being, while on the level of fruition they represent the exalted speech of *Sambhogakaya* Buddha. They also represent the central and the two side channels of the practitioner. The act of emanating light rays from these letters represents the activity of the intermediate being and also the enlightened activities of *Sambhogakaya*, both of the path and its fruition. The ‘clarification through hand implements’ represents the mind of the intermediate being, and also the exalted mind of *Sambhogakaya* of both the path and its fruition. The five-spoked *vajra* represents the five pristine cognitions, which are the five aspects of the ultimate clear light mind of *Sambhogakaya*. The three letters marking the hub of the *vajra* represent the indivisibility of *Sambhogakaya*’s body, speech and mind.

The stage of ‘clarification through emergence into full form’ represents on the ordinary level the actual intermediate state being. On the path it represents the beings of the pure and impure illusory bodies, while on the resultant level it represents *Sambhogakaya* itself. Just as the intermediate state being originates from the subtle *prana* wind of ‘five [coloured] radiance,’ the primordial lord is the embodiment of the five pristine cognitions. Just as the intermediate state being possesses a subtle ‘mental’ body, the primordial lord possesses an extremely subtle ‘rainbow’ body. Thus the five clarifications — suchness, moon, seed syllables, hand implements and full emergence of form — represent respectively the indestructible consciousness and [its] *prana* wind, the *vajra* recitation of ‘isolation of speech’, the ‘metaphoric’ and ‘actual clear lights, and pure and impure illusory bodies. This practice of taking intermediate state into the path as *Sambhogakaya* for all six Buddha families [74b] is not found in other [*sadhana*] practices where the [identities of the] other families are transferred onto that of the principal deity. [Tsongkhapa’s] *Jewel Shoots: A Detailed Analysis* mentions many such distinctive features of this [Guhyasamaja] path. Given this, the method for taking intermediate state as



Sambhogakaya into the path as presented in the [meditative] practice of Guhyasamaja in the Lokeshvara [tradition] demands a critical study.

These above aspects of the [*sadhana*] rite share feature similar to and purify such ordinary phenomena as (a) the dawning of ‘approaching attainment’ of the reversal sequence and (b) the coming into being of intermediate state. Both of these phenomena arise from the *prana* wind, which is the medium of the clear light of death. They also become the factors that ripen the conditions for the actualisation of the pure and impure illusory bodies on the perfection stage. They also leave special imprints for the realisation of *Sambhogakaya* of the resultant state, namely Buddhahood. Thus meditate with full recognition of the basis of purification and the purifying paths. These [practices] are presented in the *Root Tantra* in the following:

The *vajra* letters are supreme among *mantras*;  
He who thoroughly meditates on the ‘great seal’  
to attain all aspects of enlightenment,  
should do so by means of wisdom-*vajra*.

#### **2.4.2.1.3 The *yoga* of taking birth as *Nirmanakaya* into the path.**

This has five sections:

- (i) Generation of ‘Emanation Body Vajradhara;’
- (ii) Visualisation of *mandala* on its body;
- (iii) Consecration of its body, speech and mind;
- (iv) Generation of the ‘triple being’; and
- (v) Sealing with the lord of the family.

##### **2.4.2.1.3.1 Generation of ‘Emanation Body Vajradhara.’**

To have easier visualisation, imagine in space beneath the circular beam inside the *mandala*, countless numbers of Akshobhya in union with his consort. They are the indivisible nature of the body, speech and mind of all the Buddhas, and have all emerged from their natural abodes. This [visualisation] share features that parallel sexual union of

the parents on the ordinary level [of existence]. Now emanate Akshobhyas equal to the number of sentient beings. The Akshobhyas are composed of subtle *bodhicitta* particles created from the lights radiating from the point where the sexual organs of the male and female deities join. This ensures that the essential point of union is present [in your meditation]. **[75a]** This represents that on the ordinary level the 72000 channels in the bodies of both parents are filled with *bodhicitta*. Akshobhya blesses all sentient beings and brings into his fold those who are [already] not within it, and enhance those who are already in his fold, and liberate those who are enhanced, and help accomplish paths of those who are liberated. Thus Akshobhya leads all beings to the state of the ‘union of bliss and emptiness.’ This resembles, on the ordinary level, the parents’ experience of being overwhelmed by the bliss of [sexual union]. (This element should be present in the part on the enhancement of all sentient beings in the Yamanataka *sadhana* as well.)

The emanated Akshobhyas and all the Akshobhyas arising from having led all sentient beings to its state merge into one at the centre of the circular crossed beam. Yourself as the primordial lord seated on the cushion, you lift up in space just below the circular beam. The primordial lord Akshobhya is now seated on the cushion. Your, as the primordial lord in the space above, enters through the crown of Akshobhya. This [visualisation] resembles the intermediate state being entering into the womb either through the father’s mouth or crown and emerging into a full form inside the womb. From the transformation of this you arise as ‘Emanation Vajradhara’ with features of Akshobhya as described in the *sadhana* text. This correlates, on the ordinary level, to the emergence of a womb-born creature coming out [i.e. actual birth]. This, therefore, purify the ordinary births, which you may otherwise have to undergo in future. It becomes the factor for ripening virtuous conditions for assuming ‘emanation forms’ by those beings that have actualised the pure and impure illusory bodies on path of the perfection stage. This leaves within you special imprints to manifest on the resultant stage, while remaining unwavering from the state of *Sambhogakaya*, millions and billions of emanations wherever karmically receptive sentient beings exist. Meditate thus with full recognition of the bases of purification and the purifying paths. **[75b]** [As regards their scriptural sources,] the transformation of the ‘primordial lord’ into the emanation body is explained in the ‘literal

exposition’ of the ‘meditative absorption of the overpowering *vajra*.’ Also, the following [passage from the *Root Tantra* ] states:

After entering into equipoise through the ‘meditative absorption of *vajra*,’ the source of all commitments, the ‘*bodhicitta vajra*’ is perceived as being with three faces...

#### **2.4.2.1.3.2 Visualisation of *mandala* on body.**

The section on body-*mandala* has two parts:

- (a) The body as the residence *mandala*; and
- (b) The aggregates as the resident deities.

##### **2.4.2.1.3.2.1 The body as the ‘residential *mandala*.’**

In the front, back and two sides of your body — yourself as Emanation Vajradhara —light rays emerge resembling [the related parts of your body]; they dissolve into the doors of the *mandala* from [all] four directions. This, I think, is an oral instruction from the Gurus. In *Generation Stage* [text] it is mentioned that the [lights] dissolve into four ‘corners’ of the *mandala*. Whatever the case, the point is that the body becomes the ‘material basis’, and the earlier instances of the ‘external’ *mandala* act as co-operative conditions. From this [combination] comes into being the four sides of the *mandala*. So, from here on external and body *mandalas* become one and as such there are no two separate *mandalas*. The teacher said that the monks of Lower Tantric College, in their recitation of the *sadhana*, would punctuate [with emphasis] reciting aloud “**The four orifices — mouth, nose, the urinary and excretion pathways are the four doors.**”

From these four [parts of your body] emanate light rays resembling them; they dissolve into the four doors of the external *mandala*. From this arise the four doors of the body-*mandala*. From the ‘*prana* wind of five radiance,’ which is the medium of thoughts, emit five lights that are the purified aspects of the five pristine cognitions. They dissolve into the five layers of the *mandala* wall thus creating the five coloured walls of the body-

*mandala*. From the gustatory consciousness emits red lights, which are in their nature the gustatory consciousness, that dissolve into the jewel frieze of the external *mandala*. Through this emerges the ‘jewel frieze’ of the body-*mandala*. From the interior organs like intestines to the body organ emerge the jewel nets made of garlands of full and half loops. From the eight marrowbones — two calves, two thighs, two hands, and two arms — emerge the eight pillars. [76a] (The eight pillars should not be visualised inside the *mandala* as in Cakrasambhava; rather [here] they should be identified with those two each the two sides of the four doors. The Teacher, both in his teachings on Cakrasamvara and Guhyasamaja, said that this is an oral instruction,)

In both *Generation Stage* texts of Cangkyā Ngawang Chokden and the previous Künkhyen it is stated that the ‘parts’ of the body are the material cause [of the body *mandala*]. This comes from the instruction lineage stemming from the previous Segyü. However, Khedrup Norsang Gyatso, the 1<sup>st</sup> Dalai Lama Gendün Gyatso, Panchen Sönam Drakpa and many others have stated that it is the preceding instances of the external *mandala* which serves as the material cause, while the parts of the body are the co-operative conditions. In both cases, the dyeing of a white woollen fabric is cited as an analogy. Where they differ is that one compares the woollen fabric to the body, another compares it to the dye! Whatever the case this difference should not have any immediate effect in one’s meditation. But taking body as the material cause has [perhaps] greater significance. This is because it leaves strong imprints for manifesting celestial mansion from the parts of Vajradhara’s body, both on the path and resultant stages attained through meditative practices. It is said also that there is a significant difference between a painted-cloth *mandala* and a body *mandala*. For the material basis of one is a fabricated object, while the other is not. Also in the explanatory *tantra Vajramala* one reads:

The body becomes the celestial mansion;  
thus it supports thoroughly all the Buddhas.

and,

Meditate all of them as the *mandala*.

Also, we read in the text of the *sadhana* itself “**All the parts of the body become respectively the various parts of the *mandala*.**” We also find similar statements in [Khedrup Je’s] *Twenty-one Short Pieces* and his *Ocean of Higher Attainment: A Generation Stage*, and many other writings of Tsongkhapa and his two spiritual sons. [76b]

The definition of a material cause is this: “That which primarily brings into being as its continuum that substance.” So nowhere is it said that co-operative conditions can *become* that effect. In any case, it is difficult to reach a definite, conclusive position on this. It is, however, vital to ensure that one does not fall into excessive analysis for experiential realisations based on imaginative meditations both on the path and resultant stages are [open and] infinite. For example, in reality the deities do not possess corporeal forms made of flesh, bones, veins and tendons. But, for the purpose of purifying our corporeal body, when we visualise the deities on the basis our creative play of imagination we do so as if they [really] do it brings results. Amongst earlier Tibetan masters there were those who suggested that [for body *mandala* meditation] it is adequate simply to imagine the various parts of the body to be in their nature aspects of the celestial mansion. [There are others who assert] that we should visualise our body as *mandala* right from start. [Some who state] that the external and internal *mandalas* should be thought of as one container placed inside another. [Yet few who claim] that we should dissolve the external *mandala* into emptiness and then meditate on body *mandala*, and so on. If you understand well the significance for rejecting these suggestions, it will strengthen your understanding of our correct position. However, a thorough understanding of this can only come about in dependence upon cultivating [profound] familiarity with the treatises of great Tsongkhapa and his two spiritual sons.

#### **2.4.2.1.3.2.2 The aggregates as the ‘resident’ deities.**

As for meditation on the resident deities, in order for a meditation to be a body *mandala* practice, it is not adequate simply to place deities on the body; nor is it adequate simply to perceive your body parts as being indivisible from the deities. It is therefore not like a red ritual cake that is then decorated with a white butter ornament! The body parts

have to be taken as the basis of generation, and that they should serve as the ‘material cause’ for the actualisation of the deities. When this happens, your body and the deities become indivisible in the manner of a red, hot iron becoming one with fire. Gungthang Jampelyang states that in the least you should perceive them [the parts of your body and related parts of the *mandala*] to be inseparable as a mirror and the reflections inside it. If you know the essential point [of this meditation] in one context you will be able to extend it to other areas.

Yourself as Emanation Vajradhara, you should visualise a Vairocana between your crown and hairline. [77a] The teacher followed [here] the position presented in the *Generation Stage Guides* of Cankya Rinpoche and the previous Künkhyen. This is that your body aggregate is the material cause, while the OM that is indivisible from this is the co-operative condition. In contrast, at another instance of teaching the Teacher said that the OM that is indivisible from the body aggregate is the material cause, while the meditative mind that visualises this [at the level of imagination] is the co-operative condition. In any case visualise a Vairocana. Likewise, between your hairline and throat, is Amitabha whose hair-knot reaches just below Vairocana but not touching him. He comes into being, with your aggregate of perception as its material cause and letter AH that is indivisible from it as its co-operative condition. The AH is in its nature the pristine cognition of ‘discriminatory awareness,’ the transformed, perfected state of your perception. Between your throat and heart — the mid-point between the two breasts — is Akshobhya whose hair-knot is nearly touching Amitabha. He emerges from your consciousness and HUM, the nature of the pristine cognition of the ‘sphere of reality,’ which is the perfect purity of anger. Between our heart and navel, emerging from SVA — the pristine cognition of ‘equanimity,’ which is the perfect purity of your [aggregate of] feeling and [the emotion] pride — is Ratnasambhava whose hair-knot is nearly touching Akshobhya. Between your navel and the base of your thighs, emerging from a green HA — the pristine cognition of ‘accomplishment of deeds,’ which is the perfect purity of your [aggregate of] consciousness and [the emotion] envy — is Amoghasiddhi whose hair-knot is nearly touching Ratnasambhava.

The five [Buddhas] are facing the same way as the principal deity within the channel centres. (This is the significance of visualising five seeds at five points of the merit field in *Path to Bliss [Lamrim]* practice.) As the *kunda* flower-like *bodhicitta* — the basis of one's corporeal existence — resides at crown, you should visualise there Vairocana, who is the perfect purity of body aggregate. Although there are many types of perception, the root of activities on the path and fruition stages depend upon speech. [77b] And since speech comes from throat you should visualise Amitabha there. As the point where your heart is — i.e. the mid-point between the two breasts and about the level of the third rib inside the chest — is the site where consciousness first began amidst the fusion of parents' fluids. It is there that you should visualise Akshobhya, who is the perfect purity of consciousness. [Vasubandhu's] *Treasury of Knowledge* states

Vital-force is 'life' and it is sustained  
by heat and consciousness, which are its basis.

Thus 'heat' is identified as a basis of life. Heat is thus the basis of our experience of the three kinds of sensation. Furthermore as *tummo* — the principal amongst heat [sources] — reside at navel, you should visualise there Ratnasambhava, who is the perfect purity of the aggregate of feeling. Except for feeling and perception, all remaining forty-nine mental factors fall into the category of 'mental formations'. It is the 'root' and 'derivative' mental and emotional afflictions, which are the foundation that create unenlightened existence. And since most of the *prana* winds, which are the mediums of these afflictive thoughts and emotions, flow below the navel, you should visualise at the secret place Amoghasiddhi, who is the perfect purity of [your aggregate of] 'mental formations.'

As the refined essences of the four elements reside at navels and so, you should visualise there the four consorts such as Locana. At your navel is Locana who is in embrace with Ratnasambhava; at your heart is Mamaki who is in embrace with Akshobhya; at your throat is Pandaravasin who is in embrace with Amitabha; and at your crown is Samaya Tara who is in embrace with Vairocana.

Vaibhashika [thinkers speculatively] posit the sensory organs to be [some] 'refined' material entities unobstructed by the atoms of the actual physical organs. For example, the eye organs are thought to be like *zarma* flowers; ear organs are like the cut ends of two

straws at the base of the physical ears; nose organ resembles the shape of two silver spoons lined side by side; and the tongue is like a crescent moon with hollow in the middle and located at mid-point of the physical tongue. In advanced [Buddhist] schools, however, it is maintained that subjects and objects are mutually depended upon each other. So, visualise inside your two eyeballs two Khitigarbha. [78a] At the entrance of your eyes visualise two Rupa Vajras; they are in embrace with their male counterparts. At two ears are two Vajrapanis facing outwards from inside the ears and in embrace with Shapda Vajras. Inside the nose at the point where the two nostrils converge is Akashagarbhas facing outwards and in embrace with Gandha Vajras. (Thangsakpa says that one should visualise them at the tip of the nose.) Here, in this context [of visualisation] Lokeshvara is at mid-point of your tongue, facing outwards and embraced by Rasa Vajra.

Either at the front or the rear of Akshobhya is Manjushri, single and facing in the same direction as the principal deity. At the secret place, at the juncture where darker and lighter colour of pubic hair merge, or just below Amogasiddhi, or at the mid-point inside the *vajra* jewel is Sarvaniranaviskambini facing outwards and embraced by Sparsha Vajra. In Kyapgön Dorjechang's commentary on *Guru Puja* and also in Drakar Kachu Rinpoche's commentary on the *Generation Stage* it is stated that one should visualise Samandrabadra at three hundred and sixty joints. But they do not give the list of the joints! In the *notes* on *Guru Puja*, a brief reference is however made to Machik's *Thorough Exposition* and the *sutra* of *Nanda's Entry into the Womb*. It seems that there [in the *sutra* however] the counting is that of the bone units. There is, however, an excellent explicit list of the joints in the previous Künkhyen's miscellaneous writings. If you cannot visualise him at all the joints, you could visualise one Samandrabadra, as suggested by Segyü Dorjechang, at the point where the three ribs join at the centre and imagine reflections of Samandrabadra from there reaching to all the joints. Because this point [where the ribs converge] is the juncture where all joints began initially when they were [first] formed. At crown, behind and facing the back of Vairocana, is Maitreya who is the nature of your veins and tendons.

At two palms from HUMs are, Yamantaka [78b] and Prajnataka, who are the nature of your palms. With their heads towards the thumbs they are facing downwards toward the centre of the palm. Between your mouth and teeth, or between the tongue and teeth is



Hayagriva who is facing outwards. Inside, at the mid-point of your *vajra* jewel is Amritakundalini who is facing outwards. At the two shoulders, emerging from the two sockets of the joints, are Acala and Takiraja, their heads pointing upwards. Inside the sockets of the two knee joints, when sitting cross-legged, are Niladanda and Mahabala. At your crown, above is Vairocana and at the front is Ushnishacakravartin who are facing in the same way as the principal deity. At your two soles when sitting cross-legged are two Sumbarajas, their legs towards the heel and heads leaning on the knuckles inside the feet. Their faces are directed towards the calves as if the two Sumbarajas are looking at each other. This is how you should visualise [the deities] at the knees as well.

The deities being in ‘standing postures’ [as suggested in the text of the sadhana] perhaps mean that though seated they have the demeanour of standing. Although yourself are visualised in a form that has three faces and six arms, you should visualise the [body-*mandala*] deities only on the root face and arms and not on others.

This meditation of the body as *mandala* is presented in the following in the *Vajramala*:

The body becomes the celestial mansion...

Thus meditate these as the *mandala*.

The [body-*mandala*] meditation whereby the five aggregates are imagined as the five families, the four elements as four consorts, the ‘entrances,’ veins, tendons, and the joints as eight Bodhisattvas, the five sensory objects as five Vajra goddesses, and the limbs as the nature of the wrathful deities, is presented in [following lines of] the *Root Tantra*.

At the mid-point between the two breasts, from crown to hairline...

Thus [the above] one verse and, furthermore in the sixteenth chapter of the *Root Tantra*, we read

In brief, the five aggregates are meditated upon thoroughly as the five Buddhas.

....

Forms, sounds, smells and so on known thus must be always meditated upon as deities. [79a]

And, also in the *Vajramala* it is stated

On this body of Vajra master  
reside, in respective order, the bodies of the Victors.

The great Tsongkhapa relates all aspects of the *sadhana* text and also the various oral traditions to authentic *tantras* and their authoritative commentaries, which are their sources. This is done in such a way that even the subtle meanings of the terms are in understood in accordance with the scriptures. This is particularly true in the case of [Tsongkhapa's treatment of] Guhyasamaja *sadhana* practice, which is rare [in the works of others]. One scarcely finds words [in Tsongkhapa's writings on Guhyasamaja] that cannot be explained in relation to either the *Root Tantra* or the *Explanatory Tantras*. It is thus our great fortune to have encountered such a distinctive tradition, which is free of errors in its elucidation of the meaning of the *tantras*. Furthermore this tradition organises into one [integrated] body of path the original *vajra* words of the *tantras* through an interweaving of the *Root* and its *Explanatory tantras* together with Guru's oral instructions. It is vital therefore to appreciate this [feature of Tsongkhapa's tradition] and recognise how fortunate we are.

#### **2.4.2.1.3.3 Consecration of body, speech and mind.**

At your crown, either at the heart of Vairocana there or at its site but unobstructed by him is OM from which emerges a moon disc. On this is a white OM representing the *prana* wind endowed with five-coloured radiance. Light rays of five colours emit from this emanating hosts of Locanas filling the entire space, who invite hosts of Vairocana, the deities of Vajra Body filling the entire space. Each of them in turn emanates Vairocanas filling the entire space; they do not obstruct each other's space. Although this is difficult to imagine, we can get a sense [of this] if we examine this discursively. For example, as stated in the following [in Candrakirti's *Guide to the Middle Way*]

At that point one sees hundred Buddhas...

As one progresses from the first Bodhisattva level, one attains twelve sets of hundred qualities. In this, one progressively tread through to the tenth level where, as a result of the cessation of coarse discursive thoughts, one sees within a single instance Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas equal to the number of atoms [in the world] and at each bodily pores [of all beings]. Finally, at full enlightenment even the slightest conceptual thought processes have come to cease. Thus, as stated in the following [from Candrakirti's *Guide to the Middle Way*]

Devoid of conceptual thoughts you, until the end of existence...

[80a] it is said that one can, without wavering from *dharmakaya* state, display within a single moment countless arrays of enlightened deeds in myriad world systems, which equal to the reach of space, until the end of existence. Gungthang Jampelyang has said that one should also base one's understanding of the bodies of union as explained in *tantra* on similar reflections.

Thus, Locanas emanated by you and those invited, which fill the entire space, merge one into another; they are each in union with their lords. Eventually, a pair is left at each of the nine-part circular beam the centre of the mansion; a pair each in the four cardinal and four intermediate directions; and a pair each in the above and below. Together there remain [only] eleven pairs [Locanas in embrace with their lords]. A replica emerges from you - yourself as 'Emanation Vajrasattva' - and remains seated in front of the principal deity. With the verse "**He who assumes the body of the glorious Buddha...**" you make supplication to the principal deity. With [recitation of] the second verse you make supplications to the retinue deities. Due to this they all enter into union out of great passion for each other. They experience unique meditative absorption of bliss and emptiness, and melt into white light that descends to your crown, the gateway of Vairocana on your body, which is the site of the *kunda* flower-like *bodhicitta*. At your crown, the white light splits into two parts the larger part dissolving into Vairocana at your crown, while the other part dissolves into the deities of the *body-mandala*. The deities become satiated by bliss, the excess light fills your entire body - [yourself as] Vajrasattva - and permeates your entire body with bliss. Your mind, transformed into pristine cognition suffused with great bliss, enters into meditative absorption on emptiness. This attainment of pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness is termed as the 'attainment of the ground of pristine cognition.' In this way, imagine that you have attained the great feat of body, namely the indivisibility of your body from the Vajra body of all the Buddhas.

Then recite the verses of aspiration. **[80a]** With [the recitation of] the *mantra* place your thought on the identity of Vajra body.

Generally speaking, as can be observed in Khedrup Je's *Origins of Yamantaka* in the context of a debate between him and Rongtön, excrement is [associated with] Vairocana and urine with Akshobhya. Some earlier Tibetan masters thus take the expression 'gateway of Vairocana' in accordance with this association. Here, however, the placement of Vairocana at crown is referred to as 'at crown is the gateway of Vairocana.' The teacher made similar observations about the consecration of speech too.

At your throat, either at the heart of Amitabha there or at its site but unobstructed by him, is AH from which emerges a red eight-petalled lotus at whose hub is a red AH emitting light rays of five colours. From this emanate hosts of Pandaravasins filling the entire space, who invite hosts of Amitabha, the deities of Vajra Speech filling the entire space. They enter into union with their lords and the eleven pairs remain below the circular beam. A replica emerges from you - yourself as 'Emanation Vajrasattva' - and remains seated in front of the principal deity. When you make the supplication "**Pray, bless my speech into Vajra Speech,**" they [Pandaravasins in union with their lords] melt into light, which is the nature of bliss and emptiness. They divide into two parts the larger part dissolves into Amitabha at your throat, while the other part dissolves into the individual deities of the body-*mandala*. The excess light fills the entire body of [yourself as] Vajrasattva who becomes thus satiated with bliss. Pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness arise. Imagine that you have attained the great feat of speech— Vajra Speech—whereby the exalted speech of all the Victors has become indivisible from yours. By means of the words of the aspirational prayers and by [the recitation of] the *mantra* place your mind on the identity of Vajra Speech.

As for consecration of the mind, visualise at your heart, either at the heart of Akshobhya there or at its site but unobstructed by him, is HUM from which emerges a sun disc. **[80b]** On this is a blue HUM emitting light rays of five colours that emanate hosts of Mamakis filling the entire space; they invite hosts of Akshobhya, who are the deities of Vajra Mind filling the entire space. They enter into union with their lords and the eleven pairs remain below the circular beam. A replica emerges from you, yourself as Emanation

Vajrasattva, who remains seated in front of the principal deity. When you make the supplication to the principal and retinue deities “**Pray, bless my mind,**” they enter into union. They melt into bliss and emptiness and divide into two parts from which the larger part dissolves into Akshobhya at heart, while the other part dissolves into the individual deities of the *body-mandala*. The excess light fills the entire body of [yourself as] Vajrasattva who becomes thus satiated with bliss. Pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness arises. Imagine that you have attained the great feat of speech—Vajra Mind—whereby the exalted minds of all the Victors have become indivisible from yours. By means of the words of the aspirational prayers and by [the recitation of] the *mantra* place your mind on the identity of Vajra Mind.

As a recapitulation, you should consecrate collectively the body, speech and mind. Thus recite “**I, myself as the Tathagata... ATMA KO HAM.**” (This much is mentioned in the *sadhana* text.) As for visualisation of this section, the Teacher suggested that one should imagine that of the thirty-two *body-mandala* deities, the twenty male deities — the lords of the families, the eight Bodhisattvas, the ten wrathful deities — emanate replicas of themselves that invite the female deities. Similarly, the nine female deities — the five Vajra goddesses, the four consorts Locana and so on — emanate replicas of themselves who invite the twenty three related male deities. So, in accordance with the words of the previous Künkhyen’s *Generation Stage Guide*, [you should] visualise that Locana emanates her replicas filling the entire space and invite Vairocana. [Likewise] Mamaki invites Ratnasambhava; Pandaravasin, Amitabha; and Tara invites Amogasiddhi. Rupa Vajra invites the four: Maitreya, Khitigarbha, Yamantaka and Acala. Shapda Vajra invites the four: Vajrapani, Akashagarbha, Prajnatika and Takiraja. **[81a]** Gandha Vajra invites the four: Lokeshvara, Manjushri, Hayagriva and Niladanda. Rasa Vajra invites the four: Sarvaniranaviskambini, Samandrabadra, Vignantakriti and Mahabala. Sparsha Vajra invites Akshobhya the two wrathful deities — the one above and the other below [Ushnishacakravartin and Sumbaraja].

Of the twenty-four male deities, Akshobhya and the two wrathful deities — the one above and the other below [i.e. Ushnishacakravartin and Sumbaraja] - invite Sparsha Vajra. The four, Vairocana and so on invite Locana. Bodhisattvas and wrathful deities in the east

and southeast invite Rupa Vajra. Bodhisattvas and wrathful deities in the south and southwest invite Shapda Vajra. Bodhisattvas and wrathful deities in the west and northwest invite Gandha Vajra; and Bodhisattvas and wrathful deities in the north and northeast invite Rasa Vajra. This can be inferred from the earlier example [i.e. the invitation of the male deities by the female counterparts], and also from the practice of transferring the identity of the principal deity in the context of [meditative absorption on] ‘supreme, victorious *mandala*.’ In his *Generation Stage Guide*, the previous Künkhyen relates that of the twenty-three male deities, the five Buddhas invite Locana and so on plus Sparsha Vajra, and four Bodhisattvas such as Khitigarbha invite the four Vajra goddesses. So Khünkhyen does not include the ten wrathful deities and the last four Bodhisattvas as inviting consorts. Later when explaining the manner in which the invocation takes place, however, he writes that the twenty-three male deities and nine consorts are emanated. So it is clear that the ten wrathful deities and the remaining four Bodhisattvas too emanate their replicas.

Cangkya Rinpoche, in his *Generation Stage Guide*, writes that the five Buddhas invite the five female Buddhas, and that the five female Buddhas invite the five Buddhas of the families. Also that the four Vajra Goddesses invite the four, Khitigarbha and so on. The four Bodhisattvas and the wrathful deities in the cardinal and intermediate directions each invite the four Vajra Goddesses such as Rupa Vajra and so on. The two wrathful deities of the above and below emanate two Sparsha Vajras who in turn invite the assembly of the Guhyasamaja *mandala*. For all of this, the verb to ‘emanate’ is used only once at the end [81b] giving the impression that only the male deities emanate the female deities and not vice versa. It needs to be checked whether this is a scribal error or that this represents actually a divergent oral tradition. If, on the other hand, one reads this as the five Buddhas of the families emanating replicas of themselves who then invite the female Buddhas like Locana and so on, there is perhaps not great difference between this and our earlier explanation.

Thus, the male deities emanate replicas of themselves filling the entire space, and also the female deities emanate replicas of themselves filling the entire space who invite the male deities who pervade the space. They merge one into another thus becoming the thirty two deities of Guyhasamaja *mandala*, who remain located in space below the circular beam.

Again they emanate second replicas that make the [actual] supplication and then enter into sexual union. They melt into the nature of bliss and emptiness and divide into thirty-two *bodhicitta* drops, which dissolve into the deities of the body-*mandala*. The drops fill their bodies, and as they are emitted outwards they fill the entire body of the ‘basic’ Vajrasattva [i.e. oneself as ‘Emanation Vajrasattva’]. Due to this you attain the great state of Vajradhara, the indivisibility of body, speech and mind. Imagine thus and by means of the *mantra* [recitation] uphold the identity.

These are presented in the *Root Tantra* in the following:

That who abides in the centre of *mandala*,  
which is called HUM, meditate deeply on this...

And, also in chapter six one reads

The three ‘*vajras*’ as taught by the Tathagatas...

Similarly, in chapter two one reads

You should generate your mind as body, your body as mind, and your mind as verbal expressions.

The word ‘as’ [in the above quotation] can be understood to mean ‘form’. So the injunction “**Generate the three doors in the form of the three *vajras***” can be applied to all three [i.e. body, speech and mind]. Thus the terms ‘individually’ and ‘generate’ though stated once must be read as applying commonly to all three with regard to the [rite of] consecration. The three verses such as “**Whatever be the embodiments of the Buddhas...**” are found in the seventh chapter of the *Root Tantra*, while the supplication verse “**He who upholds the glorious Enlightened Body...**” [82a] is found in the eleventh chapter. Also the three sets of *mantras* are from the *Root Tantra*. The meaning of these [verses and *mantras*] can be learned from [Tsongkhapa’s] interwoven annotations on the *Clear Lamp*.

#### 2.4.2.1.3.4 Generation into the ‘triple being’.

At your heart — yourself as ‘commitment being’ Vajradhara — is a ‘wisdom being’ [whose appearance are] as described in the *sadhana* text. He is in union with his consort

and is fully ‘embodied’ as described in the section on [visualisation of] the lord of the Buddha family. At his heart, on a moon cushion is a blue five-spoked *vajra* at whose hub is a blue HUM, which is the ‘concentration being.’ In its real nature it is the ‘ever-present’, ‘co-emergent’ innate mind which has as its medium the indestructible *prana* wind, with uninterrupted continuum since beginningless time. It dawns eternally thus within. In some texts, [in place of the word ‘dawning’] we find the word ‘illumine’, which would then give an explicit sense of illumination of light or radiance. In fact, it would be more appropriate to say that it ‘illuminates greatly’. However, in the *Root Tantra* pertaining to this section we read

The syllable that is supreme among letters  
should be visualised at its centre.  
Meditate thoroughly with constant engagement  
upon the great ‘five-spoked Vajra.’

Thus the word ‘constantly’ is explicit in the *Root Tantra*. Furthermore, the expression ‘like a great lamp’ already suggests the illuminating quality, so here it appears more accurate to read it as ‘dawning.’ The meaning of the expression “**blazing with light and light rays dispelling darkness of ignorance**” is the same as what we find in the *sadhana* of Yamantaka where we read “five kinds of light rays radiate.” Appreciation of this point is important. The oral instructions of the teachers suggest that the meditation of the ‘triple being’ help enhance one’s body, speech and mind at all levels, the gross, subtle and the very subtle. Thus this practice has great significance. In *Sutra* system, it is said that because they have not eliminated the subtle forms of ‘obstructions to knowledge’ the Arhats of the ‘listeners’ and ‘self-enlightened Buddhas’ path have not yet purified the subtle aspects of the unenlightened existence, namely the ‘mental body’ conditioned by subtle obstructions to knowledge. This is despite the fact they [82b] no longer take bodily existence conditioned by *karma* and afflictions. So, the ‘ground for the propensities of ignorance’ refers to the propensities of mental and emotional afflictions, and it is this what constitutes ‘obstructions to knowledge.’ And since it serves as a basis for the origination of the twelve links [of dependent origination] this is called the ‘ground.’ [Maitreya’s] *Sublime Continuum* states:

Aryas have eliminated from their roots  
sufferings of disease, ageing, and so on...



Thus, because of the overwhelming force of the wisdom directly realising emptiness that is reinforced by a unique skilful means on the first Bodhisattva level eliminates completely the possibility of birth derived from *karma* and afflictive thoughts and emotions. On the eighth level, following the total elimination of the obstructions of afflictive thoughts and emotions, the [process of] eliminating ‘obstruction to knowledge’ begin. It is then the ‘Vajra body’ that is generated from the ‘ground for the propensities of ignorance’ is first attained. Gradually, as obstructions to knowledge are eliminated this body too gets refined eventually becoming the basis for the body of the Bodhisattva at the threshold [of Buddhahood], a body of ‘perfect resource’ adorned with the major and minor noble marks. So, it is said, that although *Sutra* paths can purify body, speech and mind both at the gross and subtle levels they cannot do so at the very subtle level. Thus the Bodhisattva on the tenth level, who is in his last life as a Bodhisattva, has eliminated most of the obstructions to knowledge. He has therefore attained levels equivalent up to the [stage of] ‘impure illusory body.’ The Bodhisattva is then initiated by means of the third empowerment conferred in *actuality* by the Buddhas of the ten directions. This generates his most subtle mind into the nature of spontaneous bliss. As this mind directly experiences emptiness he attains ‘actual clear light’, which causes the dissolution of the subtle *prana* winds. Through this way the Bodhisattva becomes capable of eliminating even the subtlest obstructions to knowledge and thereby capable of purifying body, speech and mind at the subtlest level. In view of this, [Jamyang Shepa, in his] *Root Text on Philosophical Tenets* states the following:

Both through *Sutra* and *Tantra* obstructions of afflictive thoughts and emotions can be eliminated;

But [as for] subtle obstructions to knowledge, it’s *Tantra* and not *Sutra* that eliminates it.

The above is explained on the basis of the differentiation made between the targeted audience of the two teachings. In *Sutra* teachings, although the ‘objective emptiness’ is taught clearly and explicitly the ‘subjective experience,’ namely the pristine cognition suffused with great bliss is hidden. **[83a]** Similarly, although the object of abandonment — i.e. obstructions to knowledge — is presented in its entirety [in the *Sutra* teachings], the nature of their medium, which are the subtle *prana* winds remains concealed. So too is hidden the nature of the antidote force, namely the generation of the subtlest mind into

pristine cognition suffused with great bliss that realises emptiness. In contrast, in the *Tantra*, even in a practice like the meditation on ‘triple being’ there is an explicit reference to the subtlest levels. For instance, the ‘commitment being’ correlates to the current, coarse level of our body, the ‘wisdom being’ correlates to the subtle most *prana* wind, while the ‘concentration being’ corresponds to the subtlest level of our mind. Therefore, when meditated thus [on the triple being], right from now the triple being of the ‘base’ is purified, and the positive conditions for the attainment of the triple being of the ‘path’ are enhanced. As illustrated by this there are many profound methods for a swift attainment of enlightenment [in the *tantric* path]. So [one could say that] within every single [*tantric*] practice is present the essential points and conditions for bringing about the attainment of Buddhahood within a single life time without the requirement of accumulating merits and wisdom for three innumerable aeons. Again, *Root Text on Philosophical Tenets* states:

Though the supreme object is taught, the supreme subject is hidden;  
Likewise, though principal obstruction is identified, its supreme antidote is hidden.

And, it continues further:

There is an abundance of profound means, and its paths are swift too.

These points are stated in the provisional reading of the following verses from the *Root Tantra*. For example, in the twelfth chapter it reads:

At the heart of commitment being  
of Vajra body, speech, and mind  
the embodiment of supreme perfection of all aspects —  
is the pristine cognition...

Similarly, we already referred to a verse from chapter ten earlier. Also in chapter eleven it reads:

Thoroughly meditate on Vajra Akshobhya  
who abides at the centre of all Buddhas;  
visualising the letter HUM at his heart,  
place your mind within a *bodhicitta* drop.

#### **2.4.2.1.3.5 Sealing with the lord of the family.**

In other *sadhana* texts initiating deities are invited, and the excess from the [initiation] water becomes the lord of the family. **[83b]** Here, however, first the lord of the family is generated. The male and female deities [then] enter into union, and with streams of nectar flowing from this [union] you are initiated. So, visualise at your crown — yourself as Vajradhara — a white Vajrasattva who is the nature of your Guru. He holds a bell and a *vajra* and is in embrace with his consort Vajradhateshvari, who is his own resonance. Visualise that you are empowered by streams of the nectar flowing from the union of the male and female deities, which purify all your stains. At his heart, on a moon disc, is the letter HUM which is surrounded by a ring of *mantra*. You can at this point recite the hundred-syllable *mantra* [of Vajrasattva]. Should you wish to undertake an elaborate version of this practice, visualise that from OM at your crown emanates countless light rays at the tips of which are white OMs. They touch the OMs at the crowns of all the Buddhas in ten directions. They are then drawn forth in the form of Vairocanas, the male and female deities of the Vajra body, filling the entire space. They enter into union with their consorts and melt into bliss and emptiness and then enter through your crown. As the wisdom beings dissolve through your crown your body becomes filled. The lights and nectars spill out and fill the body of the commitment being. The excess spills from his crown and becomes a Vajrasattva in embrace with his consort. This is the *yoga* of ‘body enhancement’ and constitutes the practice of the sealing with the lord of the family.

Again, countless light rays radiate from AH at your throat, at the tip of these rays are red AHs. They touch the AHs at the throat of all the Buddhas of ten directions, who are then drawn forth in the form of Amitabhas, the male and female deities of the Vajra Speech, filling the entire space. They enter into union with their consorts and melt into bliss and emptiness and then enter through your crown and fill the body of the wisdom being. **[84a]** The nectar spills out and fills the body of the commitment being, the excess spill from his crown and become a moon disc at the heart of the family lord. This is the *yoga* of ‘speech enhancement.’

Again, countless light rays radiate from HUM at your heart, at the tip of these rays are blue HUMs. They touch the HUMs at the heart of all the Buddhas equal to the reach of space, who are then drawn forth in the form of Akshobhas, the male and female deities of

the Vajra Mind, filling the entire space. They enter into union with their consorts and melt into bliss and emptiness and then enter through your crown and fill the body of the wisdom being. The nectar spills out and fills the body of the commitment being, the excess spill from his crown and become the letter HUM surrounded by the hundred-syllable *mantra* at the heart of the family lord. This is the *yoga* ‘collectively enhancing body, speech and mind.’ The triple being of the base, path and fruition are purified, approximated and actualised. Thus, this meditative practice resembles the procedure of an empowerment ceremony. Inexhaustible streams of nectar descend from the letter HUM and the *mantra* circle. **[84b]** Your negativity, *karma* and the obstructions of afflictive thoughts and emotions accumulated since beginningless time are all dispelled as if a lamp is lit in a dark cave. You should imagine that your body and mind are unified and transformed into the experience of great bliss as if they have become of single taste. If you undertake this visualisation and combine this with the recitation of hundred-syllable *mantra* there will be a profound and distinctive significance. Segyü Dorjechang has intimated this through the oral tradition to Künkhyen Jamyang Shepa.

This meditation is presented in the twelfth chapter of the *Root Tantra* in the following verse.

The supreme Vajradhara at [is] one’s crown;  
Supreme indeed is the commitment that delights the Buddhas...

#### **2.4.2.1.4 The rite of ‘union’ with consort indicating that the attainment of triple embodiment is dependent upon the path of desire.**

This section consists of:

- (i) Seeking the consort;
- (ii) Blessing of the secret places;
- (iii) Generating attachment;
- (iv) Making offering.

(i) *Seeking the Consort.*

From this part onwards in the *sadhana* you are engaging in the placement of thirty-two deities upon your body (yourself as Emanation Vajradhara), a meditative practice derived from the father *tantras*. At this point you should visualise that from your heart emerges consorts corresponding to the individual Buddha families. Although they are by nature aspects of your wisdom mind, in appearance they have the forms of actual women. For example, [it is said that] for the practitioners belonging to Vairocana family the consorts are of washerman caste. For Ratnasambhava family, they are of bead-making caste, for Amitabha family, artisans, for Amoghasiddhi family, craftsman caste, and for Akshobhya family, the consorts are of common or lower castes with beauty spots [on their faces].

The consort is dissolved into emptiness, and through ‘three stages’ she is generated into Sparsha Vajra. On her body are visualised, emerging from their seed syllables, twenty-nine deities as described in the *sadhana*. The consorts of Maitreya, Manjushri and Samandrabadra are not mentioned in the *Root Tantra*, and as such they are not visualised here. The four goddesses such as Locana and the five Vajra goddesses are postures similar to the principal consort and are embraced by their male deities. As the ten wrathful female deities are consorts of the ten wrathful male deities they do not by themselves form part of the actual host of the Guhyasamaja *mandala* deities. [85a] Their faces, arms, colour and so on resemble their corresponding male deities. ‘Sumbaraja’ and ‘Vajra Underground’ are synonyms as we can infer from the name of the consort who is called the ‘Earth-bearing Goddess.’ If your consort is an ‘action seal’ [i.e. a live partner], since your aggregates have been generated into deities you can transform your consort’s body into a *mandala* as well. However, if your consort is a ‘wisdom seal’, the basis is only an imagined construct hence the deities are merely visualised upon your body. And, since all deities share the same identity it is sufficient to visualise the deities only on the body of the principal male deity.

(ii) *Blessing the secret places.*

The secret places of the principal deity and his consort should be dissolved into emptiness, and then generated into a *vajra* and a ‘lotus,’ which appear respectively from the outside as a male and female organs. Through the central spoke of the *vajra*, and at the hub of the lotus are the passages in the form of a straw of light with their entrances blocked

each by a yellow letter PHAT, which is the nature of ‘downward voiding’ *prana* wind. The PHAT letters are in a lying position with their heads turned inwards. This causes the ‘freezing’ of the downward voiding *prana* and prevents the *bodhicitta* from spilling outside. The letter’s yellow colour correlates to the natural colour of the downward voiding *prana*.

(iii) *Generating attachment and (iv) making offerings..*

Although there were countless Bodhisattvas amongst his circle when the Buddha taught the *tantras* it is said that it was the identity of Ratnasambhava he adopted when he assumed the form of ‘desire.’ Similarly, it was the identity of Amoghasiddhi that he assumed when he was immersed in the [acts of] offering. Likewise here too it is suggested that the practitioner should transform themselves into Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi. However, this should not be understood as requiring to transform one’s appearance into them. Rather, one needs only adopt their identities. So, with the identity of Ratnasambhava, you should engage in the sexual acts such as embracing and so on. While thinking “**I am the Vajra that is the embodiment of desire of all Tathagatas**”, assume the identity. Then, you should transfer your identity to that of Vajradhara. While uttering HUM the deities engage in acts of union thus enhancing [85b] their vital elements, which, in the form of five colours of light rays — the nature of five pristine cognitions — fill both the *vajra* and lotus from the inside. You attain pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness.

The Tantric College monk Samten Senge asserts that although the practice of chanting the HUM in a prolonged voice is not mentioned in the *Subsequent Tantra*, in the four interwoven commentaries it is stated that the HUM should be sung. And, while assuming the identity of Amoghasiddhi you should utter PHAT! Mentally imagine [that as a result of this] a subtle *bodhicitta* drop, the size of a mustard seed, descends into the consort’s lotus. In this way, the deities of the body *mandala* are delighted with offerings of great bliss; they experience uncontaminated bliss and mental bliss. Adopt the thought “**I am the Vajra that embodies the offering deeds of all Tathagatas.**” Only this much is mentioned in the *sadhana* text. However, as found in the context of ‘secret offering’ in the rite of ‘front generation’, you should imagine that from the particles that constitute the

*bodhicittas* a multitude of male and female deities, pervading the entire space, are emanated. The male deities emanate their consorts, and the consorts a multitudes of male deities. By means of entering into union with each other all of them engage in acts of ‘offering.’ If you are undertaking only the practice [only at the level] of ‘initial engagement,’ the deities are not ‘melted’ at this point. Rather, you should visualise *mantra* circles at the heart of individual deities and then engage in the practices of [*mantra*] repetition, making offerings and exultation of praises, tasting the nectar, and dissolution of the deities. These [practices] are referred to in the ‘aspirational prayer’ [at the end of *sadhana*] in the following verses:

Having purified thoroughly the realm where one attains enlightenment...

The above verse refers to *mandala* meditation. As this indicates that it is after having purified the impure realms the pure *mandala* comes into being, the *mandala* meditation contains the essential points of the *Sutra* practice of ‘preparing for the pure realm.’ And,

There the state of triple embodiments becomes actualised...

The seven lines [in the ‘aspirational prayer’] beginning with the above present: (i) the meditative practice of taking the three ‘bodies’ into the path, (ii) the framework of generating the four *vajras* as referred to by the expression the ‘supreme *vajra*’; and (iii) the meditative practice of ‘initial engagement’, which is the path purifying ordinary birth, death and intermediate state.

The swift path for fulfilling one’s self-interest...

The above verse alludes to the swift path that enables one to [86a] engage in the fulfilment of other’s welfare following the actualisation of the state of the ‘three Buddha bodies,’ which marks the total culmination of one’s own attainments.

So, as stated in the following verse of the *Root Text on Philosophical Tenets*

As there is an abundance of profound means, and its paths too are swift...

they [verses cited from the ‘aspirational prayer’] present in summary the practice of generating your consort appropriate to your lineage into deities. This refers to the inner and outer means of engendering pristine cognition suffused with great bliss on the basis of a meditative absorption immersed in great attachment. In addition, [the verses also present]

the blessing of the secret places and how assume the identity when engaging in acts of offering. As for scriptural sources, the following verse

Through the meditative absorption in the form of great attachment...

is a direct citation from the *Root Tantra* itself. And in the seventeenth chapter [of the *Root Tantra*] we read

There is then the meditative absorption, which is immersed in the glory of enjoying all objects of desire...

Furthermore, in the seventh chapter, we read

By conjoining the two organs...

The above refers to the practice of blessing the 'space' [female organ] and the 'secret organ' [male organ] and the act of sexual union. And the following verse from the fifteenth chapter presents the qualifications of an appropriate consort.

Endowed with noble qualities like beauty spots on face...

#### **2.4.2.2 The meditative absorption on 'supreme victorious *mandala*,' which parallels the deeds of the Buddha bodies.**

In the context of 'initial engagement' meditation, not only should you not dissolve the deities at this point in the *sadhana*, you should also not dissolve them in the context of secret offering in the extensive 'self generation' practice. This is same also when making offering in the context of 'front generation' practice and also in the self-empowerment ceremony because you need to demonstrate both the outer and inner *mandalas*. Melting of the deities is done only in the context of 'secret empowerment' practice. [Visualise] at this point that all the deities within your body are afflicted by the wisdom fire of great bliss and have thus become satiated. Streams of *bodhicitta* drops flow from their body as if perspiration is dripping off their bodies. As the letter PHAT inside the jewel is slightly opened, mentally you project [86b] a subtle portion of *bodhicitta* drops into the consort's lotus. Imagine this to be the source of all deities such as the five Buddha families. Here, even if the



consort is an ‘action seal’ [i.e. a live, actual partner], you should not allow the *bodhicitta* drops to actually descend into the consort’s lotus.

The *bodhicitta* drop that is mentally projected into the consort’s lotus divides into two. One part becomes a BRUM from, which the [entire] celestial mansion together with the seats with the eastern door of the *mandala* facing towards you emerge. The other part divides into thirty-two parts all located upon the seats. On the central seat is the *mantra* OM AH HUM HUM; at its front OM AH KHAM HUM. Similarly, on the seat in the east is OM AH OM HUM, etc. [as described in the text of the *sadhana*]. Visualise this procedure until you imagine that on the seat that is beneath the circular beam is OM AH HUM HUM. So, visualise the thirty-two *mantras* — composed of inserting the seed syllables of the deities between the three syllables, OM AH HUM. The *mantras* should not be visualised as circles; rather they should be visualised as standing left to right, facing the same way as their corresponding deities. From these emerge the thirty-two hand implements such as *vajra* and so on, from which are, in turn, generated the thirty-two deities such as the principal deity peaceful Akshobya and so on. This part is known as the ‘aspect of generation’ and is the first of the ‘seven aspects’ of the process [of generation].

In the Yamantaka practice although it is necessary to assume ‘identification’ that ‘I am’ with the deities of the meditative absorption of the supreme victorious *mandala*, the word ‘self’ is not actually found in the *sadhana*. In contrast, here [in this *sadhana*] there is an explicit mention of the word ‘oneself’. This is because here [in Guhyasamaja] the attainment of illusory body is specially emphasised. Kyapgön Dorjechang once said that there are four possible relations of identity between Akshobya and Vajradhara. However, I do not remember clearly the examples he gave to illustrate this point. I asked others about this and some gave me the following version. The deity that abides in the space of the primordial Buddha is (a) Akshobya alone; while the Emanation Vajradhara is (b) Vajradhara alone. The Vajra Wrathful of protection circle and the meditative absorption of the supreme victorious *mandala* are both (c) Akshobhya and Vajradhara. Deities such as Vairocana and others are (d) neither of the two. In Dakpo’s *Generation Stage Guide* and so on [87a] it is stated that the principal deity of the ‘specially imagined’ class is Vajradhara alone; while the

principal deity of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*’ and the ‘supreme activities’ is Akshobhya alone. If viewed thus one could apply the same principle [i.e. the four possibilities] to Sparsha Vajra, Vajradhatesvari and others as well!

The activities of the deities of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*’ are as follows. You should [visualise that] the principal deity Akshobhya, who is at the centre of the *mandala*, is drawn forth through the ‘space’ and the ‘secret organ’ of principal deity and his consort to the heart of the principal deity. As you utter VAJRADHRIKA he exits from your heart emanating countless *mandalas* of Akshobhyas in ten directions. This is the ‘aspect of emanation’. They engage in such general acts as turning the wheel of law, and in particular help sentient beings purify anger and lead them to the state of Akshobhya. This is the ‘aspect of activities.’ All emanations are withdrawn into you, which is the ‘aspect of withdrawal.’ The Akshobhyas in ten directions merge with their wisdom beings, which is the ‘aspect of merging.’ As the lord of the family is naturally present in all it empowers them with his *bodhicitta* drops; this is the ‘aspect of empowerment.’ All of them arrive again and appear in front of you, and you assume their identity. They then enter through your heart. The moon disc dissolves into the sun disc, and on this you stand as peaceful Vajradhara, i.e. the Vajra Wrathful, as in the meditation on protection circle. Imagine yourself as being embraced by your consort Sparsha Vajra. This is the ‘aspect of being positioned on the seat.’ Likewise, extend these seven aspects of generation to all other deities.

Shantipa states the following in his *sNyim tog*:

When another Buddha takes the centre site,  
Akshobhya then takes his place;  
Likewise, when a retinue deity becomes the principal  
he is then enlightened; that which is projected must be dissolved...

So, you should **[87b]** engage in the visualisation of emanating and withdrawing *mandalas* whereby the thirty two deities such as Sparsha Vajra embraced by Akshobhya and so on each, in turns, become the principal deity as found in the *sadhana* text. Sparsha Vajra dissolves into the consort of the principal deity; Vairocanas and so on take their own seats. Except for the five Buddhas, all other deities assume Bodhisattva forms although in actuality their level of attainment and

abandonment remains equal to that of the Enlightened Vajras. So, with respect to these deities, there is no mention of the twelve deeds [of the Buddha]. The emanated deities each enter through the crown of the sentient beings and rescue those in the inferior rebirths and lead them to higher states. Sentient beings undertake the precepts of taking refuge and observe the laws of cause and effect. To them, the faults of unenlightened existence are also revealed. They are thus led to the path of the ‘three higher trainings.’ They transcend the [narrow] concerns of self-interest and are led to the generation of the ‘altruistic intention to attain enlightenment’ [for the benefit of all beings]. They are then initiated and are taught the path of the ‘two stages’ being eventually to the state of Akshobhya. Thus, with each sentient being, you should reflect firmly upon the entire [aspect of] path. This was underlined by my teacher in his instruction. It is necessary [therefore] to engage in a meditation that reviews both the profound and vast aspects of path. [For example, in the case of countering anger] you should review from the initial stage of undermining anger by means of loving kindness to total elimination of even the seed, including your propensity towards anger. This you should do so by [developing] insights into the absence of even the tiniest part of one’s self as being inherently real, an apprehension that [normally] serves as a basis for the arising of anger.

Geshe Palden of Gome from Ganden is said to have asked Arik Geshe Öser whether the expression ‘purify anger’ applies to the beings of the higher realms since they are [thought to be] already devoid of anger. In response, he was thought to have asserted that one should have the thought that, actually, it is the seeds and propensities towards anger that reside in all sentient beings that are being eliminated. And, of course the seeds and the propensities towards anger exist [even] in the higher realms and they must also be eliminated. **[88a]** This, I think, is a good response. According to [Vasubandhu’s] *Treasury of Knowledge* it appears that even though anger may not co-exist with attachment within a single mental event, there is however the case of intensifying anger because of attachment that could [in fact] lead to conflict and dispute. So, it is difficult to say one way or another definitely [on the issue of whether or not anger can co-exist manifestly with attachment within a single cognitive experience].

The manner in which how the sentient beings attached to tactile sensations are purified is through demonstrating the impure nature of the [bodily] substances and also showing the faults of the five objects of sensual pleasure. This procedure is the same as before [as in the case of purifying anger]. ‘Delighting the Buddhas through offerings of tactile sensations’ should be understood in the same manner as the secret offering. The meaning of the Bodhisattvas purifying the veins and tendons is that the *prana* winds of these bodily elements are absorbed. For eye illnesses, visualise THLIM that is by nature your eye organs, from which arises Khitigarbha, and recite the *mantra*. The visualisation of the light rays being emanated and withdrawn back help purify eye illness and its conditions. The four consorts such as Locana pertain to the pacification of afflictions from illnesses and malevolent harms. The ten wrathful deities help overcome malevolent forces such as Isvara and so on.

As for activities appropriate to individual wrathful deities it is said that Acala is appropriate for illnesses related to fire element, Niladanda for illnesses related to wind element, and Ushnishacakravartin for spells from above, and Sumbaraja for harms derived from earth and water elements. These activities are found in chapters thirteen and fourteen of the four interwoven commentaries and also in the wheel charts drawn from the instructions of individual Maha Siddhas. The teacher said that when you receive oral instructions there are many essential points that become elucidated. He also told the story of an old man who chased away a thief! At one of the teachings of the *guide*, at this point [in the *sadhana*], the teacher having recited confessions three times read from the previous Künkhyen’s ‘cycle of texts’ and gave some explanations as well. [88b] He also observed that there are some parts missing in the old edition of the text, which has been included in the new print.

As the celestial mansion does not have its distinct *mantra* its blessing is done with the recitation of the three syllables [i.e. OM AH HUM]. Therefore, when there is no specific *mantra* mentioned, one could use this as a substitute. This, in fact, is the intention of the *tantras*. When the six Buddha families are subsumed into the three Vajras, Ratnasambhava is subsumed into [*vajra*] body, Amoghasiddhi into [*vajra*] speech, and the sixth family into Akshobhya. As there are no deities that are not encompassed within the three Vajras, there are no seed syllables and *mantras*

that are not encompassed within the three letters. So one could recite just these three letters for all deities. For instance, it has been the view of the past masters that one can recite OM AH HUM for the ‘approximation’ of deities of many cycles such as ‘Mitra,’ ‘Jewel Rosary,’ ‘Ratnasambhava’ and so on.

Meditation on the *mandala* purifies the stains of the imperfect environment and prepares for the attainment of Buddha’s perfect realm. Thus it has great significance. According to Arik Geshe the enlightened being who has actualised the perfect union can manifest deities of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*’ and lead sentient beings to the state of full enlightenment. At that point [one could say that] all sentient beings become Buddhas. Such a being can be recognised as fully enlightened also from the point of view of the Sutra system. For while remaining seated on one cushion, in so far as the sentient beings who share *karmic* connections to be his potential beneficiaries are concerned he has undergone the period of three innumerable aeons. This is because what may appear as an instance to the enlightened being may seem an aeon for someone else. This is what is meant by the expression ‘transforming an instance into an aeon by one’s power.’ Although the activities of the supreme victorious *mandala* in the context of generation stage practice takes place only at the level of imagination, the fully enlightened one who has actualised perfect union may actually lead beings to the Buddhahood. It may seem difficult to understand why some beings are led to the Buddhahood while others are not. [89a] This may, however, have to do with *karmic* affinities. The teacher said that so long as one conceives of sentient beings being led to Buddhahood within an instance it makes greater sense to understand this in terms of the perception of a prolonged period of time at the level of ordinary experience. This, then, is referred to in two verses of the ‘aspirational prayer’ beginning with the following line:

In the blazing caused by inserting *vajra* in the spatial sphere...

Thus [by using the ‘aspirational prayer’ as a template] you should undertake meditations reviewing the following key elements: (a) Evolution of both residential and the

resident *mandalas* from the melting of *bodhicitta* drops caused by the conjoining of the ‘space’ and ‘secret organ’ of the principal deity and his consort, which ignite the inner heat; (b) that the *mandala* emanated from this union purifies the environment, while the thirty two deities purify the sentient beings living within that environment; and (c) through this way that the pure residential and resident *mandalas* emerge, which thereby perfect the meditative absorption of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*.’ If you could review in this manner on the basis of the lines from the ‘aspirational prayer’ with reference to the *sadhana* text, you will leave imprints for the realisation of the path of ‘two stages’ and the infinite enlightened activities of the Buddha.

Although there is no certainty that *bodhicitta* drops will actually flow within central channel on the level of generation stage, visualising that it does will prepare the conditions for its eventual experience. As for textual sources, the visualisation of the *bodhicitta* drops that descend into the consort’s womb, where they transform into the three syllables is stated in the following from the *Tantra in Response to Four Goddesses*.

The division into two parts is stated by the ninth itself. ...

The generation of the principal deity is stated in [Nagarjuna’s] *Summary of the Method of Attainment* in the following:

Originating from the letters of one’s own *mantras*...

Identification with the deities within the consort’s womb is stated in the following from the *Root Tantra*:

One then assumes the form of the woman...

Similarly, in the *Clear Lamp* one reads

Vajradhara, the Bhagvan, transforms into Mamaki and...

In view of these textual sources one can appreciate that the Tantric monk Samten Senge’s remark that he meditates on the two stages [89b] on the basis of the *Root Tantra* has profound significance.

#### **2.4.2.3 The meditative absorption on ‘supreme activities.’**

This has two sections

- (i) actual session, and
- (ii) the *yoga* of in-between sessions.

#### **2.4.2.3.1 The actual sessions.**

This consists of the following:

- 1 The subtle *yoga*;
- 2 *Mantra* recitation;
- 3 Songs of evocation;
- 4 Offerings, praises, and tasting of nectar; and
- 5 Meditation on dissolution.

##### **2.4.2.3.1.1 The subtle *yoga*.**

The enlightened activities of the Buddha's mind share parallels to perfect inner meditative absorption. Although it is not found in the *sadhana* text, in the "aspirational prayer" we read

At [two] ends of the channel are life-supporting and downward voiding winds...

...

such is the subtle *yoga* immersed in meditative states.

The path for the life-supporting *prana* wind is the nasal tip, while for the downward voiding *prana* wind it is the tip of the sexual organ. As for the nasal tip, it is identified in the *Guhyasamaja* texts as the point where the two nostrils join and is located at one's mid-brows. In contrast, in the *Yamantaka* texts this is identified as the tip of the nose as it is known conventionally. Either view could be accepted.

Right from start it is vital to cultivate the strong intention for the meditation. With clear awareness of the objects of purification, the purifying paths, and the purified results, you should engage in the meditation with clear visualisation as described in the *sadhana* text, and cultivate firm identification with the deities. In terms of procedure, you should

not proceed on to the next stage of visualisation until and unless you have a clear visualisation of the earlier part. And when you do go on to the next stage it is vital that you retain your visualisation of the earlier part so that you can build on it. At the end of every stage of a clear visualisation cultivate identification with it. Through this way you should combine ‘clear appearance’ with ‘firm identification’.

A practitioner at the beginner’s stage can have the great benefit of overcoming ‘lethargy’ and ‘mental excitement’ if one meditates on the *yoga* of visualising subtle drops at the upper and lower tips at this point [in the *sadhana* practice]. If there is a stronger presence of lethargy, visualise the following: From the *nada* [the squiggle on the sun disc] of HUM a small blue five-spoked *vajra* the size of a mustard seed (if this is hard visualise the size of a barley grain) emerges. It travels through your throat upwards and exits from your right nostril and positions itself at the tip of your nose standing on a sun disc about the size of a split pea. [90a] Place your concentration with firm mindfulness and introspection on this point. If, on the other hand, there is a stronger presence of mental excitement, visualise a subtle drop – the size of a mustard seed or a barley grain - resplendent with five colours of light descending from your heart. This remains positioned on a sun disc inside the passage of your sexual organ. Accomplishment of the realisation of the gross level of generation stage does not require gaining mastery over the subtle meditations of ‘emanation’ and ‘withdrawal’. So, once you have overcome lethargy and excitement you should return to your main meditation.

At the initial stage, even if you can only visualise a mound-like form in space of the deity so long as there is clarity of perception and vibrancy, there is a potential for rapid improvement. You can then visualise the shapes of head and arms emerging from this form up to a point where you are comfortable with the complexity of the visualisation. Meditate simply upon this. When this appears clearly you can move on to the next stage by adding on to the image you already have up until you have added the visualisation of the light circle around the celestial mansion. Once the entire *mandala* is complete you should train in the cultivation of the visualisation in various ways, by proceeding outwards from the centre, from outside to the centre, from east to south, west and north and so on. Once ‘lethargy’ and ‘excitement’ are eliminated [other obstacles like] mental scattering and sleepiness are



overcome as a by-product. So concentrate on overcoming lethargy and excitement in accordance with the detailed instructions found in [Assign's] *Collection of Grounds* and in the *Lamrim* texts.

You should strive to direct your thoughts only to the *yoga* wherein exists the union of appearance and emptiness such that they are mutually dependent like that between a mirror and the reflection of a face in it, or water and the reflection of moon in it. This is the union between inner meditative practices of wisdom and method — i.e. maintaining the awareness of emptiness while having a clear perception of the residence and resident *mandala* — on the one hand, and the external *yogas* on the other. Thus you should ensure that your perception of the deity form is free of any notions of obstructive, corporeality. It is because of this need for a continuous maintenance of the awareness of wisdom and method aspects and meditating on the deity's body as a great seal, it is stated that one should never be separated from the three commitments: *vajra*, bell and the seal. **[90b]** The point is not that we are being asked to take a pledge never to be separated from the actual hand implements like the *vajra* and bell!

You should strive in every round of visualisation for over a whole lifetime [if necessary]. One cannot rely on occasional, hazy experiences. Even when one accomplishes the coarse and subtle levels of generation stage one has not reached the point referred to in the following:

When one attains the 'peak' no virtuous roots are lost;  
when one attains 'patience' one does not turn to lower migrations.

As the workings of *karma* are subtle and hard to fathom, and as the end of cyclic existence is so deep [i.e. far in sight], it is difficult to have any certainty. Therefore, it has always been the advice of the past masters that one should cultivate the firm grounding in a critical study and contemplation of the 'five great treatises.' And add on to this the understanding and practice of *Tantra* so that you can encompass within your understanding [and practice of] the entire path of both *Sutra* and *Tantra*. In this way, you can develop an understanding and endeavour to leave imprints for the realisation of the entire path, right from the stage of an ordinary sentient being to the final attainment of Buddhahood. Such an

approach is comprehensive and also powerful in terms of its effectiveness in bringing progress.

As you meditate in the manner described above you will reach a point when the clear appearance of the deities and your firm identification with them arises spontaneously, or at will. Yet, still you may not be able to extend this to deities generated from the various points within your body and its elements. Thus there are said to be four phases to this realisation. First is the ‘*yoga* of single-pointed mindfulness’. This refers to the level of attainment whereby you are able to maintain your concentration with the vividness of a visual experience, free of lethargy and excitement, for the duration of one-sixth of a day [i.e. four hours]. [The clarity of your visualisation] should be such that even the black and white parts of the eyes of the body-*mandala* deities appear clearly. When you are able to focus your mind with such visualisation at will you have attained (ii) mastery over the gross level of generation stage.

Then, as you concentrate your efforts on the subtle drops you visualise that from the basic source — i.e. the focus of your meditation — a duplicate emerges. This then multiplies, one into two, two into four and so on, until the entire space is pervaded. [91a] Eventually they are drawn back through your nose and dissolved into the *nada* of HUM [at your heart]. You should repeat the same process for the lower ‘entrance’ by visualising the entire residence and resident *mandalas* inside the subtle drop, especially focusing on the essential drop at their secret places of the principal deity and his consort. This is akin to the proliferation of sons, grandsons, and great grand sons and so on. They are then drawn back. Until and unless the earlier stages have become stable, one should create the subsequent sequences. Also, it is vital that the actual order for the emanation is not confused and that they are all finally withdrawn. When you are able to maintain the subtle *yoga* for the duration of one-sixth of a day, you have attained (iii) ‘stability of the *yoga* of subtle conception.’ When you are able to maintain this for any length of time — a month, a year, and so on — at will, you have attained (iv) ‘mastery over the subtle *yoga*.’

As you train in this way, because of the subtlety of the object of meditation and also because of the dynamic nature of the activity of emanating and withdrawing, it is said that the essential elements of both absorption and analysis are present in this visualisation

meditation. Therefore, it has been stated in [Jamyang Shepa's] *Extensive Presentation of Concentrations and Form Realms* that in the *Tantra* system it is possible to achieve 'tranquil abiding of mind' and 'penetrative insight' simultaneously. I have heard that Longdöl Lama has raised certain queries on this. Also, others like Thutop Gyatso, the Gyüme Tantric College master and his students, too have raised questions about this. However, that this possibility exists can be substantiated from works like [Tsongkhapa's] *Great Exposition of Tantra*.

These debates pertain to such questions as to which of the two levels belongs the realisation of the practitioners of a high faculty who experiences the entry, abiding and the dissolution of *prana* energies inside the central channel. [In my view] If the realisation of emptiness takes place on the basis of an entry, abiding and dissolution of *prana* inside the central channel, this must be accepted as belonging to the path of preparation. As such the realisation that takes place on the level of generation stage does not constitute an integration of tranquil abiding and penetrative insight. On the level of generation stage, although it is not necessary to emanate and withdraw from inside the central channel, when the subtle *yoga* is perfected one trains in the visualisation at the channel centre inside the jewel. So, when one gains perfection of this practice of emanating and withdrawing from the jewel it heralds the realisation of perfection stage. This [meditation] is presented in the following verse from the *Root Tantra*: **[91b]**

The yogin should constantly contemplate at the tip of his ends  
with awareness and with firmness,  
the 'great previous one' the size of a mustard seed,  
and glowing with five coloured-light,  
Once the 'previous one' is stabilised multiply it;  
do not do so until and unless it is stable.

#### **2.4.2.3.1.2 Mantra recitation.**

*Mantra* recitation shares features that parallel the activities of the Buddha's enlightened speech. We read the following in the 'aspirational prayer':

May I thoroughly perfect outer and inner repetitions...

‘Inner’ repetition refers to the ‘*vajra* repetition’ or ‘mental repetition’ on the generation stage, while ‘outer’ repetition refers to the verbal recitation. Of these two, undertaking mental repetition has the advantage of ensuring that there is no distraction of the mind and that the visualisation of the *mantra* circle is clearly maintained. This is done by not uttering the *mantra* verbally and not having any movement of tongue. In stead, the recitation is done mentally. For instance, one mentally reflects upon the repetition of the *mantra* OM AH HUM several times. In the assembly at the Tantric Colleges, they take a pause after reciting “**They engage in the activities of emanation and withdrawal.**” Then, the chant master leads the recitation of the *mantras*. The senior monks of Tantric Colleges say that the significance of this is to indicate that a mental recitation of the *mantras* is also taking place.

For this you should visualise that from the seed syllable at your heart emerges a wind with tone of HUM. As it exits it emanates the *mandala* of the thirty-two deities. They fulfil the welfare of sentient beings. With the tone of OM, the wind together with the assembly of deities return and dissolve into the seed at your heart. Imagine that they abide in the tone of AH. It is best if the *mantras* of the thirty-two deities are also recited mentally.

As for verbal repetition, there are (i) ‘pledge-making’ repetition, (ii) ‘palanquin-like’ repetition, (iii) ‘ferocious’ repetition, (iv) ‘wrathful’ repetition, and (v) ‘heap-like’ repetition. These are clearly explained in the literature. Visualise a ‘wisdom being’ at the heart of the principal deity Akshobhya. [92a] At its heart is a blue five-spoked *vajra* at whose hub, on a sun disc, is a HUM with or without a *mantra* circle around it. You can also visualise the *mantra* circle around the HUM on a sun disc at the heart of Akshobhya occupying the same spatial sphere as the wisdom being. At his heart and at the heart of Akshobhya at the consort’s heart are, surrounding the seed syllables, several VAJRADHRIKA, the ‘near-heart *mantra*’. Around this are OM AH VAJRADHRIKA HUM HUM. Around this is the *mantra* beginning with OM KAM KANI. However, the first part of this *mantra*, namely NAMO RATNA TRAYAYA should be omitted. This part is said to be a feature distinctive to the *mantras* of the lower classes of *Tantra*. This, then, is the root *mantra* of Guhyasamaja.

Similarly, around the syllable KHAM at the heart of the consort of the external *mandala* and the Sparsha Vajra on the bodies of principal deity and his consort are her 'heart' and 'near heart' *mantras*. Around the OM at the heart of the three Vairocanas — one in the east, two on the bodies of the principal deity and his consort — is his *mantra*. Around the seed syllable at the heart of the Rupa Vajra and other four Rupa Vajras — on the two eyes of both the principal deity and his consort — is her *mantra*. At the heart of the external Samandrabadra and those at the joints is his *mantra*. Visualise and recite the wrathful male deities' *mantra* around HUM at the hearts of the female wrathful deities and vice versa. From this example, one can infer how to visualise the *mantras* at the heart of the other deities. One can visualise the *mantra* of Vignantakrit around the principal deity's *mantra*.

First identify with the seed syllable HUM by merging your mind with it inseparably. Imagine as if this HUM reads the *mantra*, which surrounding it; and allow the *mantra* to appear to your mind vividly, while doing so, repeat it several times. Once this becomes stable, visualise that [92b] light rays from the HUM illuminates the *mantra* circle. Light rays radiate from the *mantra* circle and fill the body of the wisdom being; as they radiate outside the rays fill the body of the commitment being. Like lighting a lamp inside a dark cave, visualise that your body becomes a single heap of light with rays coming out of your bodily pores illuminating the celestial mansion including the retinue deities. The rays merge with the light circle around the *mandala* and are drawn back. Through this you train in the visualisation of emitting and withdrawing light rays. At a certain point you shall be able to visualise the multiplication of rays in such a way that every ray splits and multiplies — one into two, two into four and so on — thus pervading all realms in ten directions.

At the tip of the rays imagine multitude of emanations [of yourself]; they pay homage and make offerings — each of the five objects of desire filling the entire space — to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in all ten directions. Each of these emanations undertake such practices as disclosure and purification of negative deeds, rejoicing in the virtuous deeds, making appeal to the Buddhas to turn the wheel of law, and appealing to the Buddhas not to enter into final Nirvana, and dedicating the merits thus created. With respect to each of these [seven] limbs you should undertake a review of the entire path,

from the start of proper reliance on a spiritual teacher to the attainment of the ‘union of no more learning’. You can also imagine the entire *mandala* at the tip of the rays. Alternatively, you can imagine [at the tip of the rays] deities with one face and two arms, or seed syllables, or hand implements of the individual deities, or your spiritual teachers who reveal the path, your spiritual colleagues who assist on the path, or various other conditions for the realisation of the path, and so on. As one reads in [Asanga’s *Ornament of Clear Realisations*]

Enlightened deeds that create peace for all beings, and...

you could imagine the entire ‘twenty-seven enlightened activities.’ These refer to such enlightened deeds as leading to higher births those who are in the lower realms, and by teaching them *dharma* they purify all afflictive thoughts and emotions together with their functions, mode of apprehension and effects [93a] and are thus led on the path and its fruition. Just as Gungthang Rinpoche has related the five PUNYEs to first five perfections and JNANA to the perfection of wisdom thus relating the *mantra* to six perfections, it is highly effective if through contemplating the meaning of *mantras* an emphatic review of the entire path can be undertaken. Therefore, it is far more beneficial to engage in the visualisations of ‘emanating and withdrawing’ rather than simply counting the number of *mantra* recitations. However, simply by engaging in the visualisation of nectar descending alone will not get anywhere. What is required is a deeper understanding. For example, when you recite [from the *sadhana*] “**the afflictive thoughts and emotions of anger is purified**”, if you should have some understanding of the nature of anger, its mode of apprehension, its conditions and effects, and the knowledge of how to apply its antidotes, namely the path. If you lack these, how can you [expect to] purify anger? Thus a successful meditative practice is entirely dependent upon learning and contemplation.

When undertaking *mantra* recitations of the principal deity you should imagine, as in the practice of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*’, that from his heart the *mandala* of the thirty-two deities is emanated, with each of the deities taking the centre stage of the principal deity. Imagine that they engage in the enlightened activities in general and also the activities specific to each of the deities; imagine too that sentient beings are led to the states of the individual deities. It is extremely vital that these emanated deities are drawn back and

dissolved into the *mantra* circles. As for the textual source for the practice of emitting *mantras* when reciting and withdrawing after the conclusion of recitation, one reads in the following in chapter thirteen of the *Root Tantra*:

Having recited, at conclusion  
the emanated *vajras* should be thoroughly withdrawn.

You can combine this process with breathing [in the following manner]: You can either relate each round of breathing, i.e. inhalation and exhalation, with a round of ‘emanation and withdrawal’ of a *mantra*. Alternatively, you can relate it to inhalation as one round and exhalation as one round [separately]. The activity of teaching *dharma* and leading to the paths is a visualisation pertaining to the realisation of ‘supreme powerful attainment’.

For activities aimed at ‘common powerful attainments’ such as the pacification and so on, you visualise your intended objects the beneficiaries, in spotless white clothes and seated on a moon disc in front of you — yourself in the form of Vajra Wrathful. **[93b]** Imagine that countless numbers of goddesses holding vases filled with white nectar emerge from the white *mantra* circles and the seed syllables at the heart of the *mandala* deities. They pour nectars purifying all negativity, afflictive thoughts and emotions and their propensities accumulated since beginningless time together with illnesses, harmful spells, and obstructions caused by them. Their bodies become crystal clear like the nature of light. Light rays in the form of tiny particles of diamond emerge from the bodies of all deities filling your body, both inside and outside, such that even the holes in your bodily pores are blocked by these diamond particles. Similarly, you can extend this visualisation to the practice of ‘enhancement’ by changing the colour into yellow as explained earlier in the context of protection circle meditation. Here too, if you have visualised the protection circle, then visualise the ‘essence *mantra*’ and the individual *mantras* at the heart of the wrathful deities and their consorts of the protection circle, those in the external *mandala*, also those on the bodies of the principal deity and his consort. You should visualise and recite the individual *mantras* as stated here and those found in the *Vajra Tent tantra*.

The visualisation for the overcoming of interferences from ten directions should be undertaken as explained in the section on ‘supreme victorious *mantra*’. One could also undertake visualisation in terms of the ‘five essential points.’ At the end one should recite

the hundred-syllable *mantra*. (This is missing in Cankya's *sadhana* text.) The basis for the meditation on the 'supreme victorious activities' are the 'subtle *yoga*' and *mantra* recitation. Therefore, in the 'aspirational prayer' one reads

Because of this, one engages in 'substances', *mantras*, 'magical circles' and meditation...

The above verse concludes the practices of generation stage by way of a summary. 'Reliance on substances' refers to such practices as the 'fire-burnt' ritual, and also one reads in the *tantra* entitled *In Response to the Four Goddesses*

It's taught that conditions are effected by means of eight substances.

...  
Through this sickness is overcome, and immortality achieved.

If the 'eight great attainments' such as the 'sword' and so on, and recitation of *mantras*, application of 'magical circles', [94a] and meditative concentrations are undertaken in proper accordance with the enlightened intentions of the great Siddhas, these practices will excel all so-called 'instructions' that are mundane. This is because such practices will definitely leave special imprints for the realisation of the [perfect] union. (One reads in the notes of Drakar Kachu Rinpoche that during the fire-burnt ritual of Guhyasamaja one should offer as much portion of the substances to the principal deity, and an appropriate portion to the consort. And as for the retinue deities, one should make the offerings by grouping them into a set of four each, and add the wrathful deities of above and below to the group of the four intermediate directions. This is, in fact, the tradition of Künkhyen Jamyang Shepa. The teacher said that it is good if one apply this same procedure for the fire-burnt ritual of Cakrasamvara as well.)

#### **2.4.2.3.1.3 Songs of evocation.**

Just as the Buddha engages in innumerable enlightened deeds by manifesting multitude of emanations in infinite world systems despite having displayed the act of departing from this realm, here too the principal re-emerges when invoked by the songs of the four goddesses despite having [already] entered into clear light. This meditation is thus



called by its short title “songs of evocation.” Although the fully enlightened Buddhas do not stir from their immutable meditative equipoise on suchness, we find the following example of a display of their skilful means of enlightened activity. In the *Heart Sutra*, for example, one reads that the Buddha entered into the meditative absorption of ‘profound light’ and then emerges out of it. Generally speaking there are two kinds of entry into clear light, one is where the appearance of form dissolves and the other where the form remains. Here the appearance of form is dissolved. This is because as the entire *mandala* enters into clear light, by the force of the principal deity and his consort entering into union the consort dissolves into the principal deity’s body. From there, through a process of dissolution, eventually even the *nada* [squiggle] dissolves thus giving rise to the actualisation of the ‘ultimate clear light’, which is the pristine cognition suffused with spontaneous great bliss. [94b] At this point, as before, you should place your identity on *dharmakaya* and meditate.

Then visualise that goddess Locana, the nature of loving kindness, who sings the verse “**Amongst sentient beings...**” Mamaki, who is the nature of compassion, sings “**O, you the embodiment of Vajra...**” Pandaravasin, who is the nature of immeasurable joy, sings “**O, you are the Vajra speech...**”; and Samaya Tara, who is the nature of immeasurable equanimity, sings “**O, you are the Vajra desire...**” They evoke thus by songs of melody. Due to the force of past aspirations and also because of the bonds of commitment, and also as stated in the following

In the various realms that are imperfect the Enlightened One displays his deeds  
until the end of existence.

you should imagine that you emerge from the *dharmakaya* of clear light into an embodied form and engages in activities dedicated to the fulfilment of the aspirations of beings. Thus you should meditate. The actual meaning of these verses [of the songs] can be found in the commentary on chapter seventeen of the *Root Tantra*.

In the *sadhanas* of Hevajra and Guhyasamaja of the Jnanashri lineage this meditation on ‘evocation through songs of appeal’ is correlated to the basis of purification, and occurs during the meditation of taking intermediate state into the path as *Sambhogakaya*. Here [in the Arya lineage of Guyhasamaja], however, as there is no basis for correlating the practices subsequent to seeking the consort and so on to the basis of

purification, they are correlated to the preparatory factors and the fruition of the perfection stage path.

#### **2.4.2.3.1.4 Offerings, praise, and tasting of nectar.**

The meditation [in this section of *sadhana*] parallels the procedure for receiving the Buddha by singing his praise, making offerings, and his acceptance of offerings through the blessings. First verse “**Akshobhya, the great pristine cognition...**” praises Akshobhya, and the verse subsumes all thirty-two deities into the five Buddha families and praises all deities. The second verse [95a] praises Vairocana, the third Ratnasambhava, and the fourth Amitabha, and the fifth the deities of the Amoghasiddhi family. There are no deities and also qualities of the deities, which can be objects of praise but not included in these families. The five pristine cognitions are distinguished on the basis of aspects, and each of these aspects can in turn be divided again into five further aspects as well. Therefore, if one meditates upon, for example, the Vairocana *mandala* in accordance with the teachings of the *tantras* where Vairocana is perceived as being the ‘mirror-like pristine cognition’ appearing in an embodied form with face and arms, the five Buddha families will be actualised. Viewed thus, one can understand the significance of the meditation in the perfection stage where hundred sublime families are subsumed into five, that into three secret families, and that too is subsumed into ‘one great secret family’.

>From this we know that within each deity is encompassed all these families. At the ordinary level we can only have the perception of discreet individuals with separate mental continuums. This is due to the tremendous power of our grasping at external objects and our perceptions and apprehensions of their substantial existence. In contrast, the enlightened mind of the Buddha exists only at the level of *dharmakaya*. Therefore, immersing in an immutable meditative equipoise on emptiness is said to be the mark of having actualised the true nature of suchness. The indistinguishable sphere of the ultimate subject, pristine cognition suffused with great bliss, and the object truth that is free of stains is devoid of any exertion or deliberated will. Nevertheless in accordance with diverse needs of sentient beings it appears in diverse forms. It is on this basis of diversity of forms that

diverse name and title for deities come into being. Once you appreciate this point you will understand the real meaning of the praise verses.

So, emanate from your heart countless numbers of goddesses of praise. While maintaining your identification both with the objects of praise and the praising goddesses, and also while contemplating on all their qualities, utter the praises like the reverberating sounds of echo. Rejoicing in their enlightened qualities, you should cultivate the aspiration to attain them [95b] and make appeals for their attainment. Imagine that you are blessed to attain them. The meaning of the verses are found in the commentary on chapter seventeen of the *Root Tantra*. As for the merits of the praise, in the *Root Tantra* it reads

Whoever praises the resources of the Vajra,  
by these soothing words of praise  
evoked by all enlightened Buddhas  
they too shall become like the enlightened Buddhas.

There are four types of offering: ‘outer,’ ‘inner,’ ‘secret’ and offering of ‘suchness.’ Offerings with external substances, offerings related to the ‘vase empowerment’, and offerings which are part of the preparations towards generation stage are all ‘outer offerings.’ Offerings involving internal substances, offerings associated with ‘secret empowerment’, offerings that are part of a preparation for the perfection stage of ‘conventional illusory body’, and offerings that are the concordant conditions for ‘illusory body’ are all ‘inner-offering.’ Offerings associated with the ‘wisdom-knowledge empowerment’, offerings that are part of a preparation for the perfection stage of ultimate clear light, and offerings that are its concordant conditions are ‘secret offering.’ The offering of ‘suchness’ refers to offerings associated with the fourth empowerment, an offering that is part of a preparation for ‘union’ and those that constitute conducive conditions [of union].

Emanate from your heart offering goddesses, countless like ‘oceans of cloud,’ many of them standing on the red frieze around the celestial mansion. Imagine also the deities who are the objects of offerings are countless, on every pore of their body are also countless deities, equal to which are offering goddesses. Imagine that offerings of daily enjoyment and five sensory objects are made to them giving birth to special experience of perfect bliss and joy. Cultivate the perception of seeing the ‘three spheres’ of offering [i.e. object, agent and the act] as manifestations of bliss and emptiness. As you say OM, imagine that you

emanate countless offering goddesses carrying ‘water for washing’; as you recite SARVA etc. they offer this; and as you say HUM the goddesses are withdrawn. This is similar to the meaning of the following verse from the *Root Tantra*:

Having uttered thus, at conclusion  
The emanated *vajras* must be withdrawn.

[96a] In the *mudra* [hand gesture] of offerings, the eight fingers [excepting the two thumbs] symbolise the eight spokes of the heart channel centre. The significance of emanating the offering goddesses from heart, and also ensuring that all offering *mudras* are performed at the level of heart is to indicate that all phenomena — both unenlightened and enlightened — are manifestations of the mind. They also indicate the absorption all *prana* winds into heart thus prepare you for the dawning of ‘metaphoric’ and ‘actual’ clear lights. And when the gesture of ‘circling of lotus’ is performed it is done slowly when it points outwards and quicker when pointing inwards. This is to prepare for the auspicious event of the *prana* energies entering into the heart swiftly. The same significance applies also the visualisation of emitting light rays outward and later drawing them back.

It is possible that although the offering may be of ‘outer’ but owing to the manner in which it is offered the offering can possess the essential points of inner sensory objects. As regards inner-offering, Khedrup Rinpoche states that [one should imagine] one’s thumb as Mt Meru arising from letter SUM, and the ring finger as an ocean arising from KSHUM. He has suggested that this is the intention of the *tantra* of “Four Seats”. In contrast, Panchen Sönam Drakpa, in his guide to the generation stage, suggests the current established custom of generating the thumb from KSHUM into the ocean abiding upon the earth base. He cites the explanation of [Khedrup’s] *Ocean of Higher Attainments* only as a further note. Therefore, Drakar Kachu Rinpoche sprinkles the inner offering upward with his thumb. The Tantric monk Samten states that, although the text of the *sadhana* remains the same, the tradition of the Tantric college too is to sprinkle the inner-offering upwards with the fingers facing up. In any case, as the following verse from the *Root Tantra of Cakrasamvara* states

With the ‘bulbous’ and the ‘one before last’ touching at their tips.

the ‘bulbous’ refers to thumb, while ‘last’ is the small finger and the ‘one before last’ is the ring finger. So with thumb and ring finger touching stir [the inner offering] three times. When you actually offer it, [96b] you can do so by slightly opening up between the two fingers. This is what Gungthang Rinpoche has stated. Other lamas too follow the same [custom]. Similar reading can also be applied to the verse that begins with

Originating from the ‘subtle’ and the ‘bulbous.’

“**Nectars are emitted from an ocean abiding upon an earth base**” alludes to the legend of how, in some remote past, the gods stirred the ocean of milk by using Mt Meru as a pole and the Naga [king] Norgye in the shape of a serpent as the rope. From this a vase filled with nectar emerged, which they drank thus giving them freedom from sickness, ageing and so on. In any case, as nectar emerged from the stirring of ocean, here too nectar emerges from the stirring of *vajra* and lotus [as symbolised by] the thumb and ring finger. As the mixture - the nectar created from the purification, transformation, and blazing of the ‘five meats’ and ‘five nectars’ - is offered with your thumb and ring finger, you should visualise that shafts of light emitting from the tongue [of the object to whom the offering is being made] touch the point where two fingers touch. Imagine that the offering is consumed through these rays of light. The teacher mentioned this visualisation in another context of a teaching on *Guyhasamaja*. There are also instructions that suggest that the offerings are made by emanating *Rasa Vajras* from your heart.

[To make the inner offering,] you should visualise, above the eastern part of the circular beam inside the *mandala*, your Guru *Vajradhara* seated on a jewel throne raised by eight lions. He is ‘kind in three ways’ especially with regard to this particular path [of *Guhyasamaja*], that is say that initiated you, gave expositions of the *tantras*, and who imparted pith instructions on the meditative practice. On his right are the lineage masters of the initiation starting with *Bodhisattva Lodrö Rinchen*. On his left are the lineage masters of the ‘exposition’ such as *Vajrapani* and so on. Imagine that these masters are seated on the beam in circles. To them you offer inner-offering [by sprinkling it] at the level of your eyebrows. The teacher also gave explanation on how in *Guyhasamaja* the inner-offering is made to the deities of the ‘self-generation’ by reciting the individual *mantras* of the deities. [97a] It is stated in the *Generation Stage* texts that you offer it to the meditational deities of

yourself, your root Guru and indirect Gurus by touching your heart, throat and crown with inner-offering.

Although there is no explicit instruction, [it is said that] there exists in every single atom of Lama's body perfect realms of meditational deities of all four classes of *Tantra*. Offer the nectar to these [deities] from the level of your heart. While directing at the *dharma* protectors on the lotus ring [around the *mandala*] make an offering from at the level of navel. Also, draw forth all beings in the form of Vajradharas outside the *mandala* and make offering to them. It is said that if one imagines the beings residing in their own natural realms the visualisation may be more convenient. Although the meditational deities of the lower classes of *Tantra* appear as such they suit the diverse needs of beings. In reality, however, they are similar to the deities of *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra*. So one can, while abiding in the *yoga* of *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra*, make offerings such as inner-offering to them. In contrast, it is said, one cannot make inner-offerings to deities of *Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra* when abiding in the *yoga* of a lower *Tantra*. As you say AMRITA you taste the nectar. Imagine that the deities residing on your body are satiated. The significance of making offerings [equally] to objects of both superior and inferior states of existence is to assist in the cultivation of the perception of everything — both environment and beings within — as pure and perfect.

The two remaining offerings [i.e. secret and suchness] are as follows. Having consecrated the 'space' and 'secret place' [of the principal deity and his consort], you proceed with the section in the *sadhana* [that begins with the sentence] "**All deities of the mandala too ...become satiated...**" However the distinction between the two offerings is not clearly drawn there. Here [in the *sadhana*] the passage that reads "**I turn into Akshobhya**" should be related to the passage "**All deities of the mandala ...**" And since the principal deity is [in the form of] Emanation Vajradhara, one should read the above as "I turn into Vajradhara." Since there are no retinue deities, [97b] one should read the second passage as "**all deities of the body mandala...**" It is widely understood that entering into a meditative equipoise on emptiness as a result of experiencing secret offering *is* the 'offering of suchness.' But if one reads carefully the text of Gungthang Jampelyang's *sadhana* it appears that both offerings [secret and suchness] has to be defined only in terms of the

indivisibility of bliss and emptiness. So, one should understand that the offering of the pristine cognition that is the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness *is* the secret offering. In contrast, the indivisibility of two truths, namely the indivisible union of pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness on the one hand and the emergence all deities into the embodiment of ‘union’ on the other is the offering of ‘suchness.’ This insight comes from Tsongkhapa alone; no Tibetan masters before him arrived at this. As you have to offer your own indivisible two truths, you must at least have an understanding of the indivisibility of two truths and offer this through your imagination. Although this is an incredible advice it is still difficult to fully comprehend.

The indivisibility of two truths is the union of ‘pure illusory body’ and ‘ultimate clear light.’ So one could offer it either by imagining its attainment, or one could cultivate identification with the unification of the subtle *prana* energy that is the medium of pristine cognition that is the union of bliss and emptiness and which has arisen as the illusory body and ultimate clear light. As in the offering rites of ‘front generation’, one could visualise Buddhas created from the subtle atoms of *bodhicitta* drops produced from the sexual union of the deity and his consort. Amongst them, the male deities create consorts and vice versa. Thus the male and female deities arise into an assembly of deities pervading all space. As it reads [in the *sadhana* text]

Infinite like ‘oceans of clouds’, infinite in their diversity...

all the Buddhas pervading to the reach of space have all actualised the great bliss of Union, which is the perfect union of exalted body, speech and mind. [98a] Therefore I think it would be highly beneficial if one meditates as suggested in the following passage from the *Root Tantra*:

Then, the fluid of Vajra pledge that is the body, speech and mind of all  
Tathagatas thoroughly permeates all spheres of space. They abide thus [in unity]  
like a vase replete with *vajra* water.

#### **2.4.2.3.1.5 Meditation on dissolution.**

By light rays emanating from my heart all retinue deities apart from the consort are drawn forth and placed upon my body as in the meditation on the ‘specially imagined

class.’ In the contexts of front generation, self-empowerment and initiation ceremony body *mandala* is not dissolved. Here, however, the retinue deities are merged indivisibly with the body *mandala* [deities]. That the sentence “at heart is Akshobhya” is missing in the ‘self-generation’ rite, while it is present in the ‘front generation’ rite is due to a difference in the generation rites. The celestial mansion is dissolved into the body, the specific parts merging with the bodily parts from where they were initially generated. From the point of the sexual union of the principal deity and his consort light rays of *bodhicitta* emit empowering all beings. It purifies their negativity and becomes the letter HUM. This in turn transforms into Vajradhara who is then drawn forth by light thus dissolving into you. Place your identity upon this pure *yoga* reflecting that “I am this embodiment of the *yoga* of perfect purity of all phenomena.” One can repeatedly undertake the visualisation of purifying and transforming the environment by means of the union of the principal deity and his consort during the periods in between sessions. The significance of the sole presence of the single pair of male-female union following the total dissolution of the environment and beings within and reinforcing this with the seal of bliss and emptiness is that nothing remains other than the circle of pure deities. One may leave the body *mandala* deities.

Just as in the *Guru Puja* rite, it is pristine cognition suffused with great bliss that manifests in infinite forms of environments and the beings within. So, as in the front generation visualisation, there could be both pure environment and pure beings. [98b] Just as the story of Norge, and also as the line “Bodily movements and expressions from speech, “ and so on suggest, you should endeavour to train in such a way that your three doors do not fall sway to ordinary patterns. Rather you should endeavour to cultivate the perception of everything as manifestations of pure vision.

#### **2.4.2.3.2 The *yoga* of in-between sessions.**

This has several parts:

- a) Torma offering;
- b) The *yoga* of eating;
- c) The *yoga* of sleeping;



- d) The *yoga* of waking;
- e) The *yoga* of washing;
- f) The *yoga* of enhancing one's body.

a) *Torma offering.*

If you wish to make *tormas* you should do so by making them with their shape and colour appropriate to the relevant category of activities. Alternatively, as the Indian Maha Siddhas have suggested, you could simply use clean flour and water. As *torma* on its own can be a little unsatisfying there is a point in pouring milk in the container and ornamenting it with butter at the front. So it appears better if one sprinkles clean water on those 'year-long' *tormas*, which can otherwise get dry. As in the case of inner-offering, you should bless the *torma* as a substance for eating. The *torma* is not offered to the 'self-generation' deity. If there is a 'front generation' deity, you should make the offering to that. If not, then as in the ritual of *torma* offering during the exorcistic protection ceremony, you should visualise the ten wrathful deities and the fifteen directional guardians outside the *mandala*. This is the intention of the *Root Tantra*, and to them too *torma* offering is made.

To do this it is not adequate simply to meditate on the 'common' protection circle. Though it is not explicit in the text of the *sadhana* the visualisation is similar to the one you have done [of the protectors] inside the *mandala*. If done briefly it is possible to leave aside the ten wrathful deities and simply view the principal deity as the embodiment of all and offer the *torma* to him. When the 'subjugating *torma* rite' is done for the purpose of pacifying interferences and creating favourable conditions for appropriate activities, if time is lacking, it can be performed comprehensively only on the basis of 'instantaneous self-generation.' According to the custom of Lower Tantric College, the earlier prayer sessions do not have 'dissolution' and the rite of 'driving in the stakes.' In contrast, during the latter prayer terms although offerings to the wrathful deities and driving in the stakes are present, the rite for dissolution is omitted. [99a] So the guests for the *torma* offering together with the *mandala* should be dissolved into oneself. You should imagine that the ten wrathful deities and the fifteen directional guardians are located above, below, four cardinal and intermediate directions of the celestial mansion and they protect you from interferences and obstacles. In one's practice, if you have visualised the mansion you could visualise them in

this way. If, on the other hand, you have not visualised the mansion you could visualise them above, below and in the cardinal and intermediate directions around yourself. You should thus know how to adapt the text of the *sadhana*.

b) *The yoga of eating.*

The elaborate version of the *yoga of eating* as presented in the *tantra of In Response to the Four Goddesses* is as follows. Consecrate your food in the manner of consecrating the inner-offering. Visualise yourself in whatever Buddha family appropriate and your throat red as a burning copper pipe. Inside this, from HRIH, emerges a red eight-petalled lotus at whose hub is a blue five-spoked *vajra* with a straw-like light hole through it. Visualise at its tip a white OM from which emits light rays that purifies your throat. The purification of your heart is done by visualising a blue HUM burning with three points of flame and standing on a sun disc at your heart. Imagine the HUM at your heart either as the embodiment of all Gurus and meditational deities; or, alternatively, visualise inside the *bindu* [drop atop the HUM] your Guru together with the deities of all four classes. You could also visualise all your Gurus and meditational deities.

Visualise at your secret place, emerging from YAM wind; at navel from RAM fire; at heart from LAM earth; at throat from BAM water *mandala*. Each of the elements is adorned with its marking letters. As the light rays from OM draw forth food and makes offering to the deities at your heart the wind [*mandala*] at your secret place is stirred and causes the fire at navel to ignite. This heats up the earth at your heart causing the water at your throat to boil, which refines the food at the throat. Imagine that this refined essence of the food satiates the deities. A small portion of the food melts, [99b] which is then held together briefly with ‘vase breath’ [at your navel]. This latter meditation is a practice that is constantly recommended by literacy master Samten Senge who describes the visualisation in accordance with the text of previous Künkhyen’s *Generation Stage*. He would attribute to this practice the fact that despite his old age of seventy-seven he has hardly any grey hair and wrinkles.

Briefly the practice [of the *yoga of eating*] can be undertaken simply as follows. Imagine your mouth to be the hearth [the site for fire-burnt offering], your hands as ladles,

and food and drinks as offering substances for fire-burnt rites. Imagine the food as nectars and offer it to yourself as a deity, or visualise deities within either the HUM at your heart or inside the *bindu* [atop the HUM] and offer food to them. The positive effects of such practices are mentioned in the *tantra* of the *Four Seats*. In contrast, if you are devoid of deity *yoga* and are attached to food, every mouthful of food you eat and every sip of drink you take leads to infraction of your Bodhisattva vows. Also you accrue partial infractions of the thirteenth secondary precept [called the category of ‘bulbous’] of the *Tantric* vows. Many other disadvantages are mentioned also in such *tantras* as *Samvarodaya*. Since food and drink are something that we depend upon regularly this practice is extremely important.

c) *The yoga of sleeping.*

When you go to bed, you should — yourself as a deity — visualise deities on your body and dissolve them through the procedure as explained in the meditation on the ‘specially imagined class.’ You should then place your mind in the meditation on emptiness. This is [the practice of] ‘clarification through suchness’ and in this way perpetually maintain the *yoga* of the *dharmakaya* of sleep.

d) *The yoga of waking.*

At dawn, it is best if you can wake up instantaneously as a full-fledged deity through the dream *yoga* of *sambhogakaya* evoked by songs of appeal from the four goddesses. If not, at least you should wake up with the identity of yourself as the Vajra Wrathful and his consort. It is mentioned in the charter of Tantric Colleges that [at dawn] the proctor should ring the gong in a slow and gentle pace. This is to indicate that one cannot wake someone from the state of clear light suddenly. It is also for this reason that the proctor prostrates to the gong first. [100a] Similarly, to indicate the waking of fully ordained monastic members who are immersed in *yogic* concentrations from their meditative equipoise, one prostrates before beating the long stick [called *gandi* used for fortnightly confessional ceremonies]. Also [before the prayer assemblies] the initial chanting of verse-praise to Tsongkhapa [in unison by the congregation] is known as the wake-sounds for those ‘engaged in *dharma* activities.’ Some say that the reason for prostrating [when

chanting this verse] is because on the mountain behind Drepung is Drakgyalma [a protectress]. This, clearly is ridiculous.

*e) The yoga of washing.*

When you are washing [in the morning] you should visualise initiating deities in space in the front; imagine that they hold vases filled with water that they pour upon you and thus grant you the complete initiations. You should imagine that all negativity of your body, speech and mind are purified. As it is vital to maintain a constant meditative practice without any interruption between the periods of actual sessions and periods in-between. Thus the *yogas* of in-between sessions ensure that your meditations during the actual sessions are not forgotten hence these practices help enhance your meditative experiences. On the other hand, if you led yourself astray during the in-between sessions, the meditations undertaken during the actual sessions will not get you far. Therefore, those on the beginner's stage the *yogas* of in-between sessions are critical.

*f) The yoga of enhancing one's body.*

This *yoga* of 'enhancing one's body' is useful especially to those *yogis*, who are meditating in the mountains and have very little provisions, and also those who subsist on 'essence pills' diet. Although the practice exists in the context of Cakrasamvara and Yamantaka as well, the explanation of the practice is found in the Guhyasamaja [teachings]. For this, visualise above your crown leaving a space of one wrist [facing upwards with your thumb extended] a white letter VA from which emerges a full moon disc. Below it at the centre is a white OM with its head downwards. From the OM and moon disc descends five colours of nectar, the nature of the five Buddha families filling your body. Imagine that your body, speech and mind all become satiated. This practice can be undertaken both during actual sessions and periods in between sessions. It can also be joined with any other [meditative] practices. **[100b]** Detailed explanations of this [practice] can be found in the *Four Interwoven Commentaries*.

It is the tradition of Pönlop Jhampa [Rinpoche] to give three repetitive explanations during each session [of the *Guide* instruction]. He would do this in particular during the last

session when giving teachings on *Lamrim* or *guide* to the ‘generation’ and ‘completion’ stages. This is perhaps a skilful means on the part of the master as it is rare to receive *guide* in their entirety these days. So those who even make it to the last session will have at least received the transmission of the entire practice.

To follow this custom then (1) first you undertake instantaneous self-generation, (2) then consecrate *vajra* and bell, (3) consecrate inner-offering, (4) make tormas offerings to the directional guardians and assign them with protection work, (5) consecrate the self-generation offering, (6) engage in Vajrasattva meditation and recitation, (7) make offerings to the merit field, (8) visualise the uncommon protection circle of the ten wrathful deities, (9) drive the stakes, (10) visualise the parameter fences and the tent, (11) you wear the protective armour, (if desired, recite the *mantras* of the ten wrathful deities), (12) meditate on the ‘the ground of pristine cognition’, (13) generate the elemental *mandalas* each above the other, and the mansion together with the seats, (14) generate on them [the seats] deities of the ‘specially imagined class’, (15) visualise the activities of the specially imagined deities, (16) place upon your body the deities of the specially imagined class, (17) meditate on taking death into the path as *dharmakaya* by correlating the dissolution of the twenty categories of gross phenomena to the dissolution of the specially imagined deities, (18) meditate on taking the intermediate state into the path as *Sambhogakaya* in the form of generating the primordial Lord through the sequence of ‘five clarifications’, (19) meditate on taking birth into the path as *Nirmanakaya* by generating Emanation Vajradhara from the entry of the primordial Lord into the *mandala* where all Akshobhyas have merged, (20) visualise your body as the *mandala* residence and your elements and so on as the deities within, (21) consecrate both individually and collectively your body, speech and mind, (22) meditate on the generation of the triple being, (23) seal yourself with the lord of the family, (24) recite the hundred-syllable *mantra* as a *yoga* to enhance one’s body, speech and mind, (25) visualise the consort through the three-staged generation procedure and place deities on her body, (26) consecrate [consort’s] ‘space’ and [deity’s] secret place, (27) enhance great attachment [101a] and maintain identification with this, (28) generate the deities of the ‘supreme victorious *mandala*’ at the consort’s heart after mentally projecting *bodhicitta* drops into the consort’s lotus, (29) imagine that they engage in enlightened activities and are withdrawn, (of the four levels the first three belongs to the coarse level of generation stage,

while at the end) (30) one should encompass all into the *yoga* of subtle drop, (31) do mental and verbal *mantra* recitations, (32) sing songs of evocation, (33) sing the praise verses, (34) make offerings of inner, outer, secret and suchness, and (35) and undertake dissolution meditation. (36) During periods of in between sessions, you should engage in the *yogas* of torma offering, eating, sleeping, waking, washing, and enhancing your body. The recapitulation of the teachings can be done [by the teacher] by reading from the full-length *sadhana* text, or by reading [simply] the section on the ‘initial engagement’ [of the *sadhana*.].

The teacher thus gave these explanations with lengths appropriate to the time at his disposal exploring with great skill how best to make these practices lucid to the students. Thus he gave extensive repetitive expositions with varying melody of tones. Here I have however I presented them once again in the fashion of a list to help pull all the key elements together in one sketch.

The great Tsongkhapa writes that

He who understands the path of Guhyasamaja  
is granted fearlessness and confidence in all scriptures.

It is therefore important to cultivate the understanding of all great treaties of Sutra and *Tantra*. It is especially crucial to concentrate on Guhyasamaja *Tantra*. Because of this [Jamyang Shepa’s] *Great Exposition of Philosophical Tenets* writes that

Seeing that the glorious *tantra* of Guhyasamaja opens the door to both *Sutra*  
and *Tantra*...

Similarly, in many *tantras* and their commentaries Guhyasamaja has been hailed as unequalled. It has thus many distinctive features and qualities. All the great treatises and instructions of master Tsongkhapa reflect unerringly the enlightened intention of the *tantras* and their commentaries. Once you become aware that even a small part of this *sadhana* text can be directly referred not only to the writings of [Indian] Maha Siddhas, but also to the *Root Tantra* itself and its various *Explanatory Tantras*, [101b] you may develop fervent admiration and deep confidence in the practice. I have therefore provided a specimen of how to relate it [i.e. the *sadhana* text] to the *tantras*. This is just an illustration; the detailed

reference to the *tantras* must be learned from [Tsongkhapa's] *Four Interwoven Commentaries* and the *Great Exposition of the Generation Stage*.

In the *Great Exposition of the Philosophical Tenets*, when refuting Taktsang's views, the author writes that it is vital to have an understanding of the significance of the two words 'secret' (*guhya*) and 'assimilation' (*samaja*) that constitute the name Guhyasamaja. This being so, he asserts, however, it appears that there is no hope for Taktsang to possess such an appreciation. The point [Jamyang Shepa is making] is that the [Guhyasamaja] *tantra* lends to a 'four-fold modes' reading. In brief, [he is suggesting] that through this four modes of exposition one should understand thoroughly the meaning of the *tantras* and thus acquire a confident understanding of both the words and their meaning of *sutras* and *tantras*. It is therefore vital to ensure that one's understanding does not slide into mere intellectual knowledge of words; rather one should be able, through learning, contemplation and meditative practice, to open the door to the entire spectrum of *sutras* and *tantras*. You should immerse yourself in the practical application [of these insights] so that all your actions become purposeful. In this way [you should] endeavour to cultivate both in yourself and others the essence of Buddha's stainless teachings.

## DEDICATORY VERSES

Thus I say:

*This zenith of thirty-three thousand tantras  
Is the distilled essence of eighty-four thousand sets of teachings.  
Merely upholding its name is repeatedly likened  
to 'Enlightened Vajra' by Vajradhara, who acclaim its praise.*

*This path unsurpassed is rare to meet even in aeons,  
'Adamantine Vehicle' that's rarer than Buddha himself,  
has been found [today] due only to a fortunate vessel's receptivity;  
Like milk from a lioness; it's not because of other conditions.*

*As our intelligence and mental faculties are feeble,  
It's hard to be worthy of such [precious] ways of dharma;  
In fact, finding even the name of the tantra would be hard;  
Thanks to my sublime father, the great treasury of compassion, I've found it!*

*Due to white light rays directed at my heart,*

*Which are enlightened deeds of the three secrets inconceivable, [102a]*

*I've found the good fortune to acquaint with my ears  
sounds of Sutra and Tantra teachings, vast and profound.*

*May from 'clouds of virtue' of all three times gathered through this endeavour  
pervading hundred perfect and imperfect realms reaching the limits of space  
project multitude of emanations resembling hundred thousand rain showers;  
may this nourish the joyous grove of Buddha's teaching and sentient beings.*

*In order that I uphold with great courage and dedication  
the wondrous task of the infinite Enlightened Buddhas,  
and liberate sentient beings as long as space remains,  
may I become just like Bodhisattva Manjugosha.*

*May I, throughout my lives, uphold at my crown  
my Gurus and meditational deities;  
may I never be separated from this wondrous path;  
may I gain mastery in upholding dharma, both scripture and its realisation,  
and accomplish the aspirations and deeds of all Buddhas and their children.*

## COLOPHON

This memorandum on the path of Guhyasamaja entitled *Sacred Words of Lord Akshobhya* has been composed from notes taken at *guide* instructions on the two stages given by my glorious and most sublime Guru Jetsün Kōnchok Gyaltzen, [mere] mention of whose bare name is difficult. He is the master of oceans of oral teachings, and his compassion and kindness are unexcelled and transcend those of all the Buddhas of three times. Although I have been approached by many with requests to produce a complete edited version of the various notes I have taken, I dared not comply with it. For I thought how can I, who do not even have accomplished a firm grounding in the foundational paths of the common teachings, write this kind of instructions containing the oral teachings. Recently I have been, however, granted permission to write this by the master [himself] and his senior disciples. Due to this blessing from the sacred words indistinguishable to that of Akshobhya, I have compiled this [text] from the various notes I have taken from earlier and later instructions from my teacher. Should there be any obscuration owing to my own inferior faculties, and if I have committed the error of revealing too explicitly any aspects of oral traditions, I acknowledge my mistakes from my heart at the presence of my Guru, meditational deities, and the protectors. From whatever merits that I may have created from this endeavour, may I be cared for by the Gurus and meditational deities in all lives. May I become a receptive vessel to benefit from this wonderful path that is



unerring and complete. And, may I be able to uphold the *dharma* in its entirety in full accordance with the enlightened intentions of all victorious Buddhas, in the infinite realms in all ten directions.

MANGALAM