Pure Appearance

Development & Completion Stages in Vajrayana Practice

His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche
PURE APPEARANCE

DEVELOPMENT & COMPLETION STAGES
IN VAJRAYĀNA PRACTICE

HIS HOLINESS DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE

TRANSLATED FROM THE TIBETAN BY
ANI JINBA PALMO

VAJRVAIROCHANA TRANSLATION COMMITTEE
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This book is a collection of translated and edited transcripts of a seminar given by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche to vajrayāna practitioners at Karma Dzong, Boulder, Colorado, in July 1987. As restricted teaching, please be aware that this volume may be used only by: (1) Vajradhatu students who have been formally accepted into vajrayāna practice or (2) other vajrayāna practitioners, upon authorization from the Vajradhatu Practice and Study Committee. No general publication is made or intended, nor may this material be reproduced in any form.

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OM SVASTI
The stainless ancient tradition of Lord Padmākara,
Who vividly saw the unchanging ultimate truth,
the supreme yāna of ati—
In order to raise the victory banner of these teachings
until the end of the world,
May the full moon of your rebirth quickly dawn.
Contents

Acknowledgments ix

1 The Four Abhiṣhekas and the Three Samādhis 1


2 The First Three Pardos 33

Completion stage: absolute truth of phenomena, six vajra yogas, six pardos. PARDO OF THIS LIFE: Use life as path by practicing dharma. Developing confidence. Seeing illusory perceptions as impermanent. Purifying impure perceptions. PARDO OF DYING: Dealing with terminal disease. Maintaining the natural state of mind inseparable from one’s teacher. Teacher inseparable from yidam. Experience of death: recognizing white and red essences, recognizing deluded appearance as display of one’s mind, remembering one’s yidam. PARDO OF DHARMATA: recognizing the three appearances as
display of one's mind. Confidence in the view. Recognizing the ground.

3 The Second Three Pardos 49

THE PARDO OF BECOMING: How to deal with projections and deluded perceptions as if they were a dream. THE PARDO OF DREAM: Using dream as the path. THE PARDO OF MEDITATION: Obstacles to samādhi—drowsiness and wildness. Practicing shamatha, developing stillness; mindfulness and awareness. Three experiences of peaceful samādhi: movement, achievement, nonmovement. Pure phenomena of kāya and jñāna, pure appearance.

4 Development Stage and Vajrasattva Practice 69


5 The Four Binding Forces 97

Acknowledgments

His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche journeyed three times to North America in order to teach the buddhadharma. His last journey was for the purpose of officiating at the cremation of his student, Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, which took place at Karme-Chöling in Barnet, Vermont, on May 26, 1987. At that time, His Holiness kindly accepted our invitation to remain in North America to teach extensively throughout our sangha.

During these visits, His Holiness gave teachings to the public and to all members of our sangha. While this was a very sad and poignant time for us, His Holiness provided a truly endless stream of precious amṛta, the deathless nectar of the buddhadharma, through his twice-daily teachings on a variety of topics. This volume is a record of his vajrayāna talks given to the Karma Dzong community in Boulder, Colorado, June 17-20, 1987.

These teachings were orally translated by the Venerable Tülku Pema Wangyal. His Holiness spoke in a seamless stream of teachings for a minimum of 20-30 minutes before he would allow time for translation. While Tülku Rinpoche was remarkable in his steady, lucid, and mesmerizing recall of His Holiness’s words, he strongly advised us to have the entire teaching retranslated before this could be published in English. Taking his counsel to heart, we were fortunate to find Ani Jinba Palmo, a long-time student of His Holiness, willing to take on this project.
Ani Jinba completed her draft last summer while in her native land of Holland. Members of the Vajravairochana Translation Committee did all the editorial work, and Ani Jinba was closely consulted in further refining her translation for publication. Sherab Chödzin and Scott Wellenbach were the main editors, assisted by Larry Mermelstein, who also handled the composition.

The dedication at the beginning of this book is actually a rebirth supplication for His Holiness, which was originally composed as a longevity supplication for him by one of his root gurus, Shechen Gyaltsap Rinpoche, Gyurme Pema Namgyal. Shortly after His Holiness’s parinirvāṇa, this was changed to a supplication for his quick return.

We are deeply indebted to Ani Jinba for her care with and understanding of both His Holiness’s difficult dialect and the meaning of his teachings. We would also like to thank Hazel Bercholz for her design and advice with production.

We are most appreciative of the permission of Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche to make these teachings available to vajrayāna practitioners, for whom they were meant. A portion of the proceeds from this publication will go toward fulfilling His Holiness’s buddha activity, especially at his monastery of Shechen Tennyi Dargye Ling in Boudhnath, Kathmandu, Nepal.
The Four Abhiṣhekas
and the Three Samādhis

THE FOUR ABHIṢHEKAS

The other day I explained the stages of the ordinary path of the buddhadharma to all the students. Now I shall explain the meaning of the extraordinary secret-mantra vajrayāna.

In essence, the secret-mantra vajrayāna can be understood in terms of ground, path, and fruition. Regarding the ground, the minds of all sentient beings are pervaded by the tathāgatagarbha. In the seed of the mind abides the essence of buddhahood, beyond meeting and parting. Just as oil is present in a mustard seed, and rice and barley have the potential to ripen within their seeds, similarly all beings have the ground potential in them from the very beginning; it does not have to be created again. If someone has gold and buries it under the ground he cannot use it. Similarly, even though we have the ground potential, if it is not realized, just having it will not help us. All the sūtras and tantras taught by the Buddha are methods for realizing this ground potential. Summarizing all the Buddha’s teachings, we can divide them into the vehicle of characteristics, which takes the cause as the path, and the secret-mantra vajrayāna, which takes the fruition as the path.

What is “taking the cause as the path”? All sentient beings have the potential, the tathāgatagarbha, within. Through the right method, this can gradually be ripened. Through the accumulation of conceptual merit and nonconceptual wis-
dom for three immeasurable kalpas with the support of the six pāramītās, one will realize the ultimate result, which is buddhahood. That is the vehicle of characteristics, which takes the cause as the path.

What is the secret mantra, which takes the fruition as the path? The ground, the essence of dharmatā, that intrinsic awareness that has the tathāgatagarbha within it, contains the qualities of the three kāyas from the very beginning. The fruits of bringing the Buddha’s activities to the path and getting used to them are the Buddha’s kāyas and the manifestation of his buddha fields. By bringing this fruition of kāyas and buddha fields to the path, superior individuals can accomplish the tathāgatagarbha, the ultimate state of buddhahood, in one lifetime, and mediocre individuals can do so in three or seven lifetimes. That is how the secret-mantra vajrayāna takes the fruition as the path.

In essence, the secret-mantra vehicle can be divided into three categories: the empowerment, which is the door; the development and completion stages, which bring liberation; and the samaya, which is like a harmonious friend. If one wants to enter a house or a big hotel, one has to enter via the door. Similarly, if one wants to enter the secret-mantra vehicle, first one needs the empowerment. Just going ahead and practicing the vajrayāna and looking at the texts of vajrayāna instructions on the development and completion stages, one does not receive the empowerment. By studying the texts and reflecting on their meaning without the empowerment, it is not possible to attain the result of the ordinary and supreme siddhis. Therefore, in the secret-mantra vehicle, without the support of the empowerment there is no siddhi. One needs the empowerment. Practicing the development and completion stages when the empowerment has ripened one’s mind constitutes practicing the path of the secret mantra.
What is the quality of empowerment? It is called the “ripening empowerment.” What is being ripened? All sentient beings have the potential of the tathāgatagarbha, which is the intrinsic nature of mind. The means of ripening that potential is the ripening empowerment. As long as one has not received that ripening empowerment, it is not possible to attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis, even though one has tathāgatagarbha. For example, if one has sand, no matter how much one pounds that sand, one will never get oil. But if one pounds just one small white mustard seed, one will get oil. Similarly, if one has not received the empowerment, the potential of the tathāgatagarbha cannot manifest.

As the buddha Vajradhara said, “Those who have not received empowerment are not allowed even to see the secret-mantra texts.” If one looks at the texts without having received the empowerment, one cannot attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis. Receiving the empowerment is like receiving a visa: it allows one to listen to, meditate on, and accomplish the secret-mantra teachings. If one receives the empowerment and does not break the samaya, even if one cannot practice the development and completion stages, just through having received the empowerment, karma and obscurations are purified, and the potential for the ordinary and supreme siddhis develops. Having received the empowerment is like being a king’s son: since the son belongs to a royal family, whether he is good or bad, he will always be known as a prince. Similarly, someone who has received empowerment will be known as a son of the buddhas.

Within the empowerment, there is the preparation and the actual abhiṣheka. For the preparation one needs a maṇḍala made of powdered sand or a painted maṇḍala. Just by laying eyes on this maṇḍala, even one’s five heinous crimes would be purified. Those who have received empowerment will be
able to purify all the evil deeds and obscurations they have accumulated until now. If one has received empowerment, does not break the samaya, and regards one’s teacher as the main deity of the maṇḍala, such as Vajradhara or Vajrasattva, through the confidence that one has received that empowerment from him, one will be reborn as a human or a god in one’s next life. As Guru Rinpoche said, “If one receives an empowerment every year, and in a hundred years one receives a hundred empowerments, even if one is reborn as an animal, one will be a very powerful animal.” If one receives one empowerment every year, through these empowerments one’s merit and windhorse will increase and one’s obscurations will be purified. When those who have received empowerments die, even if they are reborn as animals, they will be born as powerful animals, such as lions or elephants. They will never be born as weak and lowly animals. If one receives many empowerments now, even if one does not practice the development and completion stages, if one keeps samaya, at death one will be reborn in a place where the secret-mantra doctrine flourishes. Then again one can receive empowerments, practice the secret mantra, and attain the state of buddhahood within seven lifetimes. Such are the qualities of empowerment.

The transmission of the empowerment requires a qualified master to bestow it and a qualified student to receive it. If the teacher who bestows it is not a qualified master and he gives the empowerment pretending to have the necessary qualities, master and student will both go to hell. What is a qualified master? He must have entered the maṇḍala of the secret-mantra vajrayāna and have confidence in the development and completion stages. If he has students, he must look after them with great compassion, thinking to free them from the lower realms of samsāra and put them on the path
of the secret mantra. If he is such an individual, he is qualified to bestow the empowerment.

If the student is not a qualified vessel, it is like having pure water but pouring it into a dirty container. In this way, the water is spoiled. Similarly, even if a qualified teacher bestows a proper abhiṣheka, if the student who receives the empowerment does not have devotion toward the secret mantra and the teacher and cannot keep the samaya, both the student and the master will go to the lower realms. So the empowerment should only be given by a qualified master to a qualified student.

Within the empowerment there are the four abhiṣhekas, each of which has a preliminary, a main part, and a conclusion. The stages of the four abhiṣhekas should be completed in order. For example, if it is a major empowerment, first the master who bestows the empowerment should be qualified to practice the recitation of the yidam Vajrasattva or whichever yidam of the three roots is being bestowed. He should have attained the samādhi of the development and completion stages. The qualified disciple should supplicate the master to bestow the empowerment. Then the master promises to do so. If such conditions are present, the empowerment can be given. If it is a major empowerment, it contains the preparation and the main part.

What is the preparation? For instance, if one is going to put good food in a container, first that container should be thoroughly cleaned and washed. If the food is put in such a container, it will not spoil. Similarly, the mind of the student should be purified so that he will be ready to receive the empowerment. That is like cleaning the container—it is the preparation.

The preparation has three parts: preparing the deity, preparing the student, and preparing the vase. As for the preparation of the deity, for instance, if one wants to invite
a government minister, first one must send him an invitation for a certain time on a certain day and request him to do certain things. Similarly, one must inform the deity that at such and such a time he should bestow the empowerment to such and such a student in order to benefit that student. Doing so, the master performs the practice and recitation of the deity and asks permission to bestow the empowerment.

Now let us turn to the preparation of the vase. The main article used in the empowerment is the vase. The vase has to be consecrated; otherwise, it is not proper to give the empowerment. Consecrating the vase is called the preparation of the vase.

After the preparation of the vase, the students successively receive four different things. First they are given a toothstick, for purifying obscurations of body. Then they are given the consecrated water for purifying obscurations of speech. Then they are given the five-colored protection cord to purify obscurations of the mind. Finally they are given kusha grass as a token of auspicious connection with the Buddha, who attained enlightenment on a seat of kusha grass. The preparation is conducted the day before the main abhiṣheka, and as a result of the preparation the students have indications in their dreams of whether or not they are ready to receive the empowerment. The master should explain to the students how precious it is to receive the Buddha’s teachings and how extremely fortunate they are to enter the path of the secret mantra. Through his explaining that in the secret-mantra vajrayāna, just by seeing the maṇḍala, the womb of rebirth in the lower realms is shut and one’s karmic obscurations are purified, the students will develop faith and confidence and look forward to receiving such a profound empowerment. These are the preparatory stages of the empowerment through which the students become suitable vessels.
The Four Abhiṣhekas and the Three Samādhis

The stages of the four abhiṣhekas accord with the four classes of tantra of the secret mantra: kriyā, upa, yoga, and anuttara. According to kriyā tantra, which is the first vehicle of the secret mantra, the abhiṣheka is given as follows: One visualizes the deity inside the vase. From the deity’s body descends amṛta, which comes out of the vase. That is the water empowerment. As a sign of the qualities of the five buddhas, the crown empowerment is given. The water empowerment and the crown empowerment are kriyā empowerments.

After that, according to upa tantra, besides the water empowerment and the crown empowerment, there is the vajra empowerment, which is the empowerment of the mind of all the buddhas, the essence of bliss and emptiness inseparable. With the words, “Since you have entered the secret mantrayāna this will be your name,” the students are given the name empowerment of Vairochana. The vajra and name empowerments are upa empowerments.

Then, in yoga tantra there are five empowerments related to the five buddha families. The ordinary five empowerments are the body, speech, mind, quality, and activity aspects of all the buddhas. The buddha of the body category is Vairochana, the buddha of the speech category is Amitābha, the buddha of the mind category is Akṣhobhya, the buddha of the quality category is Ratnasambhava, and the buddha of the activity category is Amoghasiddhi. To symbolize these five buddhas there are five empowerments. In connection with Akṣhobhya, one receives water from the vase, which is called the water empowerment of Akṣhobhya. In connection with Ratnasambhava, one receives the crown, which is called the crown empowerment of Ratnasambhava. In connection with Amitābha, lord of the speech of all the buddhas, one receives the vajra, which is called the vajra empowerment of Amitābha. In connection with Amoghasiddhi, one receives
the bell, which is called the bell empowerment of Amoghasiddhi. In connection with Vairochana, one receives the vajra and bell and the secret-mantra name is bestowed; this is called the name empowerment of Vairochana. Besides these five, one receives the empowerment of secret transmission and the concluding completion empowerment. Those are the empowerments of yoga tantra. The above are called the three outer tantras.

Compared to anuttara tantra, the view, meditation, and action and the development and completion stages of these tantras are very limited and not as profound and vast as in anuttara tantra. The two can be compared to the inside and outside of a house: important people such as ministers and so forth stay inside the house, whereas less important people stay outside. Thus kriyā, upa, and yoga tantras are called outer tantras. The inner, anuttara tantra consists of father, mother, and nondual tantras. The father tantras are the cycles of Yamāntaka and Guhyasamāja, which mainly subdue anger. The mother tantras are the Chakrasamvara and Hevajra tantras. The nondual tantras, which are the unity of the father and mother tantras, are the Kālachakra tantras.

According to the Nyingma tradition of the secret mantra, the ground is mahāyoga, the path is anuyoga, and the fruition is atiyoga. Though the names are slightly different, the meaning is the same. In mahāyoga the main tantra is the Guhyagarbha Tantra [Tib: Gyūtrul Drawa Sangwa Nyingpo, "Secret Essence of the Illusory Web"], which has the eight classes of auspicious connections of apparent existence and so forth. In anuyoga there is the Tsokchen Düpa empowerment, in which the nine yānas are complete. [These nine yānas differ somewhat from the usual classification. The first yāna is the vehicle of celestial beings and humans, followed by the first eight yānas; atiyoga is not included here.] Atiyoga is divided into the outer section on mind [Tib: sem
The Four Abhiṣhekas and the Three Samādhis • 9
dele], the inner section on space [Tib: long de], and the secret section on oral instructions [Tib: men-ngag de]. These are the inner tantras of the secret mantra, the anuttara tantras. The empowerments of the anuttara tantras have the four abhiṣhekas: the vase abhiṣheka, the secret abhiṣheka, the prajñā-jñāna abhiṣheka and the word abhiṣheka.

For the vase abhiṣheka, as taught in kriyā and upa tantra, one visualizes the deity of the maṇḍala inside the vase. By having one's limbs washed during the vase abhiṣheka, one receives the abhiṣheka related to the five buddhas. In the secret abhiṣheka, from the bodies of the deities comes forth bodhichitta, which mixes with the amṛta in the skull cup. That is the secret abhiṣheka. In the prajñā-jñāna abhiṣheka, from the heart center of the deity radiates blissful light, which develops the samādhi of bliss and emptiness in one's being. Just as the petals of a flower open when hit by sunlight, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness develops in one's mind when one receives these light rays. That is the prajñā-jñāna abhiṣheka. The fourth abhiṣheka, the word initiation, introduces the student to the nature of mind as it is.

The vase abhiṣheka should be bestowed with the support of a maṇḍala made of colored sand. If there is no colored-sand maṇḍala, one can use a painting or drawing of the maṇḍala. For the secret abhiṣheka, the vajra master should visualize his own body as the maṇḍala deity, for example, Chakrasaṃvara, thinking that in the different places of the body are the ākāsas and ākāsinīs of the twenty-four sacred places. Thus the abhiṣheka is bestowed with the support of the vajra master's body. The prajñā-jñāna abhiṣheka is bestowed with the support of the bliss of the consort. The word abhiṣheka is bestowed with the support of absolute wisdom.
What is purified by the vase empowerment? Mainly the obscurations of body are purified. Whatever maṇḍala deity is practiced, the body blessing of that deity will enter one’s body. In the secret empowerment, the speech obscurations are purified, and the speech blessings of the maṇḍala deity enter one’s speech. In the prajñā-jñāna abhiṣheka, one’s mind obscurations are purified, and the mind blessings of the maṇḍala deity enter one’s mind. In the fourth abhiṣheka, one’s obscurations of body, speech, and mind combined are purified, and the wisdom blessings, which are of the nature of the unity of the body, speech, and mind of the maṇḍala deity, enter one’s mind.

Within these empowerments there are many different categories. A very famous major empowerment of the profound tantras is the Kālachakra. According to the view of Kālachakra, there are seven outer empowerments. These seven outer empowerments are like a preparation. For instance, a newly born baby should just suck his mother’s milk and not be given solid food. As he grows he can gradually be given some fruit and sweets. If he is given solid food like rice and meat, he will not be able to digest it. That is like the seven outer stages of the vase empowerment. Subsequently, there are the three inner, worldly empowerments. These are for more advanced students and can be compared to giving grown children rice and meat. They are similar to the above-mentioned secret and prajñā-jñāna abhiṣhekas. Then there is the empowerment that transcends the world, which is the fourth, or word, abhiṣheka. That is the empowerment to become Lord Kālachakra, which is only given to those who have the ability to explain the tantras of the secret mantra to others, and is kept secret from other people. So there are eleven empowerments: the seven outer empowerments, the three inner, worldly empowerments, and the empowerment transcending the world. Nowadays
these empowerments can be bestowed by H.H. the Dalai Lama and Lama Kalu Rinpoche.

According to the yoga tradition of the secret mantra, tantra is mahāyoga, transmission is anuyoga, and fruition is atiyoga. The main tantra is the Guhyagarbha Tantra, which has a peaceful section and a wrathful section. There are forty-two peaceful deities and fifty-eight wrathful blood-drinking deities. The empowerments of these peaceful and wrathful deities are bestowed through the following eighteen abhiṣhekas: the ten outer, beneficial abhiṣhekas, the five inner, energizing abhiṣhekas, and the three secret, profound abhiṣhekas. The ten outer, beneficial abhiṣhekas can be compared to the stages of the vase abhiṣheka as explained before. There are eighteen different empowerment substances given to the student. As to what is beneficial, for example, if a seed is put in the ground, rain helps the seed to grow. Similarly, initially when the ten outer empowerments are bestowed, they help the student to purify his obscurations and make him a suitable vessel for the empowerment. They prepare him to do the practice of the development and completion stages. That is the benefit of the ten outer abhiṣhekas.

Now let us turn to the five inner, energizing abhiṣhekas. When one plants barley or rice in the ground, that seed has the potential to sprout. In the Guhyagarbha Tantra, the five inner, energizing abhiṣhekas are the potential for the seed to develop. What are these five inner, energizing abhiṣhekas? For the student who is only able to practice for his own benefit, there is the empowerment to listen to all the tantras of the secret mantra and the empowerment to practice the samādhi of the development and completion stages. For the student who is able to benefit others, there are two activity empowerments for pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying karmas, a minor and a major one. For the stu-
dent who is able to benefit both himself and others, there is
the empowerment that ripens the potential within the
stream of being of all sentient beings, which is called the
"limitless vajra king transmission."

These outer, beneficial and inner, energizing empower­ments will ripen the potential of the empowerment within
the stream of all sentient beings, but what is even more
profound than those are the three profound, secret abhiśhekas. In India, if the student had not perfected the develop­
ment stage of the vase abhiśheka, the secret, prajña-jñāna,
and word abhiśhekas were not given. When the develop­
ment stage of the vase abhiśheka had been perfected, the
secret, prajña-jñāna and word abhiśhekas were bestowed,
and the student was able to practice the completion stages of
that maṇḍala: the yogas of chaṇḍāli, dream, illusory body,
pardo, and so forth. The three secret, profound abhiśhekas enable the student to practice those completion stages. So,
according to the tradition of Guhyagarbha, there are eighteen
empowerments: the ten outer, beneficial empowerments;
the five inner, energizing empowerments; and the three
secret, profound empowerments.

The transmission of anuyoga has the Tsokchen Düpa em­
powerment, which is an empowerment for the nine yānas. Bestowing this nine-yāna empowerment requires ten outer
abhiśhekas, which are like the vase empowerment. Then
there are eleven inner abhiśhekas, which are the same as the
five inner, energizing empowerments. Then there are
thirteen abhiśhekas that are similar to the three secret,
profound empowerments. The Tsokchen Düpa empower­
ment also has two secret, completion abhiśhekas, so alto­
together there are thirty-six abhiśhekas in the inner anuyoga.

In dzokchen, atiyoga, there is a detailed vase abhiśheka, a
simple secret abhiśheka, a very simple, and an extremely
simple abhiśheka. The vase, secret, prajña-jñāna, and word
The Four Abhiṣhekas and the Three Samādhis

abhiṣhekas are bestowed with the support of these four abhiṣhekas. In the tantras of the secret mantra, these are called the abhiṣhekas orally taught by the guru.

There is also an abhiṣheka called the empowerment of the yidam’s blessings. When the secret-mantra vajrayāna doctrine first appeared in Jambudvīpa, King Ja from the west saw seven wondrous indications in his dreams. The volumes of the tantras descended on the roof of his palace, and when he opened them he could understand the meaning of the chapter on “The Vision of Vajrasattva.” After practicing it for six months he had an actual vision of Vajrasattva and at that time he understood the meaning of all the tantras. That is the empowerment of the yidam’s blessings.

Then there is the empowerment of the vajraḍākinī’s indication. What is this empowerment? Great siddhas such as Tilopa, Saraha, and Nāgārjuna went to the ġākinī land of Uḍḍiyāna and saw the treasure of tantric books. When they left, they took all the volumes on Chakrasaṃvara and others away with them. The ġākinīs miraculously pursued them to protect the books, but they could not affect them with their miracles, and they realized that Saraha, Nāgārjuna, and so forth were accomplished masters who could hold and transmit the teachings of the secret-mantra vajrayāna. Then they gave permission and indications on how to give the empowerments and teachings on the development and completion stages to qualified students in Jambudvīpa. That is the empowerment of the ġākinī’s indication.

Then there is the empowerment of the intrinsic nature. In regard to the realization of the inner wisdom of empowerment, the meaning of the fourth empowerment, it is said, “The supreme empowerment is something we have by ourselves. If we did not have this supreme empowerment ourselves, it could not be conferred upon us, just as there is no way of giving the empowerment of a pea to a grain of
rice.” When one realizes the intrinsic nature of one’s mind, one receives the abhīṣheka of one’s own intrinsic awareness. Thus the abhīṣheka of the secret mantra is received.

That was a summary of how the empowerments of the Sarma and Nyingma tantric traditions are given, and all these are elaborate empowerments. The four abridged empowerments can be given just with the support of a vase or a torma. Yesterday I gave the Secret Essence Vajrasattva [Tib: Sangthik Dorsem] abhīṣheka with the support of the vase only. In the empowerment of the Guru Ladrup, the four abhīṣhekas are bestowed with the support of the torma only. Then there is the empowerment of the blessings of body, speech, and mind, which is like a permission, and the empowerment of the mantra while focusing the awareness. All these empowerments still exist without having been distorted.

All the special students gathered here probably have received the empowerment of Vajrayogini or Chakrasamvara from Trungpa Rinpoche and have confidence in that. Now you will receive the empowerments of the Embodiment of the Three Jewels [Tib: Koyal Chidy] and the Three Roots of the Heart Essence [Tib: Nyingthik Tsasum], both of which have the four levels of abhīṣheka. If you have understood the meaning of empowerment a little bit, when you receive it you will know the mantra and enter in clearly. During the empowerment you should think:

This is the vase empowerment. The body blessings are entering my mind, and broken samaya related to body is being amended. This is the secret empowerment. The speech blessings are entering my speech, broken samaya related to speech is being amended, and I can attain the sambhogakāya. This is the prajñā-jñāna empowerment. The mind blessings are entering my mind,
broken samaya related to mind is being amended, and I can attain the nirmāṇakāya. This is the fourth empowerment. I am being introduced to the nature of my mind. All broken samayas related to body, speech, and mind are being amended simultaneously, and the guru's wisdom mind is mingling with my mind.

As the guru gives the student the various empowerment substances during the empowerment, if the student recognizes and has confidence in all these stages, it will be very beneficial. That was a brief explanation of empowerment.

THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE

When one's being has been ripened by the empowerment, one should practice the path of the development and completion stages. Generally sentient beings in the three worlds of existence are caught up in the phenomena of birth, death, and the state in between. In the secret-mantra vajrayāna, which deals with the fruition, phenomena of birth are the nirmāṇakāya, phenomena of death are the dharma-makāya, and phenomena of the state in between are the sambhogakāya. One trains in these three states as the nature of the three buddha kāyas.

In this world of existence there are the relative and the absolute truth, and all phenomena are understood in terms of these two truths. On the path of the secret mantra, the relative truth is the development stage and the absolute truth is the completion stage. Of those two, the most profound is the completion stage. But if the development stage is not practiced before the completion stage, the completion stage will not be beneficial. And if someone wanting to practice the secret mantra does not receive em-
powerment, he cannot practice the development stage. Once he has received empowerment, he can practice the development stages. The preparation for the development stage is empowerment. When one has properly practiced the development stage, one can receive the teachings on the completion stage. So the preparation for the completion stage is the development stage. When one has perfected the completion stage, one has accomplished the result.

The development stage deals with the relative truth, relative appearances, such as this world, the outer universe, the inner inhabitants, and the emotions. Sentient beings have perceptions of a place, a body, and an experience. Regarding the perceptions of a place, if it is the hell realm, beings perceive it as hot or cold. If it is the preta realm, they perceive ugly, barren places that are frightening. If it is the animal realm, they perceive the great ocean, water, grass, woods, and so forth. If it is the human realm, they perceive their different homes. If it is the asura realm, they perceive different palaces and wish-fulfilling trees. If it is the god realm, they perceive the wish-fulfilling tree on top of Mount Meru, the jewel ground, and so forth. That is the place.

Within those places are the bodies of the sentient beings of the six realms. If there were just a body without a mind, the body could not function. When body and mind are together, body and speech follow the mind like a servant, and in that way beings create karma. With the support of body and mind, beings perform positive and negative actions. That is called deluded perception.

How did these perceptions become deluded? The universe and its inhabitants do not really exist. They are like a rainbow in the sky, but we hold onto them as if they existed. Also, we hold onto death as something that does not exist and cling to the idea that this body will last a long time. Thus we hold onto what is impermanent as permanent and
cling to an ego where there is no ego. To someone who is drunk with wine it seems as though the ground is turning around, but that is just his drunken perception. The ground is not turning. In the same way, we hold onto the appearances of the universe, its inhabitants, and emotions as things that exist, whereas in reality they do not exist. They are our delusion. The outer universe—Mount Meru, the continents, and subcontinents; its inhabitants—the beings of the six realms; and the five poisons—the conflicting emotions—should be purified through the development stage.

To purify these delusions through the development stage, first one should purify the universe. The universe is gradually formed as follows: at the bottom, there is space; upon that, wind; upon that, fire; upon that, water; upon that, the ground; and upon that, Mount Meru with the ocean. If there were no empty space, it would not be possible to create this. When the universe is destroyed, it dissolves again into empty space; it never goes beyond the nature of empty space. As their nature does not transcend that of empty space, the universe and its inhabitants are created from empty space, and from that arise enjoyment and happiness. Since empty space is infinitely vast, there is no chance of the universe not fitting into empty space or of space being jammed full with the appearances of the universe and its contents. If there were no space, the universe could not appear.

With the support of emptiness, the universe and its contents appear, but they cannot appear based just on emptiness. It is because of interdependent connection that we perceive the universe and its inhabitants, even though its nature is emptiness. For instance, in the summer the land is warm from the sun, there is cool rain, flowers grow, and everything seems pleasant. In the winter the land is frozen, there is cold wind, and everything seems unpleasant. All this
is due to interdependent causes and conditions. Similarly, the formation and destruction of the universe and its contents is due to the interdependent connection of cause and condition. If there are no parents, there cannot be a child; in the same way, everything is dependent on cause and condition. If many causes and conditions come together, something is created.

When the five elements—earth, water, fire, wind, and space—come together, earth ripens, water dissolves, fire warms, wind moves, and the four seasons are formed in the universe. Similarly, in our body, flesh, and bones are the earth element, blood and lymph are the water element, the warmth of our body is the fire element, the breath inside our body is the wind element, and the space in between is the space element. So the body is formed through the gathering of the five elements. In this body formed through the elements, there is a mind. When many instants gather, that mind perceives past, present, and future thoughts.

When all causes and conditions are destroyed, there will be absolutely nothing. When there is appearance, for someone who has realized emptiness, whatever he perceives dissolves into emptiness, like a rainbow dissolving into space. If one looks at a rainbow in the sky, one sees a beautiful appearance of five colors, but if one were to try to grasp it, or use it to wear or eat, that would be futile. It can be seen, but it is empty. Similarly, all the appearances of the universe and its contents are empty. There is nothing beyond emptiness.

**The Three Samādhīs**

*The Samādhi of Suchness*

In the Nyingma tradition of the secret mantra, the meditation of the development stage is practiced by means of the
three samādhis. When meditating on the three samādhis, one starts with the samādhi of suchness. The samādhi of suchness is of the nature of emptiness. As I said before, the universe, its contents, and the emotions are all based on emptiness. To explain the nature of form: if there is no dharmakāya of the buddha, there is no sambhogakāya or nirmanakāya. If the dharmakāya of the buddha, the stainless inconceivable dharmadhātu, is there, when the inconceivable buddha qualities accumulate, the sambhogakāya manifests from that dharmadhātu. When the compassion of the sambhogakāya is moved for the sake of sentient beings, the nirmanakāya manifests. In that way, suchness samādhi comes from emptiness, the dharmakāya.

Now we have a body and a mind, we are comfortable and happy, we have friends and enemies, and we cling to having all that. We think all of that exists and hold onto it, but it does not really exist, and that grasping is delusion. To destroy that clinging one should meditate on emptiness. According to the hinayāna tradition, the Buddha Shakya­muni taught that all compounded things are impermanent. In that way, the nature of emptiness could be understood. In the mahāyāna tradition, all phenomena are understood in terms of the three doors of liberation: the nature is emptiness, the path is free of characteristics, and the fruition is beyond expectation. On the path of the secret-mantra vajrayāna, when total emptiness is mentioned during the development stage, that is the samādhi of suchness.

Unless the emptiness nature of the mind is realized, one cannot really practice the completion stage. The method for realizing this emptiness nature is practicing the completion stage. So how should we meditate on emptiness during the development stage? At the beginning of most development-stage practices one recites the mantra OM MAHASHŪNYATA-JÑĀNA-VAJRA-SVABHĀVA-ĀTMAKO ‘HAM. If this mantra is not
there, one can recite A at the time of developing the samādhi of suchness. As we recite that mantra at the beginning of the suchness samādhi, all phenomena—our perceptions of the universe and its inhabitants and all other experiences—become completely empty, like a rainbow fading in the sky. If one has a steady visualization, the mind will experience a glimpse of emptiness. If one recognizes this experience, that is called the samādhi of suchness.

If one asks what is the form of that samādhi of suchness, the buddha’s dharmakāya does not have a face, arms, substance, or characteristics. The buddha’s dharmakāya pervades the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāna. There is no saṃsāric karma and defilements outside of the dharmakāya. There is no nirvānic kāya or jñāna outside of the dharmakāya. There is no such thing as saṃsāra’s dharmakāya being bad and nirvāna’s dharmakāya being good. Taking empty space as an analogy, the sun and moon above are pervaded by space, and the earth below is pervaded by space. The universe and its contents are all pervaded by space. All places where beings stay are pervaded by space. In the same way, there is nothing in saṃsāra or nirvāna that is not pervaded by emptiness. Since mind is empty, to understand its nature, the nature of that emptiness should be recognized. If there is no dharmakāya buddha, one cannot see the sambhogakāya and the nirmāṇakāya. That is why one has to meditate on the samādhi of suchness.

What is the use of meditating on the universe and its contents as emptiness? According to the Nyingma tradition, the Early Translation School, each of the three samādhis has three stages: purity, perfection, and ripening. Regarding purity: When this universe is perceived, for instance, when someone dies, his life force is cut, his mind wanders in the pardo, and his corpse is cremated. Not even his name remains. Everything becomes empty. When we die, the un-
iverse and its contents become emptiness. Getting used to that emptiness is the samādhi of suchness. If one gets used to the phenomena of death through the samādhi of suchness, the wisdom of dharmakāya will be realized. When one is meditating on the completion stage, one should know that the completion stage is a method for realizing emptiness, the samādhi of suchness. As is said, “Whoever is capable of realizing shūnyatā is capable of everything.” When emptiness is realized, there is nothing more to realize, and taking that emptiness nature as the path is the purity.

When one rests in the nature of that emptiness, the qualities of the buddha’s dharmakāya are perfected. That is the perfection.

When meditating on emptiness while practicing the completion stage, one has experiences of bliss, clarity, and nonthought. That is the ripening. Of those three, the experience of nonthought is also the samādhi of suchness.

The samādhi of suchness is the main meditation throughout all levels. At the time of fruition, it is the dharmakāya, and at the impure stage it transforms the universe and its contents into emptiness. Of the phenomena of birth, death, and pardo, it is a way of purifying the phenomena of death. It is important to understand this vital point of the samādhi of suchness.

The All-Illuminating Samādhi

It is not possible to attain liberation through emptiness alone. The essence of emptiness is compassion, and that compassion is called the all-illuminating samādhi, something that appears outside. In emptiness, there is no such thing as something that appears and something that makes things appear. It is one emptiness. When compassion arises from that state, it is called the all-illuminating samādhi.
How does one practice the all-illuminating samādhi? First one should recite the shūnyatā mantra and think that the universe and its contents—everything—is empty. Within that emptiness nature, thinking that all phenomena of samsāra and nirvāṇa are empty, one should generate compassion toward all sentient beings who have not realized shūnyatā. Thinking that in order to guide all sentient beings toward the realization of emptiness one will practice the samādhi of the yidam deity is the all-illuminating samādhi. It is not possible for beginners to have nonconceptual compassion. They have to have the concept of benefiting sentient beings.

Compassion is the life force of the mahāyāna path. Whether it is the mahāyāna path of characteristics or the mahāyāna path of the secret-mantra vajrayāna, if there is no bodhichitta, it cannot be called mahāyāna. The root of bodhichitta is compassion toward sentient beings. As the Buddha Shākyamuni said, “Someone who has a head has eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, a tongue, and a whole body. If he has no head, the body will be useless, since it cannot function.” Similarly, if those on the mahāyāna path have no compassion, it cannot be the real mahāyāna path. Generating compassion in one’s being is called the all-illuminating samādhi. While all buddhas abide in the expanse of dharma-dhatu, they look after all sentient beings by means of the unity of emptiness and compassion. They never abide in emptiness for their own benefit. When sentient beings fall into delusion, the qualities of the buddhas manifest through the power of compassion. Compassion should be brought forth like dawn appearing when the sky is grey at daybreak.

When meditating on compassion, what is being purified? At death, when body and mind separate, first, as the elements dissolve, our eyes stop seeing, our ears stop hearing, our mouth and nose stop breathing, and our body stops
feeling. Everything stops. As everything stops, we arrive at the ground, emptiness. Having arrived at that emptiness nature, if we could remain in that state we would attain enlightenment. But we will not be able to remain in that emptiness. As soon as we arrive in that emptiness, we fall back into delusion. When one gets used to the dharmakāya samādhi of suchness, great compassion toward beings who have not realized the dharmakāya samādhi arises. Through this samādhi, we purify the pardo phenomenon of falling back into delusion from the ground nature.

The nonconceptual compassion of the buddhas pervades all beings. When the buddhas manifest as the sambhogakāya, having manifested sambhogakāya buddha fields with the five perfect aspects—the perfect place, the perfect time, the perfect teaching, the perfect teacher, and the perfect students—there is no more passing into nirvāṇa and dissolving of buddha fields. The sambhogakāya buddha field emanations naturally manifest for the benefit of sentient beings—that is called compassion.

As for meditating on the completion stage, the completion stage is no good if one only meditates on emptiness. That emptiness must have a luminosity aspect, and that luminosity aspect is compassion. When the concept of benefiting beings arises in one's mind, that is the luminosity aspect, the compassion of one who is a practitioner on the path. When the phenomena of birth are purified, even if one has attained perfect enlightenment, emanations will manifest continuously. When buddhas pass into nirvāṇa, as they abide in the dharmakāya expanse, they manifest emanations for the benefit of sentient beings. It never happens that the buddhas do not appear.

What is being purified by this samādhi? When body and mind separate and one arrives in the ground nature, there is the obscuration that leads one to fall back into delusion in
the pardo. That is being purified. What is perfected? In that state, the sambhogakāya buddha qualities are perfected. What is ripened? In the completion stage, there are experiences of bliss, luminosity, and nonthought. That luminosity nature is being ripened. The completion stage is its ripening. When purity, perfection, and ripening are complete, that is the actual mahāyāna path as-it-is. That is called the all-illuminating samādhi or perfectly manifesting samādhi.

The Seed Samādhi

The third samādhi is called the seed samādhi. One should practice the seed samādhi in the state of the unity of emptiness and compassion. What is this seed samādhi? When practicing the development stage and creating the support of the buddha palace and the deities, the seed syllable from which all that manifests is called the seed samādhi. The union of emptiness and compassion, the nature of the mind, is a samādhi without form. In the seed samādhi, there is a form. Just as consciousness is the source of body and speech, through which one can experience the phenomenal world, similarly, the buddhas manifest through the seed syllable, which transforms into the buddha fields and the deities. So, it is called the seed samādhi because from it the palace and deities manifest.

What do we visualize in the seed samādhi? Emptiness, which clears away the phenomenal world, and compassion, which arises for all beings who have not realized emptiness, are inseparable. Going to the core of compassion, we come to emptiness. There is no compassion other than emptiness. This nondual essence of emptiness and compassion takes the form of a seed syllable. For instance, if one is meditating on a deity of the vajra family, one visualizes the syllable HŪM. If one is meditating on a deity of the speech family, one
visualizes the syllable आ. If one is meditating on a deity of the body family, one visualizes the syllable ओ. That is called the seed samādhi. Though the form is the seed syllable, the essence is the wisdom of the knowledge, compassion, and power of the deity. It is not just a syllable like the ones we write down. It is not some solid syllable. It is the essence of the buddha’s mind.

How do we meditate on this seed syllable? After having purified the universe and its contents into emptiness, one should think the syllable हुम arises in empty space, like the moon shining in the sky. If the deity is blue in color, the हुम is blue. If the deity is white in color, the हुम is white. The white हुम shining like a moon in the sky is called the seed samādhi.

Regarding falling into delusion during the pardo, when the phenomena of the pardo start, there is a mind. That mind is supported by the mental body of the pardo. The experience of that mental body is like when we dream and feel as if we are moving around from place to place, although the physical body is not doing anything. During the pardo, we have a similar experience. In order to purify the pardo phenomena we practice the seed samādhi.

What is the benefit of meditating on this seed samādhi? We can see this with reference to doing the practices of Chakrasaṃvara, Vajrayogini, Vajrasattva, and so forth. For instance, when we meditate on Chakrasaṃvara, we first visualize the syllable हुम. When we meditate on Vajrayogini, we first visualize the syllable वाम. When we meditate on Guru Rinpoche, we visualize the syllable ह्रि:ह. When we meditate on Vajrasattva, we visualize the syllable हुम. That visualization symbolizes consciousness. What does it purify? It purifies the obscurations of the consciousness wandering in the pardo. That is why we visualize the syllable हुम. It should be visualized the color of the deity we are meditating
on. HŪM is the essence of the wisdom mind of all the buddhas. What does it purify? The obscurations of all beings wandering in the pardo, their obscurations leading to taking rebirth, are purified. What is it that purifies? The essence of the buddhas’ wisdom mind does the purifying. The reason that this purification can occur is that when many syllables are gathered, one can recite mantras with these syllables, and the dharma and phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa can be pointed out. Similarly, from the seed syllables of the buddhas, maṇḍalas emanate and dissolve.

The nature of HŪM is the essence of the buddhas’ life. Of the three buddha kāyas, the seed syllable represents the nirmāṇakāya. The HŪM emanates the support of the buddha palace and the deities; that is what makes it the seed samādhi. When the nirmāṇakāyas of the thousand buddhas come to this world, first each displays a buddha field in this universe and then the buddha manifests. Let us take the pure land of Amitābha, the Sukhāvatī in the west. First, through the aspirations and samādhi of the buddha, the buddha field Sukhāvatī manifests and then the buddha Amitābha comes. So, what manifests the buddha fields and buddhas is the seed samādhi, which symbolizes the nature of the nirmāṇakāya buddhas.

What is being purified? The obscurations that make one take rebirth while wandering in the pardo are being purified. The essence of that which purifies is the syllable HŪM. The HŪM, visualized in empty space, is the lord of the wisdom of all buddhas. What is purified by that? The obscurations of beings in the pardo leading them to take rebirth are purified. What qualities are perfected? The qualities of the nirmāṇakāya buddhas are perfected. What is ripened? When practicing the completion stage, when the inseparable essence of bliss and emptiness, the samādhi of the wisdom of non-thought, develops in one’s mind, the absolute coemergent
wisdom, the mahāmudrā, the dzokpa chenpo—that wisdom—is born. The seed samādhi is the seed of developing that wisdom. For this to ripen, certain conditions are necessary. When a seed is planted in the ground, three conditions are necessary for it to ripen: summer, good soil, and rain. If those three conditions are present there will be good fruit. Similarly, the prerequisite preparation for the completion stage is the development stage. The development stage prepares one for the completion stage. Thus, when one starts to practice the basic samādhi of the seed syllable, light radiates from the seed syllable and creates the vajra protection tent. Then gradually the different elements are created. On the layers of the elements, one visualizes the development process.

There are four ways that beings take birth in this world: through parents and from a womb; from an egg; from warmth and moisture; or miraculously, without the fluid and blood of parents, like the gods. In regard to the development stage, birth from an egg corresponds to a very elaborate development-stage process, in which one visualizes by means of the causal and the fruition heruka. In regard to birth from warmth and moisture, when these two come together, beings are created. This can occur in a forest during the summer: when it is hot and it rains, insects are born. In the development-stage process corresponding to birth from warmth and moisture, habits related to that kind of birth are purified. In birth from an egg, first the egg is born from the mother and then through the warmth of the mother the being is formed. In miraculous birth, as in the celestial realms, the consciousness enters a lotus flower and then the body is formed. In the development-stage process corresponding to birth from an egg, one visualizes the causal heruka and the fruition heruka. First the egg is born from the mother, and then the being is formed from the egg, like
a double birth. When the elaborate explanation of that is given, we talk about the five phases of purifying and developing and the three vajra ritual visualizations. In the development-stage process corresponding to birth from warmth and moisture, the suchness samādhi, the all-illuminating samādhi, and the seed samādhi are perfected instantly. One does not need to visualize the causal heruka and the fruition heruka. In the development-stage process corresponding to miraculous birth, there are four levels of visualization, which are instantly remembered and perfected. Through these four levels of visualization, the support is gradually stabilized. That is the seed samādhi.

These three samādhis are the basis for practicing the samādhi of the development stage. Regarding the purpose of developing the support of the maṇḍala and the deities: For instance, a man has a perception of his house and possessions and people around. Through meditation on the seed syllable and its manifestation of the buddha palace and the deities, these habitual tendencies can be purified. In order to purify these habitual tendencies toward existence, we visualize the syllable हुम from which light radiates, making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas and then gathering back their body, speech, and mind blessings. Then the light radiates again, touching all sentient beings and purifying their karmic obscurations. Then again it dissolves back into the syllable.

Then the light rays emanate the syllable ब्रह्म. This syllable ब्रह्म is composed of five parts, symbolizing the five wisdoms of all the buddhas. The buddha palace is manifested by उष्णिष्ठ-चक्रवर्तिन. When उष्णिष्ठ-चक्रवर्तिन was a bodhisattva performing enlightened activities, he made the aspiration that when he attained perfect buddhahood, the wisdom of his mind would manifest as the fields and palaces of all the buddhas, which are in
essence the nature of Vairochana. Our human palaces are made of earth and stone, but buddha palaces manifest from the play of wisdom. They are pervaded by wisdom, and there is nothing solid to them. The BHRŪM is yellow in color and emanates the five colors. From the BHRŪM, the syllables of the different elements emanate, such as E YAM RAM SUM and so forth, gradually building up the elements below the buddha palace.

On that foundation, one visualizes the protection circle made of many different vajras of different sizes. Upon that, in some sādhanas one visualizes the eight charnel grounds; in some sādhanas there are no charnel grounds. If there are eight charnel grounds, in some sādhanas they are inside, and in some sādhanas outside, the protection circle.

Within those eight charnel grounds one visualizes a thirty-two petaled lotus, which symbolizes the thirty-two major marks of a buddha. Upon the lotus is a green sun disk: because the lotus stalk is green and the sun is like crystal, it reflects the color green. Upon that is a multicolored vajra with twelve prongs, three in the east, three in the south, three in the west, and three in the north. There are also vajras with twenty prongs.

The center of the vajra is square, and within that square, one visualizes the buddha palace. If it is a peaceful buddha palace, as a sign of the five wisdoms there are the walls of five layers, as well as the corners, the roof, the pendants, the vajra on top, and so forth. If it is a wrathful buddha palace, it has walls of three layers, made of human heads. In the center of the buddha palace is a lotus and a sun disk. If the deity is wrathful, it is a sun disk; if the deity is peaceful, it is a moon disk. Upon that appears the syllable HŪM. From that, light rays radiate, which make offerings to the buddhas and gather their blessings back into the HŪM. Again light rays emanate to all sentient beings, purify their obscurations, and
are gathered back into the HŪM. Then, if the sādhana goes through the five phases of purifying and developing, the HŪM transforms into a five-pronged vajra, which transforms into the deity, such as Vajrasattva, Chakrasaṃvara, Chem-chok, and so on. From the deity’s heart center radiate light rays, which transform into the retinue, such as the five buddhas, the ten wrathful ones, and so on. That is called the meditation on the deity maṇḍala in the support of the buddha palace.

First the buddha palace is visualized from the outside toward the inside: the protection circle, the fire, the charnel grounds, and so on. The deity is visualized from the inside toward the outside: first the main deity and from that the retinue manifests.

What is purified by this manifestation? The habitual tendencies toward houses, land, and possessions that are part of human existence in this world are purified through meditation on the buddha palace. The habitual tendencies toward people, parents and children, are purified by meditation on the deities. When the buddhas miraculously manifest the pure lands, each buddha manifests his own buddha field, with a buddha palace, a bodhi tree, a temple with monks, and his own students. For instance, Buddha Śākyamuni has his disciples Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, the sixteen arhats, and so forth. If one’s mind becomes accustomed to the buddhas’ actions now, that is dealing with the fruition. In that way, the obscurations of the three worlds of samsāra, the universe and its contents, are purified.

In the completion stage, the body is most important: the body is the buddha palace, and the nāḍīs and bindus are the deities. Through the habit of visualizing the deities, by the ripening of that potential, habitual tendencies toward samsāra are exhausted. Bringing the nirmāṇakāya buddha’s manifestations of buddha fields and buddha palaces to the
path purifies the obscurations of habitual tendencies toward samsāra. In the meditation on the maṇḍala of the deity in the completion stage, oneself as the maṇḍala deity is called the samayasattva.

In the development stage, from the heart center of the deity light rays radiate, and from the pure lands the buddhas and bodhisattvas are invited in the form of the same deity. That which is invited is the jñānasattva. Then the jñānasattva dissolves into the visualized deity, and they become inseparable. Just as when one has invited an important guest, one offers him food and pays respect, similarly, at this point, from one's heart center one emanates many offering goddesses who prostrate, make offerings, and sing verses of praise. That is the meditation of the development stage, using the body as the path, which purifies obscurations of the body.

Since we not only have a body, but also speech and mind, in order to purify obscurations of speech, in the heart center of the deity we visualize a seed syllable from which light rays radiate. They purify obscurations of speech. All these appearances manifest from emptiness and have no real existence. This is like when the buddhas manifest buddha fields and then pass into nirvāṇa. For instance, when Buddha Shākyamuni taught King Indrabhūti the teachings of Guhyasamāja, he first manifested the complete maṇḍala of Guhyasamāja and then taught the tantra. After he had taught the tantra, as the emanation dissolved, the Guhyasamāja maṇḍala with the buddha palace dissolved back into emptiness. Similarly, what we have visualized should be dissolved. The reason why it should be dissolved is that once we are born we have to die, and this purifies these impure habitual patterns. Manifesting and dissolving the buddha fields corresponds to using the buddhas' activities to progress on the path.
What is the benefit of meditating on the yoga of the naḍīs, prāṇa, and bindu in the completion stage? One’s mind is able to realize the wisdom of emptiness. Realizing the wisdom of emptiness is a preliminary for ripening. Thus, the universe dissolves into the contents, the beings; the contents, the beings, dissolve into the palace; the palace dissolves into the retinue; the retinue dissolves into the main deity; the deity dissolves into the mantra; the mantra dissolves into the seed syllable at the heart center; the seed syllable dissolves into emptiness; and then one rests the mind in the state of emptiness. That is called the completion stage of the samādhi of suchness.

This has been a brief explanation of the development stage, using form as the path to purify the habitual tendencies of birth. When one actually starts to practice a śādhanā, one will be able to get the elaborate instructions from one’s own teacher and understand them.

In practicing the development stage, at the beginning one should always have the thought of bodhichitta; in the middle, one should do the main practice of the development stage with one-pointed concentration; and in the end one should dedicate the merit to all sentient beings. Thus applying the root of the mahāyāna path, the three excellences, the ordinary and supreme siddhis of the development stage, the root of the secret-mantra path, will be attained.

If one practices the development stage according to the Sarma, or New Translation School, the universe and its contents are purified into emptiness, and from the state of emptiness the seed syllable manifests. There is no mention of the three samādhis. The three samādhis are a speciality of the development stage according to the Nyingma tradition. Practicing in this way will be a great benefit to your mind.
This morning I talked about the ripening empowerments and the development stage of the secret-mantra vajrayāna path. This afternoon I shall give detailed instructions on the completion stage. As I told you before, the development stage is dealing with the relative truth of all phenomena. Working with the appearances of relative truth—the universe and its contents, the buddha palace, the deities, light rays radiating from the mantra, and so forth—is using the relative truth as the path.

The completion stage is dealing with the absolute truth of phenomena. What does dealing with the absolute truth mean? When the uncontrived innate nature, the intrinsic nature, is controlled by samādhi, that is called yoga. In that way, the uncontrived innate nature is brought to the path. To bring the uncontrived innate nature to the path, one should meditate according to the nature of the absolute truth. The development stage is the preparation for the completion stage. The completion stage consists of the six vajra yogas: chaṇḍālī, illusory body, dream, luminosity, pardo, and transference.

In the Nyingma tradition of the secret mantra, there are six pardos. The teachings on these six pardos are not different from those on the six yogas of the completion stage. The six pardos are the pardo of this life, the pardo of dying, the pardo of dharmatā, the pardo of becoming, the pardo of dream, and the pardo of meditation. Pardo means the intermediate state between two bodies, when one body is
done with and the next one is not yet born. If one is going somewhere, the state after leaving one’s country and before arriving at the place one is going to is also called pardo. It is a state in which one has no control.

THE PARDO OF THIS LIFE

The first pardo is the pardo of this life [Tib: kye-ne pardo], which is the state between birth from the mother’s womb and the moment of death. One might think that this state is not the pardo, because it lasts a long time compared to the pardo after death, which may only last an instant. Beginning with the moment of birth from the mother’s womb, one is pushed by the power of one’s karma. If one has accumulated positive actions, one will have a long life without disease, and one’s work will be successful. If one has accumulated negative actions, one will have a short life with many diseases, and one’s work will not be successful. One will meet enemies, one’s wealth will diminish, and one will experience much suffering. Everything happens according to the karma one has accumulated from past lives. One might want to be happy and comfortable, but one does not have the control necessary to avoid the suffering resulting from one’s past actions.

How should one deal with the pardo of this life? With the support of the ripening empowerments and the liberating instructions on the development and completion stages that I explained before, one should use this life as path. When one is born, as a baby one sucks one’s mother’s milk and sits on her lap. As one grows up, one starts to walk and talk and have concepts about beautiful and ugly, good and bad. As one grows older, about twenty or thirty years old, if one has harmful enemies, one wants to repay that harm. If one has
beneficial friends, one wants to repay that benefit. If one has wealth, one wants to hoard it. Whatever work one wants to do—work in the fields, work as a businessman, as an artist, or whatever—one can train to do that. As our body is being trained to do that work, we have no concept of impermanence. Since we never think about death, we never think about the holy dharma. When we think about this worldly existence only, we are distracted by our actions. While we are distracted by worldly actions, death can suddenly come upon us. Whether we are good or bad, there is no way to escape death. Even if we are very wealthy, we will have to die and leave behind all our wealth. Even if we are young and beautiful, we have no power over death and will have to leave our body behind. At death we will have great regret. But that regret comes too late.

If we had any certainty about when death will come, for instance, if we knew for sure that we had another fifty years to live, we could plan to work for this life for twenty-five years and then practice the dharma for twenty-five years. But we will never have that certainty. If we consider how many of our friends and relatives have died at a young age from the time we were born until now, how many of them have died while working, how many of them have died in the middle of all sorts of projects, and how many of them have died at war, we can see that there is no certainty whatsoever about how long we will live. When we know that death will come, we realize that the only thing that can help us is the holy dharma.

When death comes, if we have understood the dharma, it will not cause us any suffering. For the true practitioner, death is a way to experience the dharmakāya. If a very wealthy man has to go somewhere distant, he does not have to worry, because he can stay comfortably anywhere and die in luxury. Similarly, if one has practiced the dharma,
one has the confidence of one’s dharma practice, so there is nothing to worry about when death comes.

What is it that protects us from the fears of death? Practicing the development stage as I explained before, meditating on oneself as the yidam deity, by practicing the mudrā yoga of the body in the development stage, the mantra yoga of the speech recitation, and the suchness yoga of the mind in the completion stage purifies one’s obscurations of body, speech, and mind. If one attains inseparability of one’s body, speech, and mind from those of the yidam, whether it be Chakrasamvara, Vajrayoginī, or Vajrasattva, through the power of that attainment, when the suffering of death comes one will have the confidence that through meditating on one’s yidam, one will overcome that suffering. Thus there will be no fear of death.

If one does not practice the dharma, when the time of death comes, it will be like taking a hair out of butter: only the hair, no butter or oil, comes out. Similarly, when the time of death comes, one has to leave everything except for one’s mind and the positive and negative actions one has committed in this lifetime. We have to leave our body, our friends and relatives, and our wealth and possessions. If we exert ourselves in practicing the yoga of the deity, the mantra, and the dharmakāya, we will not have any fear of leaving all that. As the incomparable Takpo Rinpoche said:

The best practitioners will realize the dharmakāya state at death. Middle-level practitioners can use death as the path and avoid birth in samsāra with the support of the instructions on ejecting consciousness. Lower-level practitioners will have the confidence that through their practice of the yidam deity they will not go to the lower realms.
Thus, in bringing the pardo of this life to the path by practicing the development and completion stages, one should first listen, reflect, and meditate on the teachings properly, and after having understood them, one should develop experience. One should remember that when the suffering of death comes, through the power of practicing the path, one does not have to be afraid of that suffering. If one acquires that confidence, one will know that the illusory perceptions of the pardo of this life are impermanent. If one brings that impermanence to the path, purifying impure perceptions through the yogas of the deity, mantra, and dharma-kāya, when pure perceptions appear, one will not be controlled by the terrifying illusory perceptions of samsāra. If one practices well meditating on one’s yidam deity, when one thinks that the pardo of this life is over and death is about to come, one will have the confidence that, when the terrifying appearances manifest in the pardo, by supplicating one’s yidam deity, one will have an actual vision of one’s yidam deity and he will guide one to the buddha field. If one has that confidence, one has perfected the pardo of this life.

The best way to perfect the pardo of this life is to attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis in this very body, actually have a vision of one’s yidam deity, and become inseparable from the body, speech, and mind of one’s yidam deity. But even if that is not the case, it is all right if one has achieved the confidence mentioned above. So that is how one should deal with the pardo of this life.

THE PARDO OF DYING

After that, one arrives in the pardo of dying. The pardo of dying starts when one gets a terminal illness and ends when
one’s breath stops. At the time of death, the yogin will know that the time has come. There are two types of death: premature death, when one’s life span has not been completed, and timely death, when one’s lifespan has been exhausted. Premature death can be avoided through rituals and mantras to prolong life. Timely death cannot be avoided. Even Buddha Shākyamuni and great siddhas of the past had to go when their life spans had been exhausted. Very courageous beings and kings with great wealth all have to go when their lifespans are exhausted. They have no control over death. Everyone has to listen to the Lord of Death; there is no way to avoid or deceive him.

What will one think when death comes? First, when one becomes ill with a terminal disease, one will think, “I have to leave my parents, children, friends and relatives. I have so much wealth and so many possessions and I have to leave it all behind. I cannot finish my business, so my wealth will not increase, and my children will use it up and waste it. When I die, the pleasant experiences of this life will be over, my body will be cremated, and my consciousness will go to the pardo, where there is only suffering.” Thus one will be very upset.

A good practitioner will not feel upset about leaving anything behind. Guru Rinpoche said that when the time of death has come, even the king of the gods, Indra, does not have the power to avoid it. Even the king of wealth, Jam-bhala, will have to leave behind all his wealth when his life-span is exhausted. He has no way of avoiding death. That is how powerful the Lord of Death is.

When a practitioner becomes ill with a terminal disease, he should think:

I am not going to be able to recover. Until now I have been able to rely on my teacher. I have entered the path
of the Buddha’s doctrine and have practiced the instructions. What was the reason for all that? I have been very carefully prepared for the suffering of dying. Now that it has come, I need instructions, just like someone who is sick needs medicine and someone who is thirsty needs water. It is useless to be attached to anything in this life, such as children and relatives, friends, my home, possessions and so forth. Being attached to them will only upset me when I have to leave them behind, and that will not help me on the path of liberation. Whatever possessions I have I should offer to the sangha and to my spiritual friends, as when a person leaving for a faraway place gets rid of whatever he has.

One should wait for death as if a guest were coming. When a soldier is being trained, he is given food, drink, and clothing, and when the enemy arrives that is the time that the soldier is needed. In the same way, the practice of the dharma is needed at the time of death. One thinks, “When I die I should not die like an ordinary being, but I should go to the buddha fields, such as Sukhāvatī or the Copper-Colored Mountain.” This is like a son returning to his father’s home or a daughter returning to her mother’s home: they will arrive there without any doubt.

One should think that one’s teacher abides inseparably from Guru Rinpoche or Amitābha in their buddha fields and one is returning to the buddha fields to join him. One should think that it is much better to join one’s teacher in the buddha fields than stay in this world and experience happiness, illness, friends and enemies, and so forth, because in the buddha fields there is no attachment or hatred, and everyone is happy. Since the buddha field is a very happy place, if one has received instructions on the pardo of dying,
giving up all attachment to this life, one should make the wish to apply the instructions one-pointedly.

If one cannot remember the instructions because of illness, one should request a close vajra brother or sister to remind one of the instructions at the moment of death. The spiritual friend should tell us not to be afraid of the appearances in the pardo. He should remind us that they are our own perceptions and that we must remember the guru's instructions. Applying the instructions at the moment of death is like an actress looking in a mirror to check her make-up. In the same way, at the moment of death the instructions one has practiced that are not clear should be remembered.

One-pointedly remembering one's teacher, one should maintain the unaltered natural state of mind and regard it as inseparable from one's teacher. In that way, the teacher is not outside of oneself, but inseparable from one's own mind. Since oneself and one's mind are beyond union and separation, wishing never to be separate from one's teacher even for an instant, if one is able to remain in the view, one should watch the unaltered nature of mind. If one cannot see the unaltered nature, one should remember Guru Rinpoche or Amitābha and think that they are the nature of one's mind, inseparable from one's teacher.

When the signs of death appear, such as the breath stopping and the eyes turning upward, and relatives in the room start to talk a lot, one should visualize one's root teacher in one's heart center as Amitābha, the yidam Vajrayoginī, or Chakrasamvara. One should one-pointedly concentrate on that and recite their mantra. If the elements dissolve while one is thinking of the yidam, while one is mentally reciting the mantra and supplicating him, it will be as when trying to remember something while going to sleep: when one wakes up one can still remember it. If one falls
asleep in that state, thoughts will not cut what one is trying to remember. Thus if one one-pointedly supplicates the root teacher in the form of Amitābha in one's heart center, beyond union or separation from the nature of one's mind, thinking that death will not lead to suffering and one-pointedly concentrating on that, when the dissolution of the elements takes place and the appearances of the pardo of becoming manifest, one will think that is the display of the protector Amitābha, inseparable from one's teacher.

At that moment one will receive an actual vision of the deity and he will take one to the buddha fields. In the pardo we do not have a solid body, but a mental body. Because of that, during the pardo it is possible to perceive the deity and the teacher. While we have this solid body, even though we supplicate the guru and the deity, we cannot actually see them.

If one can train in the practice of the pardo before death comes, when the time of death approaches it will be easy to apply the instructions. To fight the enemy during a war, one needs to be prepared. Once the war has started, there is no time to collect the necessary weapons to fight the enemy. In the same way, to prepare for the enemy of death it is essential to prepare for death during this lifetime by practicing the instructions. If one has the confidence that one has such-and-such a teacher and has practiced such-and-such instructions, when death comes there will be no fear. As is said, for the yogin death is a state of enlightenment. So this is the essential practice for bringing the pardo of dying to the path.

At the time of death there is a sound of "trrrrrrr." What is this sound? At present, body and mind are comfortably together, like a man sitting relaxed in his house. But when death comes, the mind wanders into the pardo and the body is left behind. The connection between body and mind is
When the connection between body and mind is cut, the five elements of the body—earth, water, fire, wind, and space—dissolve into each other. There are many different experiences of dissolution of the elements, depending on the individual. The most common dissolution among beings is the threefold experience called appearance, increase, and attainment.

When the breath has stopped and it seems that one has died, the white essence at the crown of the head, obtained from one's father, comes down. As it is descending from the forehead center to the heart center, one experiences all appearances as white light. It is like when the moon rises in a very clear autumn sky and bright moonlight appears everywhere. Such a white light appears everywhere. At the same time the mind experiences a state of great bliss, without any suffering or illness. Also, with regard to the kleshas, all thoughts of anger dissolve into the mind and hatred does not rise any more.

If the dying person is a practitioner who can bring this experience to the path, he should be able to recognize the essence of the buddha's nirmāṇakāya. How is this essence of the buddha's nirmāṇakāya brought to the path? The practitioner should recognize the white essence, which is the upāya aspect, as the nature of the buddha's nirmāṇakāya. When the mind remains in that state of bliss, it does not get lost in delusion. If one cannot recognize this experience as the nirmāṇakāya, one will just feel very comfortable, as though enjoying a very good sleep in a comfortable bed.

As the red rakta, obtained from one's mother, ascends from the navel center to the heart center, everything appears like a bright red light. One cannot see anything but red. At the same time the klesha of passion stops. When everything appears as red light and thoughts of passion stop, the mind experiences an incredible luminosity. If one can recognize
this experience of luminosity, one will recognize the red light as the essence of the buddha’s sambhogakāya, and one will not be caught in delusion. If one cannot recognize this experience as the sambhogakāya, one will be caught in delusion.

When the white essence from the crown of the head and the red rakta from the navel center have dissolved into the heart center, the consciousness dissolves. Our ordinary consciousness, by seeing forms with the eyes, can recognize deities and demons, beautiful and ugly, and by hearing sounds with the ears, it can recognize pleasant and unpleasant sounds. As this consciousness dissolves, one experiences intense darkness. As when the sky is without sun and moon and a cloud brings a heavy rainfall, one is unable to see anything, not even one’s own body and possessions. The mind is without any thoughts.

If one can recognize this state as the essence of the buddha’s dharmakāya, one will not fall into delusion. If one cannot recognize this state as the essence of the dharmakāya, one will be caught in delusion. At this time all thoughts of ignorance dissolve into the intrinsic nature. If one is able to remain in that state for a while, when that state of darkness is finished, all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa will be pervaded by the intrinsic nature of emptiness. That emptiness is not realized through meditation, but through the separation of body and mind. At this point, there is no way for the mind to avoid the experience of emptiness.

When the experience of emptiness arises as the nature of mind, if the dying person is a practitioner of the great perfection or mahāmudrā, by recognizing that experience and resting in that state, he will be liberated, like a child getting on its mother’s lap. In that state there is no more delusion; it is the buddha’s dharmakāya. All phenomena of
saṃsāra and nirvāṇa dissolve into the state of dharmatā, and one attains perfect buddhahood. If the deceased, like an ordinary, worldly person, does not recognize the view of the intrinsic nature, he will not experience this state for more than a fraction of a second, and from that state of dharmatā he will again fall into delusion.

Someone who has confidence in the view but was not able to be liberated in that instant will again wander in saṃsāra. Again he will experience deluded appearances in the form of sounds, lights, and rays. The sounds will be like thousands of thunderclaps resounding simultaneously in a very frightening manner. This sound is so powerful that it can move mountains, toss the waves of the ocean into the sky, and cause a hurricane. When a thousand thunderclaps resound simultaneously, one can only try to block one’s ears to avoid the noise. At the time of this great noise, one should recognize that it is just a display of one’s own mind and not something from outside. For instance, ordinarily when there is the sound of thunder, there is the danger that we might be hit by lightning, and if someone shoots a gun, there is the danger that we might be hit. If one recognizes that there is nothing to be afraid of because that sound is not outside oneself but is the sound of dharmatā, it will change into the mantra of whatever yidam deity one has relied on, such as Chakrasamvara’s mantra, OM HRĪ ḤA HA HŪM PHAT, or Vajrayogini’s mantra, OM VAM VAIROCHANA. . . . Once the sounds change into the mantra of one’s yidam deity, one cannot avoid remembering one’s yidam. Just by remembering one’s yidam deity, one will be liberated.

Then one will experience a very bright light. Like rolls of brocade being unrolled, that five-colored light—white, red, blue, green, and yellow—is so bright and intense that we cannot look at it. From wherever we look, from above or below, it appears everywhere. Recognizing that this light is
the radiance of the intrinsic nature of one’s mind, one recognizes the luminosity aspect of the mind, and the rainbow light dissolves into one’s heart center. In that state of nonthought, the intrinsic nature, one attains buddhahood. If one does not recognize that the light is the radiance of the intrinsic nature and one’s mind is distracted by it, one will be caught in delusion and wander into the pardo of becoming.

Then one will experience rays which are extremely bright and sharp. The points of the rays are like sharp weapons that might harm us. If we think that these weaponlike rays are going to cut us, we become very frightened and fall into delusion. If we recognize that the rays do not really exist and are nothing but the radiance of the intrinsic nature and we are able to rest in the state of nonthought, mahāmudrā, the appearances of the rays will subside and we will attain enlightenment in the state of nonthought, the intrinsic nature. We will not be deluded by the sounds, lights, and rays of the pardo.

In order to be able to bring these experiences to the path, we should supplicate our yidam deity now, recite the mantra, and think that such-and-such appearances will manifest during the pardo. In order to get used to those appearances, whatever we do now, we should consider it to be the pardo. When there is thunder and lightning, we should think that it is the sound of the pardo, and at that time we should remember our yidam deity or teacher. If we get used to thinking that everything is the pardo, we will not need to try to imagine that. Whatever we do, we will just naturally think it is the pardo. If we think that the appearances of the pardo are just our own fabrications and do not exist as something outside of us, and that all the appearances of the pardo are like an illusion, a dream, and we get used to the
fears of the pardo now, that will help us in the future, when the pardo actually manifests.

THE PARDO OF DHARMATĀ

Regarding the pardo of dharmatā: the dharmatā has no intermediate state. In the state of dharmatā, when we fall into delusion, between being deluded and not deluded these appearances manifest. That is called the pardo of dharmatā. To bring that to the path, one should recognize that the three appearances of sounds, lights, and rays, and the three appearances of appearance, increase, and attainment are the display of one’s own mind.

Emptiness, the nature of one’s mind, is beyond fear and that which fears. As the mind cannot be grasped or touched, it is like space. If one has that confidence in the view, the illusory appearances of the pardo are liberated in the state of dharmatā. When they are liberated, one is liberated in the ground nature and will not again wander in saṃsāra. The reason why one can be liberated in the pardo is that when body and mind are separated, one returns to the ground from which we have been deluded from the very beginning. When one properly recognizes that ground, one cannot help but be liberated. If the dead person wanders around without recognizing that he is in the pardo, he will be deceived by the appearances in the pardo and will not recognize them. Then he cannot help but fall into delusion.

To recognize that the pardo of the dharmatā is the display of one’s own nature, one should practice the instructions of the great perfection and mahāmudrā now, and train in perceiving all forms as the yidam deity, all sounds as the yidam’s mantra, and all thoughts as the yidam’s mind, the wisdom nature of bliss and emptiness inseparable. One
should think that this is the pardo and there is no need to be afraid. By getting used to that, one will remember it through one's habitual tendencies. So those are the instructions for liberation in the pardo of dharmatā. If one is liberated in the pardo of dharmatā, one cannot fall into delusion again. So there you have instructions on the first three pardos.
The root of delusion, which creates the three worlds of saṃsāra, consists of the perceptions of birth, death, and the pardo. The three methods for freeing ourselves from these deluded perceptions are the development stage, the completion stage, and mahāmudrā and the great perfection. While purifying the delusions of birth, death, and the pardo, if one recognizes the nature of birth, death, and the intermediate state as it is, as the three buddha kāyas, there are no impurities.

Holding onto something that does not exist, believing in something that is not true, through our ignorance we are deceived by these deluded perceptions. If a very good magician displays different things, such as beautiful animals and so forth, when we see them we might think they are real animals, but they are not. Similarly, what we perceive is not true in reality, and so these appearances of birth, death, and the pardo cause an enormous amount of suffering. Someone who has not realized emptiness will perceive the appearances of birth, death, and the pardo as an enormous amount of suffering, but someone who has realized emptiness will perceive them as a rainbow in the sky or a mirage. He will not see any real existence. If one understands the nature of emptiness, without any sense of real existence, there is no way that birth, death, and the pardo will not naturally appear as the three buddha kāyas.

As for a method for making birth, death, and the pardo appear in that way, the Buddha explained the inconceivable
teachings of the causal vehicle of characteristics and of the fruition vehicle of the secret-mantra vajrayāna. Among those, the best, most perfect, and quickest method, which is easy to practice, is the unsurpassed secret-mantra vajrayāna. Regarding the unsurpassed secret-mantra vajrayāna, there are four classes of tantras: kriyā, upa, yoga, and anuttara. Practicing anuttara tantra is the supreme path, which is very easy. In order to practice that path, one first needs to ripen one’s being with the ripening empowerment. Then one needs to exert oneself in the development and completion stages. In the completion stage there are six yogas, or six pards. The practice of the six pards is a method for pointing out the delusions of the pardo as a display of the three kāyas. The instructions hidden by Padmasambhava and discovered by Karma Lingpa, the profound teachings of Karling Shitro, are such a method.

These six pards are the pardo of this life, the pardo of dying, the pardo of dharmatā, the pardo of becoming, the pardo of dream, and the pardo of meditation. Yesterday I explained the pardo of this life, the pardo of dying, and the pardo of dharmatā. Today I shall explain the pardo of becoming, the pardo of dream, and the pardo of meditation.

Pardo means intermediate state, when a past action is over and the next action has not started. The state in between those two is called pardo. When one is caught in between those two actions, if one needs to do something one cannot do it. Though one cannot do anything, one cannot just sit around. This state of delusion causes great suffering. The best-known meaning of the word pardo, explained in all the sūtras and tantras, is the intermediate state when one has left one’s previous body behind and has not yet found one’s next body. On the secret-mantra vajrayāna path this state is explained in terms of the six pards.
THE PARDO OF BECOMING

Regarding the pardo of becoming, if one has not been liberated in the ground nature after death and one has not recognized the appearances of the pardo of dharmatā as a display of the three kāyas, one will wander into the pardo of becoming. What is this pardo of becoming? It is the when one has left one’s previous body and not yet found a new one.

While wandering in the pardo of becoming, one has a mental body. It is as when one is dreaming and has the feeling that one has a body, but it is the body of one’s habitual patterns. There is no substantial, obstructing body like we have now. With the mind depending on that mental body, one wonders where to go and what to do. One is very restless, not sure about what to do or where to go, and everything appears very frightening. As one’s body is without the white and red essences, which one received from one’s parents, one cannot draw support from the sun or moon. There is no perception of the sun and moon, everything is perceived as before dawn. One is without one’s children, relatives, friends, and enemies. Everything becomes very frightening, and one feels like one is being pursued by executioners with many weapons, or carried here, there, and everywhere like dry leaves by a fierce wind. One can still think as though one had the five sense organs; one can see the gods and gurus above and one’s parents, children, and relatives below. One does not recognize that one has died. One has the feeling that one is being pursued by enemies on every side.

To recognize that the appearances of the pardo of becoming are one’s own deluded perceptions and that there are no outside enemies, one should think that the appearances of the pardo are nothing but a dream. It is like when one is
sleeping comfortably in one's bed and has a dream about being pursued, caught, beaten, and killed by many soldiers. All these perceptions are just a dream, and one is comfortably lying in one's bed. Similarly, when deluded appearances arise, if one recognizes the intrinsic nature one will recognize that all the appearances of the pardo are delusions. Though one may be frightened of deluded perceptions, there is no reason to be so. All one needs to do is remain in the intrinsic nature and remember one's teacher and the instructions. With that confidence, one will see the frightening appearances like someone awakening from sleep, and one will not follow them. Thinking that the frightening appearances are a display of one's yidam, when one is pursued by murderers with weapons one should meditate on them as messengers emanated by one's yidam. Whatever sounds of thunder and lightning one hears, one should think that it is all the display of one's yidam and not be frightened. Thus remaining in the intrinsic nature, the best practitioners will be liberated at this stage. A middle-level practitioner, remembering his teacher and yidam deity, should ask them for protection against those frightening appearances. With the confidence that the frightening appearances are nothing but the display of the body, speech, and mind of one's yidam deity, one does not need to be frightened.

For instance when one sees a movie with wars and so forth, one knows that it is just a projection on a screen. If one is not frightened of the appearances and sees the innate essence of the unaltered intrinsic nature, the appearances will fade like a rainbow fading in the sky. When they fade, there is no more suffering or fear from the projections in the pardo. Just from thinking that one wants to go to the buddha fields and receive instructions from one's teacher, just from supplicating one's teacher, he will appear and take
one to the buddha fields. In that way, one will be protected from the fears of the pardo of becoming.

As for the length of the pardo of becoming, if one has to stay two weeks in the pardo of becoming, during the first week one will have perceptions of one’s previous life, and during the next week one will have perceptions of one’s next life. But all these appearances should be dealt with in the same manner. In essence, one should remember one’s teacher, regard the projections in the pardo as a display of one’s yidam’s body, speech, and mind, and with firm confidence develop devotion. In that way one will be protected from the fears of saṃsāra.

THE PARDO OF DREAM

The fifth pardo is the pardo of dream. We have different perceptions of this life and the next. Regarding the perceptions of this life, we think it is permanent and stable, that we can just stay around and have long life. When the frightening projections of the pardo manifest, if one has experience in the instructions of pardo practice, what one perceives in this life and in the pardo will be the same. Even though one is in the pardo, one will immediately remember one’s teacher and meditate on the instructions. As many appearances as manifest in the pardo will all make one progress on the path. Knowing that the perceptions of this life are nothing but suffering and impermanence, one will give up the eight worldly actions, one-pointedly concentrate on one’s teacher and the instructions, and feel inspired to practice. If that is how one feels, one has been able to bring the projections of the pardo to the path. If one does not feel like that, it is a sign that one has not been able to bring the pardo projections to the path.
Milarepa said: "If one feels no difference between this life and the next, one has thoroughly understood the view. If one feels no difference between day and night, one has thoroughly understood meditation." Now the appearances of this life and the appearances of the daytime seem the same. The projections in dreams and the projections in the pardo seem the same. While comfortably sleeping in one's bed without any illness, if one has good dreams about having great wealth, attaining what one wants, arriving where one wants to be, meeting, talking, and having a nice time with one's parents and relatives who have died, at that time one's mind feels happy. But when one wakes up it is like a mirage; there is nothing real about all these experiences. As there is nothing real about this, it is called the pardo of dream.

Bringing the dream pardo on the path, one will be able to mix together appearances of day and dream. If one is able to mix appearances of day and dream, the experiences of this life and the pardo will mix. As they mix, when the projections of the pardo meet with the habitual patterns from this life, one will not have frightening experiences in the pardo. To mix the experiences of daily life with those of the dream pardo, one should first recognize dreams as such. When we are dreaming now, we think the dream is real and do not recognize it as a dream. That is a sign of not recognizing dreams. When we have frightening experiences in dreams, such as being eaten by wild animals, if we have confidence that we are not really being eaten but that it is just a dream, the fear will subside. When we have a good dream, such as meeting our parents who have passed away and talking with them, if we recognize that it is a dream and that our parents have died and are not there but that in dreams such deluded experiences arise, we will be able to recognize the dream as a dream. That is using dream as the path.
We mundane people like to accumulate profit, respect, and fame, and do not like loss, slander, and disgrace. Not liking slander and disgrace is due to habitual patterns related to the clinging to the permanence of this life. If one is trained to see everything in this life as impermanent, even though one encounters disgrace in this life, one will know that it has no essence and one will have no attachment to this life. In order to recognize dream as dream one needs to meditate on the instructions of one’s teacher.

How does one meditate on these instructions? When going to sleep at night, one should visualize oneself as a deity such as Vajrasattva and in his heart center, a four-petaled red lotus. In the center of that lotus one should visualize a white syllable A, very fine. While falling asleep, one should visualize that from the syllable A light radiates, filling one’s body and room, which becomes as bright as in daytime. One should one-pointedly concentrate on that. As one falls asleep, the universe and its contents dissolve into light, which dissolves into the A. Then the A dissolves into emptiness. Remaining in that state of emptiness, one will recognize dream as dream. If one does not recognize the dream as such, when one wakes up from one’s sleep one can try to meditate on it again.

There are two types of recognition: dream and luminosity. If one is mainly trying to recognize dreams, one should visualize a red lotus in one’s throat center and the radiation of light. That is the instruction for dream yoga.

If one recognizes a dream, even when it is a good dream, there is no liking or excitement: it is just a dream, nothing permanent. If it is a bad dream, where one is killed or beaten by enemies, one thinks that it is just a dream. One will gradually recognize one dream and then another, and in that way all dreams will be recognized. If one is confident that one’s mind can change dreams, as one recognizes a dream
containing impure perceptions such as going to one of the eighteen hell realms and being beaten or killed by executioners, one should think that it is just a dream and that one is experiencing the sufferings of hell and so forth in one’s dream. Since dreams are mind-made, the mind can change them into anything. One can change the hell realm of one’s dream into a buddha field and the executioners into the deities of a maṇḍala, such as that of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities or of one’s yidam—Vajrayogini, Vajrasattva, Chakrasamvara, and so on. With the confidence and devoted feeling that one is in a buddha field with deities, having faith in them and reciting their mantra, one can instantly change impure perceptions into pure ones. The reason impure perceptions in dreams can instantly change into pure perceptions is that dreams are not permanent or reliable, but are deluded perceptions.

Just as one can change impure dreams into pure ones, one can change daytime experiences of the universe and its contents into a maṇḍala with deities. The daytime perceptions of the universe and its contents are also impermanent and unreliable, just like last night’s dream, but we hold onto them as something permanent. The nature of emptiness can be transformed into anything. If one has confidence in the view of emptiness, the appearances of the universe can be transformed into a buddha field and the contents into deities, with all forms as the form of the deity, all sounds as the mantra of the deity, and all thoughts as the wisdom mind of the deity.

In changing appearances through samādhi in this way, first one has the inclination to transform the appearances, and then when one’s samādhi is stabilized, one can actually transform them. The universe naturally changes into a buddha field. Similarly, one can change impure dreams into pure ones. If one can recognize dreams and transform them,
out of one dream one can make many, and out of many dreams one can make one. It is one's mental body that experiences the dream, not the solid body. In one's dream, wherever one wishes to go, there one goes. If one concentrates on wishing to go to buddha fields such as Sukhāvatī and the Copper-Colored Mountain, one will arrive there in one's dream. Whether one arrives there or not, the dream is an illusion, and illusions have no essence. If one holds onto an illusion as real, that is one's own clinging.

Thinking that dreams are emptiness, one can change them into pure lands, such as the western buddha field Sukhāvatī. In that buddha field one can meet the buddha Amitābha and receive his prophecy. Now one is still alive and this is just a dream, but by thinking that in the future, when one has died, one will go there and be born from a lotus flower, one can prepare for being born there. In such a way one can change one's perceptions. With the support of the dream one can see how one can change perceptions. In that way one will develop confidence in being able to change one's perceptions of this life.

It is possible to transform perceptions because all appearances of this life have the nature of emptiness, and emptiness can be changed into anything. When King Trisong Detsen's messengers went to Mang-yul to invite Guru Rinpoche to come to Tibet, they offered him a maṇḍala of gold coins and gold dust. Guru Rinpoche just threw the gold into the sky, offering it to the three jewels. The messengers felt sorry that the gold was wasted, so Guru Padmasambhava smiled and said, "You do not need to feel sorry about it. I can make as much gold as I want." As he looked at the earth, his gaze changed the mountains and rocks of Mang-yul into gold. If one has realized emptiness, one is able to transform things in such a way.
Whatever one perceives in this life one will be able to change into anything one likes. Whatever impure perceptions one has now are all an illusion. Thinking to cut the root of illusion and change it into emptiness, one should develop confidence that today’s perceptions and last night’s dream are an illusion. Again and again one should meditate on perceptions of daily life as the play of deity, mantra, and dharmakāya. Whatever one does during the daytime, one should think that it is a dream. If one feels happy because of meeting friends or relatives, one should think it is a dream. If one is joyful because of being in a beautiful garden, one should think it is a dream. Thus thinking that whatever happens and whatever one does is a dream, when dreaming at night one will also recognize that to be a dream. Knowing that it is a dream, one will know that one can transform it, and transforming it, one can change impure into pure. With that confidence, when one wakes up from one’s sleep, one will know that it is easy to change one’s dream. The reason it is easy is that dreams are just a manifestation of prāṇa-mind and do not really exist.

During the day, one perceives solid things and thinks they actually exist, like clinging to impurities in gold. Even though one is attached to those appearances, if with diligence one continues to think that all that is emptiness and one can change it, one will actually be able to transform those appearances. If one is able to change the appearances in one’s dream, one will be able to change the projections in the pardo. Then there will be no more difference between this life and the next, and one will have thoroughly understood the view. If one is able to transform in such a way, one has perfected the practice of the pardo of dream.
THE PARDO OF MEDITATION

The sixth pardo is the pardo of meditation, which means the meditation of inner samādhi. How does this meditation of inner samādhi relate to the pardo? If we practice samādhi now, that does not mean we have stabilized it. In between stabilizing samādhi and just practicing samādhi lie the obstacles to samādhi—drowsiness and wildness of thoughts. With drowsiness and wildness, it is not possible to develop true samādhi. If one is not controlled by drowsiness and wildness, one will be able to develop true samādhi.

What is drowsiness? When the mind is gathered too much inside, one starts to feel sleepy, one’s five senses become numb, and if one wants to visualize something, one cannot. What is wildness? When the mind is gathered too much inside, if one tries to control the perceptions of the five senses, one cannot. One is unable to concentrate, the mind has many thoughts, and one is distracted by them. If one tries to tame the mind with mindfulness and awareness, one cannot. One’s prāna becomes unbalanced and one has pain in the heart center. If one can get rid of the faults of drowsiness and wildness, one can develop genuine samādhi. If one gets lost in drowsiness and wildness, it is not possible to develop true samādhi.

It is very important to be aware of and try to control our thoughts; otherwise, we will get completely lost in them and go crazy. It is important to control the movements of one’s mind and try to find clarity, so that the arising of thought will slow down. The moment in between these constant movements of the mind we call the pardo. One cannot expect clarity from the very beginning of one’s practice. It is important to know what is going on and to control speedy thoughts, but one should not be influenced by expectation and doubt. One should not fall into those
extremes. One should depend on antidotes for drowsiness and wildness. Nobody is without drowsiness and wildness. Ordinary people are like that.

Until now we have spoiled our mind by following thoughts, following past habits, welcoming future thoughts about subduing enemies and supporting relatives, thinking that if we do such-and-such we will be happy for a long time and if we do not, things will be bad. Thinking a lot, one has hopes about accomplishing one’s plans and fears about not accomplishing them. Hoping to accomplish one’s plans, one exerts oneself day and night, not even sleeping. If one cannot accomplish them, one is very upset. If one thinks about what one has done up to now, one may have accomplished certain work that is very good. It has made one happy and comfortable. Now one wants to do such-and-such in order to accomplish such-and-such, and one makes more plans, following one’s present thoughts. Just as the wind tosses the waves on the ocean and the ocean is never calm, with this wildness, the mind will never be calm.

To develop samādhi, one has to get rid of drowsiness and wildness. To get rid of drowsiness and wildness, one has to practice shamatha, or stillness of mind. If one does not develop stillness, one will not be able to get rid of drowsiness and wildness. For instance, if one burns a butter lamp in a very windy place with no protective glass cover, it will be blown out by the wind. With a protective glass cover, the wind will not be able to blow out the butter lamp. In the beginning, it is very difficult for us to train the mind and be aware of its movements. When we recognize them, we see that they are very strong. But we should not give up. We should continue. For example, if one wants to tame a wild elephant one needs time to train it. One should train it in a very skillful manner and always find the middle way, not too vigorous and not too mild. If one controls an elephant
with a hook, it can be led to do whatever one wants. It will sit, walk, and even make sounds according to what one wants. Similarly, when the mind is still, one should look up and be joyful and happy, and when it is wild, one should look down, remember the sufferings of samsāra and impermanence, and arouse renunciation. One should feel how useless it is to waste one’s time by following these thoughts. The speed of the movement will slow down. Then one should continue the practice, trying to encourage oneself.

When a skilled craftsman makes golden ornaments, he has to go through different processes. He heats the gold with various substances for a long time, burns it, and beats it to improve the quality of the gold. In the same way, if one tames one’s mind in the right way, one develops a special state of samādhi. Right now our mind is not capable of developing samādhi. Though we want the mind to be still, thinking many thoughts, it is like a restless monkey; it never stays still. In that way, we will never develop samādhi. If we cannot develop samādhi in our mind, we will not generate the qualities of stillness.

The mind can be compared with a crippled rider and prāṇa with a blind wild horse. If a crippled rider mounts a blind wild horse, since the horse is blind he cannot see whether the road is good or bad and whether it is suitable to go on or not. He just goes ahead anywhere. Since he just goes anywhere, the rider will be thrown off the horse. Though the rider can see whether the road is good or bad, because he is crippled he cannot control the wild horse. He cannot control its direction. In the same way, we are caught up in deluded perceptions. Our prāṇa is like the blind wild horse, followed by our mind, which is like the crippled rider. For instance, if we are attached to relatives, because of that attachment our mind will be very active. If we have anger toward enemies, our mind will be distracted figuring out
how to get rid of our enemies. Due to the fault of distraction, thoughts of desire, hatred, and ignorance will automatically arise. But if the mind is bound by the ropes of mindfulness and awareness, like an elephant tied with a rope, it cannot go anywhere.

Thus, through mindfulness and awareness the mind can be controlled. What is mindfulness? When body, speech, and mind are under control, they are in harmony with samādhi. If not, they are not in harmony with samādhi. Now we are not able to recognize what the mind does, how it gets wild and drowsy. Without the antidotes of mindfulness and awareness there is no way to control the mind. Watching one’s mind, one will be able to discover the faults of the mind and apply the right antidotes. When the mind is drowsy, one will be able to recognize that fault and know how to get rid of that drowsiness through mindfulness. When the mind is wild, one will be able to recognize this and apply the right antidote to get rid of it, so that one can develop samādhi. Awareness keeps analyzing body and mind to see whether they are acting in harmony with the dharma; it is like a teacher.

If one has both mindfulness and awareness, when the mind is wild and distracted, thinking only about worldly things, one should think that worldly actions have no essence. One should think that until now one has been caught up in the suffering of saṃsāra, and realize how useless everything is that one does in that regard. If the mind is spoiled by being caught up in that way, there will be no way to become free from the suffering of the three lower realms. If the mind is not spoiled, one’s bliss and happiness will increase, just like that of the exalted ones. Thinking of that, one should try to heal the mind. In the beginning, it is very difficult to control, but gradually, as one gets used to doing so, it becomes easier.
When one practices peaceful samādhi, three experiences arise. The first one is the experience of movement, which is likened to a waterfall coming down a steep mountain. When water falls down a steep mountain, it cannot be stopped even with great force. When one first meditates on stillness [San: shamatha] and insight [San: vipashyanā], it is extremely difficult to control the mind. It is not possible to control it for a minute or even a second. When one gets distracted, if one thinks that it is impossible to control one’s mind and just gives up, that will not help.

If one wants to catch a monkey or a wild horse, one should first give it food and be gentle with it. In that way one can catch it. Once one gets hold of it, one can make it do whatever one wants. Similarly, if one tries to catch the mind while it is wild, it is not possible to control it. Knowing that one’s mind is wild, one should develop renunciation and weariness when the mind is not weary. When one feels weary, tamed by that suffering, the mind will stay still. In that state of being tamed by suffering, the mind will stay still. In that state of being tamed by suffering, one can develop stillness and insight. When one does not feel happy, according to the great beings from the past, that is the best time to develop samādhi. Practicing samādhi with great diligence, in the future one will attain happiness and, eventually, the fruition of nonreturning. Thus one should rejoice and cheer the mind; in that state one can develop samādhi.

The second experience is the experience of achievement. What is achieved? One achieves a level that is quite peaceful compared to what one has had before. Once one has understood that one’s mind is like a waterfall coming down a mountain, one will not make the mind tense up, and it will be easier to meditate on stillness and insight. The strength of the wildness will let up. Properly concentrating on a visualization, one’s mind will be a little more steady than before. Even though the mind may be wild or drowsy, the force of
that is not as strong as before. The mind is stronger because it is more used to samādhi. As wild as a horse may be, once it has been tamed, if one restrains it with a bridle and saddle, it will go wherever one wants. In the same way, one can stabilize one's samādhi a little bit. That is called the experience of achievement, which is like an ocean not stirred up by the wind.

The third experience happens when one gets used to samādhi. When a yogin practices samādhi, even if one shows him a hundred entertaining things, his mind will not be distracted in the least. He can completely control his mind through samādhi. Supported by the qualities of samādhi, the mind does not move. Even if one practices samādhi for many months or years, the mind will not become drowsy, sleepy, or weary. Even if one tries to make it wild using desirable things, the mind will not be disturbed, because it has become steady. It is like a mountain on a great plain covered with a forest of all sorts of trees. No matter how much wind and rain come, the mountain cannot be moved.

To continue the samādhi practice, when drowsiness arises, one cheers the mind. When wildness arises, one tames it with mindfulness and awareness. In that way, one attains stability. When we get used to this, instead of being how we are now—cherishing ourselves above everyone else—if we meditate on bodhichitta, consider all sentient beings as our parents, give up anger toward enemies and attachment to friends, we will cherish other sentient beings above ourselves. We will not feel anger or attachment to others, and we will also not have anger or attachment to ourselves. This will come gradually as we get used to the practice.

When we have stabilized the meditation, body and mind will be comfortable. It is like the blind wild horse being able to see and the crippled rider being able to use his legs. Thus the rider can guide the horse along the right roads and
carefully avoid going to the wrong places. In the same way, if one has stabilized one’s samādhi, body and mind will be comfortable and one can stay in samādhi for many days and nights. Without feeling any discomfort, whatever conditions of cold or heat occur, one will not fall ill or die from them. When body and mind experience bliss through samādhi, one will be able to levitate, go to all sorts of places, and do all sorts of things. That stability is the result of the right practice of samādhi. If one does not stabilize samādhi, even if one sits on a steady piece of wood, one will not be able to stay there. If one stabilizes one’s samādhi, one will not be controlled by drowsiness and wildness. One can meditate as long as one wants, and body and mind will be blissful. That is the perfection of the pardo of meditation.

This has been an abridged explanation of the practice of the six pardos. In essence, no matter which of the six pardos one practices, the main benefit is that clinging to the illusory perceptions of saṁsāra as real subsides. If the illusory perceptions of saṁsāra arise as pure appearances, one has understood the practice. The nature of saṁsāric delusions is pure. Phenomena are primordially pure kāya and jñāna. But just as someone with an eye defect looking at the moon cannot see that the moon is beautiful and full because it is faraway, if we do not recognize that the nature of phenomena is pure, we hold on to what is pure as impure, and cling to the impure as real. That clinging to reality is a delusion. The root of attachment to worldly affairs comes from the clinging to their reality.

In the god realm there are miraculous things such as the wish-fulfilling tree, crops that need no cultivation, one’s own body radiating light so that one does not need sunlight or moonlight, the ability to levitate into the sky, and so forth. Even though such miraculous things exist, if one is attached to them, being distracted by that attachment, one will wan-
der in saṃsāra and be unable to progress on the path of liberation. Being distracted in this way through one's whole life, when death comes, one will think that one has been distracted one's whole life and realize that great suffering is about to begin. For instance, a celestial being who knows he is going to die goes through extreme suffering; an ordinary being does not experience that much suffering. Why does he not experience as much suffering? Celestial beings have incredible comfort and luxury, to which they are very attached. When they find out that they are going to die within a week, and they know where they will be reborn, they experience unbearable suffering. If a human being who lives comfortably experiences suffering, he will suffer more intensely than someone who is always suffering.

Even though one suffers, if one understands the nature of emptiness, there is no reason to not want that suffering. Suffering is the cause of developing renunciation toward saṃsāra and confidence in karma and its result. Knowing that all appearances are impermanent and understanding the nature of impermanence, one will understand the pure phenomena of kāya and jñāna. Knowing the nature of appearances, one will understand that projections are impure and illusory. Having rejected illusions, one will recognize that the nature of illusion is pure.

If someone discovers gold that looks black because it is covered with a stain, a specialist would recognize that. He knows that if the gold is polished so that the stain is removed, it will be very valuable. If it is heated and beaten, the gold will have a very good quality. Similarly, knowing that impure illusions are a delusion, with the support of the antidote one can purify illusory projections, so that all delusions appear as wisdom. That is called delusion appearing as wisdom. When delusion appears as wisdom, wisdom
is a phenomenon of the buddha’s kāya and jñāna, in which there is nothing but purity.

For this to appear, it is necessary to apply the essential points of the teachings. To apply the essential points, one should develop renunciation and weariness toward the three worlds of samsāra and dedicate whatever positive actions of body, speech, and mind one accumulates to the welfare of all sentient beings, instead of keeping them for oneself. Considering that there are no beings who have not been one’s parents and all of them are tormented by suffering, one should wish for them all to obtain the root of one’s positive actions and the power of samādhi, and develop great compassion. One should not have any pride or partiality about one’s practice. Even though one has not attained all the qualities of the path, if one is very diligent in the practice, eventually one will definitely attain all the qualities. Without diligence, one cannot attain these qualities. Practicing the dharma with diligence, one will develop faith and devotion, compassion, and all the qualities of the path.

If one continuously exerts oneself in worldly actions with body, speech, and mind, one can succeed in subduing enemies and supporting relatives and friends, if one wishes to do so. One will be successful in all worldly matters. If sometimes one is ambitious and sometimes one gives up, one will not be successful in one’s aim. Similarly, to practice the dharma, one should also continuously exert oneself.

Even if one develops special experiences and realization, one should not be proud of that. If one’s samādhi is disturbed by drowsiness and wildness, one should remember death and impermanence and the suffering of saṃsāra. In that way, one will develop courage and diligence. Thus one cannot help but perceive the sixth pardo as the pure appearances of the three kāyas. When the sixth pardo appears as the three kāyas, impure is perceived as pure and, enjoying
the appearances of the three buddha kāyas, there is no suffering. One will be liberated in the result of the secret-mantra vajrayāna path.

This explanation of the six pardos is according to the Nyingma tradition of the secret mantra. The Sarma tradition also has the pardo of dying, the pardo of becoming, and the pardo of this life. For instance, the six yogas of Nāropa consist of chanḍālī, illusory body, dream, luminosity, transference, and pardo. If one applies the essential points of these practices, they are the same.

It is important to remind oneself how fortunate one is. Now we have obtained a precious human body and have been born in a place where the Buddha’s doctrine is known. We follow special spiritual teachers and friends and practice the holy dharma. It is extremely fortunate that we can practice the dharma, and in a future birth we may not be so fortunate. So we should not waste this precious opportunity, but practice the dharma now. Once one has heard the dharma, one should try to understand it by reflecting on it. Then if one practices it, it is inevitable that the qualities of the dharma will develop in one’s mind. As is said, “As a sign of hearing many teachings, one should be able to control one’s mind. As a sign of having done a lot of practice, one should not have kleshas.”

All the instructions we have gone through are very important and precious. If one practices for one hour, one will be able to develop samādhi in that time. It will be very good if you can practice according to these instructions.
All of us have entered the path of the buddhadharma and follow a qualified teacher. Not only do we follow a qualified teacher, we also have received the profound instructions, and we have practiced those instructions, which is extremely fortunate.

For practicing the dharma, there are the causal vehicle of characteristics and the fruition vehicle of the secret-mantra vajrayāna. Now we are practicing the extraordinary teachings of the secret-mantra vajrayāna. In the secret-mantra vajrayāna, once one has been ripened through the abhiśheka, it is very important to practice the development and completion stages. In particular, it is extremely important to practice the development stage properly, since it is the preparation for the completion stage. If one can properly concentrate on the visualization during the development stage, stillness is accomplished within that state.

The development stages of the Sarma and Nyingma traditions are slightly different. In the development stage of the Nyingma tradition, one creates the maṇḍala with the support of the three samādhis and seals it with purity, completion, and ripening. The form of the deity is used to progress on the path. If one makes progress and removes obstructing forces with the support of clear visualization of form, there will be progress in the yoga of the mantra recitation. The development and completion stages are both included in the three samādhis [the completion stage
corresponds to the samādhi of suchness]. Because of that, through the development stage one can attain not only the ordinary but also the supreme siddhis.

The development stage is based on the three samādhis. For instance, if we, depending on that basis, practice the sādhnā of Vajrasattva, we recite the mantra OM MAHĀŚŪNYATĀ-JÑĀNA-VAJRA-SVABHĀVA-ĀTMAKO 'HAM, which means, “From the very beginning all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are the unborn state of emptiness.” That is the samādhi of suchness. While one recites the shūnyatā mantra and rests in the nonconceptual state of emptiness, the appearances of the universe and its contents become emptiness. This samādhi of suchness uses the essence of the buddha’s dharmakāya to progress on the path.

“The play of unceasing compassion is like a rainbow in the sky.” That is the all-illuminating samādhi. As all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa fade into emptiness like a rainbow, there is no way for the mind not to experience emptiness. As that experience of emptiness arises, one generates compassion toward all sentient beings who have not realized this nature of emptiness. “May all beings reach the state of the glorious Vajrasattva. To that end, may I practice the yoga of Vajrasattva.” That is the all-illuminating samādhi, which relates to the buddha’s sambhogakāya.

In the mahāyāna vehicle of characteristics, the paths of emptiness and compassion are to be practiced inseparably. Meditating on emptiness alone, one will not attain the result of buddhahood. Meditating on compassion alone, one cannot get beyond the worldly path. When one practices in a state of nondual emptiness and compassion, practice becomes the mahāyāna vehicle of characteristics. Both the secret-mantra vajrayāna and the causal vehicle of characteristics come from this profound view. The nature of the samādhi of suchness is emptiness, and the nature of the
all-illuminating samādhi is great compassion. When one practices these two inseparably as prajñā and upāya, as it is said: “The display of wisdom beyond substance arises as the unchanging syllable HŪM.”

The essence of the buddha’s wisdom mind has no existing substance such as that of a pillar or a vase. Even though it has no existing substance, the seed samādhi makes it possible to show students that which cannot be shown, the inconceivable dharmadhātu beyond speech, thought, or expression. Just as the sky has no solidity and cannot be grasped as if it were a pillar or a vase, the seed samādhi is like the appearance of a rainbow in the sky. Meditating on the nondual nature of emptiness and compassion in the form of a white HŪM rising in the sky like the moon is the seed samādhi. It manifests the buddha palace and the maṇḍala of deities, using the buddha’s nirmāṇakāya to progress on the path.

What is the purpose of these three samādhis? Sentient beings in the three worlds of saṃsāra are deluded by obscurations of birth, death, and pardo. The samādhi of suchness purifies obscurations of death, the all-illuminating samādhi purifies obscurations of the pardo, and the seed samādhi purifies obscurations of birth. So the three samādhis purify obscurations of birth, death, and pardo. If one practices the completion stage, one will experience a state of bliss, luminosity, and nonthought. On the path, the samādhi of nonthought is the samādhi of suchness, the samādhi of luminosity is the all-illuminating samādhi, and the samādhi of bliss is the seed samādhi. Their fruition is the three buddha kāyas.

From the syllable HŪM gradually emanate various syllables that manifest the elements, the protection circle, and the buddha palace. In the center, on a lion throne, a lotus, and a sun-and-moon disk, the syllable HŪM descends from the
sky, radiating light rays that make offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas and gather back the blessings of their body, speech, and mind, which dissolve into the \textit{H\text{"u}M}. Again the light rays radiate to all beings of the three worlds, purify their karmic obscurations, and dissolve back into the \textit{H\text{"u}M}, which transforms into a five-pronged vajra. The syllable \textit{H\text{"u}M} is the speech aspect; the vajra into which it transforms is the mind aspect. Then the vajra transforms into \textit{Vajrasattva} with consort, which is the body aspect. These three vajra aspects should be complete within the practice of the development stage. Having visualized oneself as the deity in the development stage, one invites the wisdom of the buddhas and bodhisattvas from \textit{Akan\text{"i}sh\text{\text{"a}}ha} in the form of the deity one has visualized.

At first, oneself as the deity is called the "samayasattva." Why is it called the samayasattva? For instance, if one's teacher is in front of one, and one makes the vow to accomplish such-and-such a virtuous action or do such-and-such a practice, one should not break that promise [or, samaya]. Breaking that promise creates a seed for going to hell. If one does not break that promise but lives up to it, one can attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis. Similarly, when one meditates on one's body, speech, and mind as the nature of \textit{Vajrasattva}, since the buddha's body, speech, and mind are inseparable from one's own body, speech, and mind, one is blessed by the body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas. That is the promise of the buddhas; therefore that visualization is called the samayasattva.

Now one is obscured by karma and defilements, but when one purifies impure perceptions and meditates on pure appearances, when the light rays emanate from the \textit{OM} at one's forehead center, the \textit{\text{"A}H} at one's throat center, and the \textit{H\text{"u}M} at one's heart center, the \textit{j\text{"a}nasattva} is invited from the \textit{Akan\text{"i}sh\text{\text{"a}}ha} buddha field. The buddhas invited from the
Akanishta buddha field are called “jñānasattvas” [wisdom beings] because they have abandoned all their obscurations, are complete with all good qualities, and have perfected their wisdom. Therefore they are called jñānasattvas.

Why are both the samayasattva and jñānasattva called “sattva”? Because they have promised to send the blessings of their body, speech, and mind for the sake of all sentient beings, and bodhisattvas never break their promise. Since it is their mind promise they are called “sattva.” [The Tibetan translation of “sattva,” sempa, means “brave mind.”]

When the jñānasattva is invited, dissolves into the samayasattva, and samayasattva and jñānasattva mix inseparably, it is like adding yeast to rice pulp so that it becomes beer, or putting gold on a clay statue of the Buddha so that it becomes valuable. When samaya and jñāna have become inseparable, in order to bless one’s skandhas and sense organs as the secret maṇḍala of the three seats, one emanates from one’s heart center light rays that invite the devas of abhiṣheka. The five buddhas with their consorts are invited and bestow the abhiṣheka and blessings. This is like consecrating the deities, the inseparable samaya- and jñānasattvas, so that their blessings become even stronger than before. From one’s heart center emanate offering goddesses who prostrate to the deity, make offerings, and sing verses of praise. Then they dissolve back into oneself. After they dissolve back into oneself, one’s sense of the development stage is stabilized. That is a brief explanation of the development stage. If one meditates on oneself as Vajrasattva, that is the way to proceed.

In order to attain the ordinary and supreme siddhis through the development stage, one should combine the development and completion stages so that they are non-dual. For that, the following three factors are necessary: clearly visualizing the details, remembering their meaning
[recollection of purity], and having confidence that one is the deity [pride of the deity].

**CLEARLY VISUALIZING THE DETAILS**

Regarding the first factor, how do we clearly visualize the details? If we have a clear and stable visualization of the buddha’s form, and continue to train in that visualization, our mind will attain stillness. If one is to visualize Vajrasattva, first one should visualize oneself as the form of Vajrasattva. Then one should concentrate on the face, and then just on the eyes, their color, the eyelashes, the eyebrows, the circle of hair between the eyebrows radiating five colored lights, the nose, the mouth, the red lips, the ears, the hair, the crown, the topknot, the radiance of the hair, and the jeweled earrings. When a skilled artist paints a buddha, he first paints the face: the nose, the eyes, the circle of hair between the eyebrows, the mouth, and the ears. When all the details of the face are finished, he paints the expression, very youthful and beautiful. Then he paints the chest, the lower body, the legs in vajra posture, the lower garment of different-colored silks, the silk blouse, the right hand holding a five-pronged vajra at the heart center, and the left hand holding a bell at the left hip. Thus a skilled artist paints all the details very clearly in the right proportions, without mixing them up.

Though the details of the form are visualized this way, their nature is not solid like that of earth or rock. They are also not something flat but like a rainbow appearing in the sky. All the details of the body are completely clear and distinct. Within the body there is no flesh, blood, and bones. Rather, it is like a pitched tent. Vajrasattva’s form is very
youthful and attractive, without any signs of aging or ugliness.

Having concentrated on visualizing all the details in this way, one can then concentrate on the entire form. Then again one can visualize all the details. After concentrating for a long time on the entire form, when the mind becomes dull and the visualization unclear, one can again visualize the details as I described before—the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the head ornament, the earrings, the vajra in the hand—concentrating on each detail. When one clearly visualizes each detail, the nature of the form should be radiant, like the moon shining. Each detail is perfect in color, distinct, as though painted by a very skilled artist. The nature of the details is empty, without any solidity or characteristics. Appearance and emptiness are inseparable, like a crystal vase.

In the heart center of Vajrasattva is the jñānasattva. Generally, wrathful deities have a peaceful jñānasattva, and peaceful deities have a wrathful jñānasattva in their heart center. For instance Vajrakīlāya has a peaceful Vajrasattva in his heart center. Sometimes, the basis of manifestation of the main deity is the jñānasattva in the heart center. For example, in the heart center of the ďākinī Yeshe Tsogyal is Jetsün Tārā or Vajravarāhī. Sometimes there are three types of deities of the same family. According to the Guhyagarbha Tantra tradition, with oneself as Vajrasattva, the jñānasattva is a Vajrasattva the size of four fingers in height. That form is without any ornaments, naked, very beautiful and attractive, not holding any attributes. He holds one hand at his heart center and one down at the side of his body. That, visualized clearly, is called the jñānasattva. The outer form of Vajrasattva is the samayasattva. Taking a human being as an analogy, the jñānasattva is like the human being’s consciousness.
All the details of the jñānasattva should be visualized very clearly. In the heart center of the jñānasattva is a moon disk the size of a pea. On top of the moon disk is a standing five-pronged white vajra, symbolizing the mind of all the tathāgatas, the nature of bliss and emptiness. In the center of the vajra is the mind syllable of Vajrasattva, a white HŪM, the same color as the deity, from which light and light rays radiate. One should one-pointedly concentrate on that visualization. That HŪM is called the samādhisattva.

So there are three sattvas: the samayasattva, the jñānasattva, and the samādhisattva. Building up these three sattvas is the ultimate development stage of the deity. One can visualize the deity as large as a mountain, with the buddha palace in equal proportions. One can also visualize the deity the size of one’s body, or as small as a cubit, a hand-span or a grain, whichever is most comfortable. When one visualizes Vajrasattva for a long time, the practice of the development stage will become stable.

In order to progress in the practice, one should visualize Vajrasattva as standing, getting up, walking around, eating and drinking, and so forth, and then sitting down again. Sometimes one should visualize the deity as large as Mount Meru, with wild animals roaming around on him, resting on the nose of Vajrasattva, flying around him, and so on. But all that should not disturb the visualization of Vajrasattva. Sometimes one should visualize the deity as small as a mustard seed, with all the details very fine. Then again one should visualize Vajrasattva as vast as space, with billions of buddha fields manifesting from every pore of his body. The pores of his body do not become bigger, nor do the buddha fields become smaller; they are exactly the size of the pores of the buddha. The size of the buddha fields does not differ from their own exact size of two or three hundred thousand miles across. In each buddha field abides a buddha
teaching the doctrine to limitless disciples, displaying various miracles such as flying back and forth through the sky, and practicing samādhi. All that is maintained in the visualization in each pore of Vajrasattva’s body. Then again one can bring the visualization back to the size one finds comfortable.

After concentrating for a long time on the samādhis, if one gets tired, sleepy, bored, or drowsy, one should fix one’s eyes on empty space so that Vajrasattva’s form can become clear again. One should remember biographies of past saints who meditated on Vajrasattva and the fruition they achieved, and generate great joy. One should reflect on the meaning of the dharma. If one has too many thoughts and cannot visualize, one should concentrate one-pointedly on the visualization of the HŪM in the heart center of Vajrasattva. That is stillness [San: shamatha] without characteristics.

If one wishes to practice stillness with characteristics, one can draw a white syllable HŪM on a piece of canvas or paper a cubit in size. Putting that right in front of you, concentrate one-pointedly on it, not letting thoughts follow anything else. If there is any noise or if there are people going or coming, do not look at them or talk to them, but just concentrate on the HŪM. If one can look clearly at the HŪM, when one closes one’s eyes one will see the HŪM very clearly. Similarly, one could put a painting of Vajrasattva in front of oneself and concentrate on that. After some time, one will be able to see it very vividly with one’s eyes closed. If one visualizes such an image in one’s heart center one’s wild thoughts will be pacified.

If one is neither drowsy nor wild, but in a state of clear visualization, one can stay without eating for a whole day. Meditating in this way, one will stabilize the practice. Even if one’s practice is not yet that steady and one does not get those signs of stability, just concentrating on the form of the
buddha has great benefit. For instance, if a child who is upset and crying sees an image of the buddha and offers a flower that he has in his hand, through that action he makes a direct connection and in future will follow the buddha. Since the buddha’s activities are inconceivable, one should consider that just looking at the buddha’s form has great benefit.

As for Vajrasattva, sentient beings with karma and defilements, who have sins and obscurations, just by hearing his name and thinking about it, will be purified of those obscurations. All the infinite mandalas manifest from Vajrasattva. In the Sarma tradition, Kālachakra, Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, and so forth all manifest from Vajrasattva. In the Nyingma tradition, Yangdak Heruka, Vajrakīlaya, and so forth all manifest from Vajrasattva. As Vajrasattva is the lord of all families, concentrating on the form of Vajrasattva alone is equal to concentrating on the forms of all the buddhas. That one-pointed concentration without the flaws of drowsiness and wildness will develop samādhi in one’s mind. In the four great classes of tantra of the secret-mantra vajrayāna there is no text without the name of Vajrasattva, so one should cultivate an attitude of great joy toward being able to do this practice. In that way one can develop the ability to practice samādhi. If the mind becomes too wild, one should concentrate again on the thangka. Then when one closes one’s eyes, the image on the thangka should appear vividly.

In the same way, in visualizing one’s own body in that form, if one meditates for a long time, one will be able to visualize the details very clearly and feel the presence of the deity. In the first stage, that of visualization as a mental object, if one practices the development stage for a long time, first the mind will think that one is Vajrasattva—his body is colored white, he holds a vajra and bell, embraces his
Development Stage and Vajrasattva Practice

consort Vajrāṭopā ["vajra pride"], also white in color, and so forth. All that will appear in the mind very vividly. That stage is called visualization as a mental object: at this stage, the object becomes vivid in one's mental state.

In the second stage, that of visualization as a sense object, having continued that training, one will actually transform into Vajrasattva and see and feel that very clearly. With the support of the confidence in oneself as Vajrasattva, the pride of the deity, concentrating on one's own body, one can actually transform into Vajrasattva.

In the last stage, that of visualization as a physical appearance, the body appears as the deity. If a teacher has mastered this practice, a student who has devotion will perceive the master as Vajrasattva. Physical forms actually appear as the deity. That is the fruition of the practice. Completing these three stages, one perfects the clear visualization of the details.

If one practices until one has perfected these stages, the merit of visualizing the buddha's form is immense. Accomplishing stillness is the perfect basis for samādhi. As for the benefit of reciting the secret mantra of Vajrasattva, there is no difference between reciting the mantra with one's mouth and visualizing through the mind's samādhi. Thus one should consider the great benefit of this practice. That concludes the discussion of the first topic, clearly visualizing the details.

REMEMBERING THE MEANING OF THE DETAILS

Visualizing the deity's form alone is called the gross or ordinary development stage [without the three samādhis]. Through the color and attributes of the buddha, the inner, mind qualities are displayed externally in order to train
sentient beings. Thus we perceive peaceful and wrathful appearances, which are not ordinary forms. Merely visualizing the form very clearly will not lead us to the state of liberation. In order to gain certainty that the forms we visualize are not ordinary forms, we should remember their meaning.

How do we remember their meaning? For instance, Vajrasattva has one face, which symbolizes that within the intrinsic nature of emptiness all phenomena of sāṃsāra and nirvāṇa are one. There is not a sāṃsāric emptiness and a nirvānic emptiness; they are one. The nature of sāṃsāric emptiness is perfect with all unconditioned qualities, and the nature of nirvānic emptiness also is perfect with all unconditioned qualities. Vajrasattva has one face, symbolizing the one nature of sāṃsāra and nirvāṇa beyond accepting and rejecting.

Though having attained the state of fruition, the buddha kāya has both the dharmakāya and the rupakāya. At the time of persevering on the path of enlightenment, there are two kinds of accumulations: the accumulation of conceptual merit and the accumulation of nonconceptual merit. When first developing bodhichitta, there are two factors: the upāya of great compassion and the prajñā of emptiness. That is what is symbolized by the two arms of Vajrasattva.

The white color of Vajrasattva symbolizes that his body, speech, and mind are completely free of any obscurations. For the sake of disciples, his body is beyond death and impermanence. He does not pass into nirvāṇa like the buddhas, but always remains, free of birth and death, with a very youthful and beautiful body.

Symbolizing that he directly and indirectly performs peaceful activities such as turning the wheel of the dharma and wrathful, destroying activities to train beings, he has two legs. No matter how many actions the buddha displays in taking birth in the three worlds of existence for the sake
of sentient beings—sometimes manifesting as a householder, sometimes as a monk, and sometimes as a wild animal, a bird, and so forth—he is not stained by any of the faults of the three worlds of saṃsāra. He is not like the shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, who pass into nirvāṇa aiming for their own enlightenment and cannot vastly benefit beings like the bodhisattvas. Symbolizing that he does not fall into the extreme of either saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, he has two legs and is seated in vajra posture.

His right hand holds a golden five-pronged vajra at his heart center. The upper five prongs symbolize the five buddhas and the lower five prongs symbolize their five consorts. The center of the vajra symbolizes that in whatever form the five buddhas and their consorts manifest, they are not different from the one essence of the wisdom display. So there is one center connecting them. From the point of view of the form aspect, the five-pronged vajra is very beautiful; from point of view of the emptiness aspect, there is no attachment to worldly wealth—it symbolizes being without attachment. The five-pronged vajra appears as a symbol of nondual appearance and emptiness. Symbolizing the natural wisdom of Vajrasattva’s mind, where appearances and emptiness are inseparable, and that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa do not go beyond the one essence of Vajrasattva, his right hand holds a vajra at his heart center.

His left hand holding a bell symbolizes the prajñā aspect. The nature of prajñā is emptiness, and when compassion appears in the nature of emptiness, as when a sound comes from the bell, there is no existing substance to the sound, nothing tangible. Similarly, when from the expanse of emptiness wisdom one shows disciples whichever of the three vehicles is effective for training them, there is no such concept as “I have accomplished the aim of teaching them the dharma,” or “I have not accomplished the aim of
teaching them the dharma." Regarding the teachings, there is no concept of time; teachers always teach for the benefit of beings. That is symbolized by the bell held in the left hand.

Who has this great compassion to teach the dharma to all beings? Vajrasattva has this great compassion. Explaining it from the aspect of the buddha's nature, he is without any manifesting characteristics and does not move from the expanse of dharmakāya. But in order to show a form to the beings to be trained, that dharmakāya has all the unconditioned qualities, such as the five wisdoms, the six pāramitās, and so forth. These are symbolized by the thirteen jewel ornaments and the five silk garments. The five silk garments are the upper and lower garments and the ribbons around the crown. The thirteen jewel ornaments are the crown, the topknot, the earrings, the necklaces, the armlets, the bracelets, the anklets, and the apron. Ten of the thirteen ornaments symbolize the ten powers and three symbolize the three kāyas.

Symbolizing that Vajrasattva's mind is unchanging within the wisdom state of nondual bliss-emptiness, he is in union with his consort. Symbolizing the wisdom emptiness of the consort, she is naked, without any clothes. Though she is naked, she is adorned with the five bone ornaments, symbolizing that she is beyond union with or separation from the five wisdoms. The right hand of the consort holds a hooked knife, the right arm embracing the neck of her consort, which symbolizes cutting the root of attachment to the three worlds of samsāra. Her left hand holds a kapāla filled with amṛta; this symbolizes the enjoyment of continuous bliss-emptiness. Though prajñā and upāya appear in the form of the principal deity and consort, in the ultimate nature there is no difference between the them. To symbolize that, the deities kiss each other.
From their bodies radiate billions of light rays of the five wisdoms and the sixth, self-born wisdom, pervading the infinite buddha fields with light rays of body. All those buddha fields are just a display of Vajrasattva’s form which, like our karma body, is just a display of wisdom. His form abiding in that expanse of light rays is seated on a lotus, symbolizing that he is not touched by faults of body, speech, and mind. Symbolizing that he continuously looks after all sentient beings with great compassion, there is a moon disk on the lotus, upon which Vajrasattva sits. Symbolizing that Vajrasattva spontaneously perfects all unconditioned qualities, he manifests in sambhogakāya form. However his form appears, it is very beautiful and there is nothing ugly about it. Even if one were to look at his face for many days, one would never have enough of seeing it. He is without any signs of an ordinary worldly body; he is the lord of nondual appearance and emptiness.

This is the way one should remember the meaning of all the different details, such as the arms, the legs, and so forth. Vajrasattva has all these qualities of purity. One might think that if one visualizes oneself as Vajrasattva with these qualities, one will be able to obtain such qualities in the future, and that at the time of the ground these qualities are not there, at the time of the path they are neither there nor not there, and at the time of the result they are all there. But that is not the case. In the ground nature these unconditioned qualities are all perfectly present. On the path, from the point of view of appearance, all these unconditioned qualities manifest according to one’s perception, and from the point of view of emptiness, the essence of these qualities is perfected. In the fruition, these unconditioned qualities are perfect in the way they appear and the way they are. In brief, one-pointedly visualizing oneself as Vajrasattva, the
basis of manifestation of all the buddhas, one should think one really is Vajrasattva.

To illustrate the qualities of that buddha—the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, the eighteen distinctive features, and all other unconditioned qualities—one visualizes the outer buddha palace, perfectly adorned and arranged. If one does not visualize the buddha palace, one can just visualize oneself as Vajrasattva in the center of the protection circle. That is easier to visualize and includes everything.

In brief, everything about Vajrasattva, up to the pores of his skin, illustrates his unconditioned qualities. As one maintains the pride that there is no ordinary conditioned body subject to suffering, the obscurations of one’s ordinary conditioned body are purified, and the buddha wisdom is realized. If one can visualize like that, with the certainty that one has the unconditioned wisdom body of the buddha and no ordinary karmic body, one will develop the confidence that one will actually obtain that unconditioned wisdom body. That concludes the discussion of the second topic, remembering the meaning, or being aware, of the qualities and importance of the visualization.

PRIDE OF THE DEITY

The third topic is confidence that one is the deity, or maintaining the pride of the deity. We are not trying to fabricate something that is not there. We are just trying to see what is within our nature. Visualizing the earth as gold will not change the earth into gold. Though the meditator is an ordinary person, he has the potential of the tathāgata-garbha, where all unconditioned qualities are primordially present, just as oil is present in a mustard seed. If one presses a small mustard seed, one will obtain oil. Similarly,
through clearly visualizing the details, remembering their meaning, and maintaining the pride of the deity, one cannot help but actualize the qualities present in the tathāgatagarbha. It is not as though now we are impure ordinary individuals deluded by karma and defilements, but in the future we might be transformed and be pure. From the point of view of the qualities of the ground, the victorious Vajrasattva has exhausted all faults and perfected all qualities. The nature of the wisdom mind of nondual bliss and emptiness of all the buddhas is the nature of one’s own tathāgatagarbha. Because of that nature one should maintain the pride of the deity.

As explained during the discussion of remembering the meaning, the wisdom form of all the buddhas manifests in the form of Vajrasattva. All the parts of Vajrasattva—his face, arms, legs, and so forth, up to the pores of his skin—are pervaded with the buddhas’ wisdom, which benefits sentient beings. If even one pore of the skin of Vajrasattva’s body benefits sentient beings, visualizing one’s body, speech, and mind as Vajrasattva will have immense benefit. Though we are ordinary individuals and beginners, the qualities of Vajrasattva are present in the nature of our mind. So it is not as if we are trying to fabricate something we do not have. We are just trying to uncover the potential we have within. Thinking that one is actually Vajrasattva himself, one should maintain the pride of the deity.

One should mix the pride of the deity with remembering the meaning. If one has pure gold, it can be used if it is heated, mixed with other substances, and beaten. Similarly, as Vajrasattva is primordially present in the natural state of one’s mind, the tathāgatagarbha, if one meditates on Vajrasattva according to the various points of the development stage and the completion stage, remembering the meaning and maintaining the pride of the deity, there is no
way that the qualities of the tathāgatagarbha will not be realized. Not remembering the meaning during the visualizations of the development stage is like leaving a gold mine undiscovered. As no one knows it exists, no one will use it, so it will not have any benefit. If the gold is discovered by someone, it can be used. The way to use the tathāgatagarbha is to practice the development stage.

Regarding the confidence that one is Vajrasattva oneself, the root of wandering in the three worlds of saṃsāra is ego-clinging. If one meditates thinking that that ego is the deity, that is not impure pride, but becomes pure pride. Once this pure pride has arisen in the mind, there is no need to do anything special about impure pride, as it has been transformed into pure pride. That is the oral instruction of the profound method of the secret-mantra vajrayāna. Stabilizing this pride will also help the visualization. If one thinks that one is visualizing oneself as something one is not, one will not be very happy. If one thinks that one is visualizing oneself as something one is, one will develop confidence. Continuing that meditation, one will develop all the qualities of the development stage. When one notices that these qualities are developing, one attains the certainty and confidence that one is actually like that.

What is the wisdom body of Vajrasattva like? That one body pervades all the buddha fields. In order for all the buddha fields to be displayed in one pore of his body, it is not necessary to make the pore bigger or the buddha fields smaller; they can both remain just as they are. For instance, when Milarepa got inside a wild yak’s horn in Kungthang to avoid a hailstorm, the wild yak’s horn did not get bigger and Milarepa did not shrink. But he was quite comfortable in that wild yak’s horn. Similarly, within the body of Vajrasattva whole buddha fields can take form with everything manifest. If one is able to display such miracles, there is no
reason to feel uncomfortable about countless buddha fields abiding in one pore of the body. When it is explained according to its appearance aspect, it is luminous like a rainbow; when it is explained according to its emptiness aspect, it is without substantial flesh and blood. Because the buddha’s body is an unconditioned wisdom body, however beings visualize it in accordance with their interest and devotion, that is the way the form will actually appear. As soon as one thinks about that form, the blessings of the buddha’s body will enter one’s mind. Thus one should maintain the pride of the deity.

While meditating on that samādhi, one’s mind might become drowsy or wild. If it becomes drowsy or spaced out, one should concentrate on the importance of the practice, the qualities of Vajrasattva, and the supreme and ordinary siddhis one can attain from meditating on Vajrasattva, and rejoice. If the mind becomes wild, one should concentrate on the form of the buddha. Even visualizing the buddha’s form for just one second has immense benefit. If one is distracted by beautiful worldly forms and things, entertainment, and so forth, and feels like doing something else, one is wasting one’s time, getting distracted from one’s own nature, and there is no benefit whatsoever. Concentrating on the form of Vajrasattva makes our wisdom mind, the potential within, unfold. One should try to get used to doing it for a long time. One should keep one’s mindfulness and awareness. Mindfulness means thinking that one is Vajrasattva and always maintaining that pride without forgetting it. Awareness is watching whether one is meditating on Vajrasattva’s form and whether the qualities are developing in one’s being. One should check up on oneself repeatedly and, if those qualities are not developing, one should train in the methods of developing them. If one practices for a long time in this way, one’s practice will become stabilized.
MANTRA RECITATION

When one’s practice has become stabilized, if one meditates on the emptiness aspect of the development stage for a long time and one’s mind becomes weary, to progress in the practice one should do the yoga of mantra recitation. What is this yoga of mantra recitation? In general, in ordinary individuals, body, speech, and mind are separate things. The body is a form made of flesh and blood, the speech is what speaks, and the mind is all the thoughts that arise. For instance, when we die and the mind has gone into the pardo, the physical body is cremated or thrown in the water, and there is nothing left of the speech. The body, speech, and mind of a buddha are not like that. The body alone can perform all activities of speech and mind, the speech alone can perform all activities of body and mind, and the mind alone can perform all activities of body and speech. Since his body, speech, and mind are inseparable, one of these aspects can perform the activities of the others. If a buddha can benefit more beings through his body, he will manifest his body. If he can benefit more beings with his speech, he will manifest his speech. If he can benefit more beings through the blessings of his mind, he will manifest his mind. Thus, visualizing his body is not different from visualizing his speech. His speech is the secret mantra.

For instance, now we do not actually see the form of Vajrasattva or recognize the ultimate Vajrasattva, the wisdom of awareness-emptiness. Even though we do not recognize that, the six-syllable mantra OM VAJRASATTVA HŪM and the hundred-syllable mantra are the miraculously displayed form of Vajrasattva’s speech. That mantra is a manifestation of Vajrasattva, and if we recite that mantra—for instance if we recite the hundred-syllable mantra 21 times without being distracted—our evil deeds will not increase and will gradual-
ly be exhausted. If with undistracted mind we recite 100 or 108 times the hundred-syllable mantra, even if we have broken samaya and committed the five heinous crimes, they will be purified. The six-syllable or the hundred-syllable secret mantras are blessed by Vajrasattva. If one gathers many medicines, blends them, and has them blessed by gurus, giving this blessed medicine to beings will remove their illness and obstacles, protect them, and prevent harm. In the same way, if one recites Vajrasattva’s mantra, the deity manifests in the form of the mantra.

We should not think that if we were actually able to see the form of Vajrasattva that would be great, but just reciting his mantra is easy and therefore not as great. Because Vajrasattva actually manifests in his mantra, reciting the mantra with the visualization is of great benefit. Through the recitation, as our obscurations are gradually exhausted, the mantra will transform into the deity, and we will actually have a vision of Vajrasattva. He will give us prophecies, and we will attain the five types of higher perception and so forth. It is inevitable that such an accomplishment will naturally happen. The deity and the mantra are not separate things. Even though it is the speech of Vajrasattva, one should think that it is actually Vajrasattva.

If one prays to a wish-fulfilling jewel, food, clothes, and whatever wealth one wants will naturally arise. Similarly, if one looks at the mantra, it has no mind, and when it is written there is nothing but the shape of the drawn syllables. But if one recites it with one-pointed concentration and meditates on the samādhis, the supreme and ordinary siddhis can be attained through the recitation of that mantra.

The buddha has body, speech, and mind activities. Of those, his speech activity is the one that brings the most benefit to sentient beings. How is it that the speech activity is the one that is of greatest benefit? Our Buddha, Shākya-
muni, manifested in this world with his body, but when he passed into nirvāṇa his body disappeared, so we can no longer connect with his appearance aspect. But his speech is preserved in writings such as the sūtras and tantras, so we can study his teachings. If we hear, contemplate, and meditate on those teachings, we will know what the Buddha said to accept and what to reject. If we know what to accept and what to reject, that knowledge is also the Buddha’s activity. So speech is very important.

Even if they have not developed faith and devotion, when beings see the six-syllable mantra OM VAJRASATTVA HŪṂ and when the thought of that arises in their mind, that is like planting a seed of enlightenment. It is inevitable that they will have a connection with Vajrasattva in the future. If we write the mantra on a rock or cloth or paper and leave it somewhere, some beings will make a connection just by seeing it. If they just think, “Oh, this may be a mantra written in Sanskrit or Tibetan,” just by looking at it, they make a strong connection. It is because each syllable is not ordinary but completely blessed and because it manifests from the wisdom state of enlightened beings that it has such significant benefit. Beings that have no direct way to connect will naturally make a connection through mantras written on rocks or pieces of cloth or paper. In that way, a seed of enlightenment is planted, and it is inevitable that through that seed Vajrasattva will take care of them.

In the past there was a great Indian scholar named Vasubandhu, who used to recite 9,900,000 texts. Because he did not want to interrupt his recitations, at night he would sit naked in a tub filled with oil, to clarify his prāṇa, and recite the texts. Once when he was sitting there reciting, there was a pigeon in his room. The pigeon did not know what the master was reciting, but heard the sound of the Buddha’s teachings again and again. Though the pigeon
could not arouse devotion, just through hearing the sounds, when the pigeon died he was reborn as a student of master Vasubandhu and became just as learned as the master. He was known as the paññātīa Sthiramati, and from birth he could remember all the sūtras he had heard in his previous life. In the same way, if beings just hear the sound of Vajrasattva’s mantra, it will have immense benefit in their next life.

When Vajrasattva’s mantra is written on rocks or flags that hang in the air, the wind blows over those mantras. Then whoever is touched by that wind will make a strong connection with Vajrasattva and be saved from the three lower realms. So that is an important way to protect beings. It is a connection taking place in an indirect way. For instance, in building a fire, if we have coals that just need to be blown on, the fire will burn quite easily. In the same way, through the recitation of the mantra, one’s karma and obscurations will be purified. The power of it will be like having coals for the fire.

It is important to combine the visualization and recitation. Meditating on the form of Vajrasattva while reciting his mantra is much more beneficial. It is like when one wants to approach someone and calls his name again and again. If one does that, in the end that man will say, “What?” When sending a letter of request to a minister, if one sends it not only once but twice or three times, in the end that minister will send a reply. Similarly, when one constantly recites Vajrasattva’s name, through the support of that recitation Vajrasattva will always look after us with compassion and give us special blessings.

Some sādhanas of other deities have sections on approaching, close approaching, accomplishment, and great accomplishment. Every sādhana has an approaching, accomplishment, and activity aspect. For the recitation of
Vajrasattva's mantra, concentrating on the seed syllable HŪM surrounded by the mantra and reciting OM VAJRASATTVA HŪM or the hundred-syllable mantra while one-pointedly concentrating on the visualization of Vajrasattva's body, speech, and mind is the approaching aspect. The emanating of light rays from the mantra is the close-approaching aspect. When one attains the supreme and ordinary siddhis, one applies the activities. As one meditates on oneself as Vajrasattva with the seed syllable and the six-syllable mantra in the heart center turning clockwise, inconceivable light rays radiate and pervade limitless buddha fields. When the light rays touch the heart centers of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, they are very happy and send their body, speech, and mind blessings back with the light rays. It is like bees taking honey from flowers. As the light rays dissolve into one's body, speech, and mind, one's broken samayas of body, speech, and mind are purified. One obtains the body, speech, and mind blessings, and one's visualization of Vajrasattva becomes even more clear and stable than before.

Again from Vajrasattva's heart center radiate light rays, which pervade the beings of the six realms. The suffering of each realm, such as the heat and cold of the hell beings and the hunger and thirst of the pretas, is pacified. As the sun rising in the sky melts the frost with its warmth, all their impure perceptions are dispelled by the light rays emanating from the seed syllable and the mantra in the heart center of Vajrasattva. All phenomena should be considered as of the nature of the three vajras. All forms are Vajrasattva's buddha field and Vajrasattva's form. They appear but their nature is emptiness. All sounds are Vajrasattva's mantra. All thoughts are the wisdom of bliss and emptiness inseparable.

Visualizing the radiating light rays in this manner, one recites the six-syllable mantra OM VAJRASATTVA HŪM. The six
pāramitās of Vajrasattva's mind are perfected. In reciting the hundred-syllable mantra one recites the syllables of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities. Whatever deity of the secret-mantra vajrayāna one practices, throughout the Sarma or Nyingma there is not a single one who is not connected with Vajrasattva. Therefore Vajrasattva is the lord of all the families and manifests all the buddhas. Within this practice the recitation, accomplishment, and activity are fulfilled. For instance, in the first stage, through emanating light rays and making offerings, we approach the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' blessings, which is the approaching aspect. The accomplishment aspect is gathering the blessings back into oneself through the light rays and becoming inseparable from Vajrasattva's body, speech, and mind. Then, emanating light rays to all beings and purifying them is the activity aspect. In the Vajrasattva practice, these three aspects are very simple, but they include everything.

After the buddhas have manifested their buddha fields, when their activities are completed, they remain in the dharmakāya state and their buddha field dissolves. Similarly, one visualizes Vajrasattva's form, concentrates one-pointedly on the visualization, trains in the purity, perfection, and ripening, and exerts oneself in the recitation of the mantra. At the end of the session, the outer universe dissolves into the protection circle, that dissolves into the buddha palace, that dissolves into Vajrasattva, the consort dissolves into Vajrasattva, Vajrasattva dissolves into the mantra, the mantra dissolves HŪM, and the HŪM fades into space, like a rainbow. Then the mind has an experience of emptiness. One should rest for a while in that state. That is the absolute Vajrasattva, the aspect of appearance and emptiness. When thoughts arise again, the universe becomes Vajrasattva's buddha field, the contents become Vajrasattva's form, and
all sounds become his mantra. Thus the purity is used to progress on the path.

The form is the mudrā teaching of the development stage, the speech recitation is the mantra teaching, and the mind meditation is the teaching of the completion stage, the absolute teaching. As for the appearance aspect, one visualizes Vajrasattva's buddha field and the form of the deity, which dissolves into the expanse of emptiness. When dissolving the form in the expanse of emptiness, it is the mind that dissolves it. Vajrasattva is not a form that can be touched with the hands; neither is it something that one cannot see. It is made by the mind, and after it has dissolved back into the mind, when one looks at that mind, it seems that something is there. If one asks a child whether there is a mind, he will say that there is. If one asks him to look at the nature of that mind and see whether it is white, yellow, red, blue, square, or round, he will not be able to find anything. Similarly, when Vajrasattva has dissolved into the state of emptiness, that illustrates the nature of appearance and emptiness inseparable.

The mind has an appearing aspect. Because inside the body there is a mind, we can see with our eyes, hear with our ears, remember with our mind, like good things, and dislike bad things. That thinking mind is like a rainbow in empty space: it cannot be touched with the hands nor seen with the eyes. Even a great scholar cannot explain how to meditate on the nature of that mind. The recognition of the nature of the mind, the nature of appearance and emptiness inseparable, in the development stage is called the yoga of luminosity.

We are not producing something that is not there. All we visualize and try to concentrate upon is within our nature. It unfolds from there. The nature of appearance is not ordinary but should be recognized as empty. From emptiness
anything can manifest. We should be able to remember the instructions for the practice, work with the details, remember the meaning of them all, and have confidence that we ourselves have that potential within. External phenomena should be realized as nothing but a display of what is within.

We should have confidence that this practice is very important. The practice of Vajrasattva has such blessings that it naturally purifies all breaches of samaya and all subtle and gross obscurations. This samādhi meditation should be combined with the three excellencies: the application of bodhichitta, the main practice beyond concepts, and the dedication of merit to all sentient beings, which is the basis of the mahāyāna vehicle. Just by remembering Vajrasattva's name, the door to rebirth in the lower realms is shut, broken samaya is purified, and body, speech, and mind accomplishments are attained. That concludes this brief instruction on the development stage.
The Four Binding Forces

In the stages of the path of the mahāyāna secret-mantra vajrayāna, there are the development stage and the completion stage. It is important to start with the practice of the development stage. Just as a man has a body, speech, and mind, as well as activity that combines those three, within the development stage there are four binding forces. The practice of relating to our body as the form of the buddha deity to progress on the path is the binding force of appearance as the deity. Relating to our speech as the essence of the buddha’s speech to progress on the path is the binding force of mantra recitation. Relating to our mind as the buddha’s mind to progress on the path is the binding force of the unchanging view. Making one’s body, speech, and mind inseparable from the buddha’s body, speech, and mind, one uses buddha activity to progress on the path. This is the binding force of activity. These are the four binding forces, which are special instructions on the development stage by Guru Rinpoche.

THE BINDING FORCE OF APPEARANCES AS THE DEITY

Let us discuss the first binding force, appearances as the deity. All phenomena, the universe and its contents, are formed through the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Of these five elements, earth solidifies, water
moistens, fire gives heat, wind moves, and space pervades. Those are the actions of the five elements.

The nature of the five elements is the five consorts of the buddhas. The nature of earth is Buddhalochana, the nature of water is Māmakī, the nature of fire is Pāṇḍaravāsinī, the nature of wind is Samayatārā, and the nature of space is Dhātvishvari. The nature of the five buddha consorts is the way the five elements are. As for the way they appear: earth is solid, water is wet, fire is hot, wind moves, and space pervades.

Through our impure perception, the universe and its contents manifest from the five elements. When the universe is destroyed, it is also through the five elements. Recognizing the elements as the nature of the five buddha consorts, one meditates on the maṇḍala as in the secret-mantra vajrayāna path, with the elements and Mount Meru below and, on top of them, the buddha palace. There is nothing that is not made of the five elements, which should be recognized as a display of the five consorts.

Regarding the contents of the universe, sentient beings: all beings have the five skandhas, which are form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness. From the impure, saṃsāric point of view, these conditioned, fundamental skandhas are the basis of all karma and emotions; their nature is impure. When their purity is recognized according to the secret-mantra vajrayāna path, they are the five buddhas. Form is Vairochana, feeling is Ratnasambhava, perception is Amitābha, formation is Amoghasiddhi, and consciousness is Akṣhobhya. The way they are is the five buddhas, and the way they appear is the five skandhas. According to the impure, saṃsāric outlook, these five skandhas are the basis of all karma and emotions and thus the basis of saṃsāra. One recognizes their nature as the five buddhas during the development stage. If one practices the
elaborate development stage, meditation on a single deity who embodies all the families, such as Vajrasattva, a deity who embodies all the tathāgatas, is called a single mudrā. The mudrā's pure aspect is the five buddhas. From the perspective of what is to be purified and what purifies, one can practice according to the five buddha families.

Elaborating on those five buddha families, if the sattvas and so on are introduced, one can practice according to the forty-two peaceful deities. One can also practice according to the three families, corresponding to body, speech, and mind. Step by step, the practice can be made more elaborate, up to the hundred deities and, when each of their aspects is considered, one thousand deities can be emanated, and so forth. All these are a display of the five skandhas.

As one recognizes the five skandhas to be a display of the buddha families and purifies the karmic obscurations and defilements accumulated by the impure skandhas, one develops the support of pure buddha kāyas and buddha fields. That is when body, speech, mind, quality, and activity appear as the five buddha families. What is called "the nature of the deity"—the essence of the deity—can appear as one family, five families, or as inconceivable emanations.

The five skandhas are the inner contents, sentient beings, and the five elements are the outer container, the universe. Making the connection between these two are the five sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—and consciousness. The five sense organs have the five sense fields of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. In the impure, saṃsāric mode, these five sense fields are perceived with the five sense organs: the eyes see form, the ears hear sound, the nose smells, the tongue tastes, and the body feels. In dependence on that, consciousness becomes attached to beautiful objects and generates aversion toward ugly objects, and in that way the karma of attachment and aversion is
accumulated. If one speaks of their ultimate nature, consciousness is pure as the eight sattvas and their consorts, as in the Shitro, or the eight close disciples and the eight offering goddesses. From the perspective of the way things are, what makes a connection between the five skandhas and the five elements is the pure eight sattvas and their consorts. From the perspective of the way things appear, it is the impure sense organs.

When the sense organs perceive an object, kleshas develop. That is how they become the cause of wandering in samsāra, accumulating karma of attachment and aversion. If one can meditate on all that as the nature of the deity, one will not be deluded. It is not that a yogin of the secret-mantra vajrayāna does not see form or hear sound, but when he sees a form with his eyes, there is no attachment or aversion, and when he hears a sound with his ears, there is no hope or fear about pleasant or unpleasant. He has no clinging concerning it. In order to destroy clinging, one should visualize the form of the deity. When one visualizes the form of the deity, one should visualize the support of the buddha palace, the deity, and the protection circle. Just as we worldly people have a house to stay in, the deity has a buddha palace inside of which the maṇḍala of the deity abides.

When the meditation of the development stage becomes stable, one can emanate many principal deities and their retinues. When the meditation is not yet stable, one should concentrate on the details of one deity, such as Vajrasattva. In essence, if we try to analyze the ceaseless appearing aspect with our awareness, it cannot transcend the expanse of emptiness endowed with all the supreme aspects. The outer five elements that we perceive can be crushed into dust, dust into atoms, atoms into atomlessness, and atomlessness into emptiness. If we analyze the wisdom of empti-
ness into outer and inner emptiness, there are the five consorts for the outer emptiness. As for the inner contents, sentient beings, in the Guhyagarbha Tantra, for instance, there are the container, the contents, and the mind stream. At the time of impure delusion, the outer container is the five elements. The inner contents, sentient beings, are the five skandhas. When sense objects are connected with that, the mind stream is the kleshas, the five poisons. In the pure aspect, the container, the five elements, is the five buddha consorts; and the contents, sentient beings, the five skandhas, are the five buddhas.

The sense organs meet objects, giving rise to consciousness and subsequently kleshas, the five poisons. In relative truth, they are perceived as impure by ordinary individuals, but a yogin will know how to use them. For instance, when someone who is skilled in searching for precious stones looks at the earth, he will know where there is gold underneath, unearth it, and use it for jewelry or other purposes. When the five elements and the five skandhas arise as a display of the five wisdoms, there are no more impure perceptions. In the secret-mantra vajrayāna path, the relative truth is not rejected but perceived as the deities. Saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are realized as the same. In this indivisible truth of evenness and purity, there is no duality of rejecting the relative and accepting the absolute. The rejected and accepted truths are inseparable and appear as a play of the intrinsic nature.

To perceive that, one should visualize the support of the buddha palace with all the ornaments. Within that are the forms of the deities. The forms of all deities should not be visualized as something compounded of flesh and blood, nor something solid and obstructed like clay or golden statues. They should be visualized like a rainbow in space.
Though they are like a rainbow, they are not just a form without potential. Their form has potential, and without obstruction they can perform any activity that has to be performed. They are not concrete and unable to act, but the pores of their bodies and all the buddha palaces have the dynamic power of all the qualities of the enlightened state. They should be visualized as a play of omniscient wisdom; even just one pore of their bodies has the potential to perform body, speech, and mind activity, training those who need to be trained, expounding the dharma, and performing whatever other activity is beneficial.

One should visualize as I explained before, clearly visualizing the details, remembering their meaning, and maintaining the pride of the deity. All the substantial perceptions we have of the universe and its contents will appear as a pure play of the kāya and jñāna of the buddhas. As that perception becomes stable, first the visualization is like a mental object; in the middle, it is like a sense object—one actually sees one’s own body as the deity and all places as pure buddha fields; and finally one perceives physical appearance as the deity—when Guru Rinpoche gave the eight-logos empowerment to his twenty-five disciples, they actually perceived him as the deity. When these three stages of visualization are perfected, that is called the binding force of appearances as the deity.

The Tibetan expression for this is kyepa lheser. Kye means the outer container—the habitual patterns that make up the universe—which is seen as a buddha field. The deluded habitual patterns that make up the contents, sentient beings, are seen as being of the nature of the deity. The five poisons, the emotions, are seen as the wisdom play of the deities, free from attachment and aversion. That is called kyepa lheser. When two pieces of wood are to be put together, one uses a nail to join them. Similarly, as one seals the
impure perceptions of the universe, its contents, and emotions as the pure play of kāya and jñāna, though one rejects impure perceptions until pure kāya and jñāna arise, in fact they have always been inseparable.

It is not as if we are trying to fabricate something. We are just trying to recognize the nature of the universe and its contents, which is naturally pure. For instance, suppose we try to obtain a wish-fulfilling jewel from underground or from the depths of the ocean. When the jewel has been brought up, we can use it. As long as it is down in the ocean, we cannot use it. Thus, visualizing one's aggregates and skandhas as the wisdom form of the buddha is known as *kyepa lheser*, the nail [binding force] for giving birth to [developing] the deity.

**THE BINDING FORCE OF MANTRA RECITATION**

The second binding force is the recitation of the mantra, blessing speech as the speech of the buddha. Though the universe is formed by all the five elements, in that process wind is the most important. Also when the universe is destroyed, it is done by wind. When the bodies of sentient beings, who make up the contents, are formed, it is by the wind that the five elements are gathered and then scattered again. At the time of death, consciousness is pushed by wind and goes into the pardo, and the body is left behind. Wind has very powerful energy; it is because of that that there is communication between mind and object. When the eyes see form and the ears hear sound, one thinks that one sees and hears—there is communication between mind and object. This is caused by the power of wind. In the very beginning, when sentient beings fell into delusion out of
the dharmatā state of tathāgatagarbha, this was caused by the movement of wind. Due to that movement, they fell into the delusion of holding onto an ego. So that wind is very powerful.

What are the characteristics of this wind? It is light and moving. This wind has two aspects: the impure wind, which is called the karmic wind, and the pure wisdom wind. In the case of the impure karmic wind, the mind is moved by the wind. Action and reaction is based on this wind. Speech is based on this wind. Though the sound of speech has no form or color, when one communicates one's thoughts to someone through speech, they know what one is thinking. This communication through speech is done through wind. There is nothing that is more powerful than wind. If one practices the yoga of wind, the root of saṃsāric delusion will be cut, and one will be able to attain the supreme and ordinary siddhis.

Where is this karmic wind? Within our body we have nāḍīs that generate attachment and aversion. The right one, called the rasanā, is red, and the left one, called the lalanā, is white. The rasanā and the lalanā are the nāḍīs of the duality of object and mind. When the wind moves into the rasanā and lalanā, it makes the mind move. Where is the pure wisdom wind? In between the rasanā and the lalanā is the central channel, the avadhūti, through which the wisdom prāṇa circulates. All the sounds of the Buddha's teachings unfold from this wisdom energy channel. The channels of the Buddha's body contain the vowels and consonants, which are the basis of the 84,000 dharmas taught by the Buddha, based on that wind.

Regarding our body, whatever actions we perform are all based on this wind, energy. Without this pervading energy, we would be unable to do anything. The karmic wind contains the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and
The Four Binding Forces

The energy of the five elements has color and shape. The earth energy is yellow and shaped like a square, the fire energy is red and shaped like a triangle, the water energy is white and shaped like a circle, the wind energy is green and shaped like a triangle, and the space energy is blue and shaped like an octagon.

In the center of the body, between the heart and the lungs, is the life vein. When the energy [San: prāṇa] is in that life vein, if that life vein is filled and not damaged, the person will have a long life. If the energy in that life vein escapes, it is inevitable that that person will die. That is called the "life-holding prāṇa." The energy that pervades our whole body, makes us able to move our limbs, enables our eyes to see forms, even if they are very far away, and enables us to hear sound, is called the "pervading prāṇa." The energy that runs through our mouth and nose is called the "rising prāṇa." The energy that circulates through our lower orifices is called the "descending prāṇa." Then there is the "fire-balancing prāṇa," which gives the body warmth. When the power of the fire-balancing prāṇa degenerates, one cannot digest food and becomes ill.

These five energies are the basis of how things function. The inner division [that of the contents, or sentient beings] has ten categories: the five elements plus the rising prāṇa, the descending prāṇa, the life-holding prāṇa, the fire-balancing prāṇa, and the pervading prāṇa. When the buddha’s speech is used to progress on the path, these five energies transform into wisdom energy.

How can one use the buddhas’ speech to progress on the path? In the secret-mantra vajrayāna, when we recite mantras, the speech of the buddhas, those mantras stop the power of impure energy and increase the power of pure wisdom energy. What is such a mantra? There are three
types of mantra: the infallible-cause root mantra, the condition-developing mantra, and the activity recitation mantra.

What is the infallible-cause root mantra? While visualizing the deity in the development stage, through the seed samādhi which, as I explained earlier, is done with the support of the seed syllable of the deity—for instance, the HŪM of Vajrasattva and Vajrapāṇi, the DHIH of Mañjushrī, the OM of Vairochana, the HRIH of Avalokiteshvara and Amitābha and so forth—the form of the buddha is accomplished. That is the infallible-cause root mantra. When Guru Rinpoche came to train sentient beings in Jambudvīpa, the buddha Amitābha emanated the nature of his great wisdom mind in the form of the syllable HRIH to Lake Dhanakosha, and from it a young boy with the major and minor signs manifested. That is the infallible-cause root mantra.

The condition-developing mantra is done while visualizing the buddha palace. These are mantras such as SPHARANA PHAT, SAMHARANA HŪM, and so forth. Then the deity develops. For instance, from the seed syllable light rays radiate as one says SPHARANA PHAT. Then, as one says SAMHARANA HŪM, the light rays are gathered back and dissolve into the HŪM. That transforms into a five-pronged white vajra. As one recites OM VAJRASATTVA ĀH, it becomes the form of Vajrasattva. All those recitations are called condition-developing mantras. They are the mantras used to generate [develop] the deity. These Sanskrit mantras are found in all sādhanas.

In the activity recitation mantra, one recites the mantra and through its power karma and defilements are exhausted, as though consumed by fire. According to the secret-mantra vajrayāna, the buddha’s wisdom appears in the form of the mantra. It is important to have confidence that the mantra has that dynamic power. For instance, the six syllables of the mantras OM VAJRASATTVA HŪM or OM MANI
PADME HŪM perfect the six pāramitās. They possess the inconceivable qualities of the six pāramitās, which are blessed as the six syllables. Whoever recites these six syllables will shut the door to rebirth in the six realms of samsāra. He will purify the obscurations of the six emotions and poisons and attain the state of the six buddhas. Thus inconceivable benefits arise from recitation of this mantra, which is a sign that the wisdom of the buddhas is present in it.

We beginners recite with the sense that the deity is the mantra. For instance, in the sādhana of Chakrasaṃvara, one needs to practice with the sense that the deity and the mantra are inseparable. Practicing that way, at present we are not able to have an actual vision of Chakrasaṃvara or hear his speech. We cannot go to the buddha field of Chakrasaṃvara. But Chakrasaṃvara’s life essence appears in the form of the mantra ŌM Hṛīḥ HA HA HŪM HŪM PHAT, and if we have received the abhiṣheka, we are able to recite it. As we do the visualization with the support of the recitation, when through the dynamic power of the mantra our karmic obscurations and defilements are exhausted, the mantra transforms into the deity. It will transform into glorious Chakrasaṃvara, who will look after us. That is how one can attain siddhi. The mantra has inconceivable power. Of the buddha’s body, speech and mind, his speech is the most powerful and active. I explained the reason for this earlier.

Among the ways of reciting, there is what is known as mental recitation. We visualize ourselves as Chakrasaṃvara with the life-syllable HŪM in his heart center and the mantra ŌM Hṛīḥ HA HA HŪM HŪM PHAT going around it. As we concentrate on the mantra going around the seed syllable, if we visualize each syllable as it goes around, even if we do not recite the mantra with the tongue, that is recitation. That is what we call mental recitation.
The recitation can also be combined with the breath. When we breathe in, we visualize the breath in the form of the syllable OM. While the breath stays inside, we visualize the syllable AH. When we breathe out, we visualize the syllable HUM. The essence of the buddha’s body, speech, and mind, the nature of the three vajras, is primordially present. If we recognize that the nature of the buddha’s body, speech, and mind is primordially present, when the breath comes in, there is the sound OM; when it stays inside, the sound AH; and when it goes out, the sound HUM. Concentrating one-pointedly in this way on the visualization as we breathe naturally, without altering it, is called the dorje depa, or vajra recitation. What does this vajra recitation mean? Visualizing the buddha’s three vajras of body, speech, and mind in the form of the white syllable OM, the red syllable AH, and the dark blue syllable HUM; thinking that they are the mantra, and concentrating on the visualization—this mental visualization combined with breathing—is called the vajra recitation. The nature of inseparable wisdom appears as the three syllables, and the blessings of the buddha’s body, speech, and mind enter the stream of one’s being. When we have realized the nature of the way things are, breathing in while visualizing OM, keeping the breath inside the belly while visualizing AH, and exhaling while visualizing HUM come naturally. As when gold is polished its natural quality shines through even more, through this practice the qualities of the wisdom within will naturally manifest.

One can also combine the vajra recitation with the vase breathing. For vase breathing, one should understand these four instructions: inhaling, filling, spreading, and shooting like an arrow. The great siddha Nāropa said that if one does not apply these four instructions in the right way, the practice may be dangerous. First, inhaling the breath through the nostrils, one should visualize the syllable OM.
Second, after inhaling, one should suppress the upper breath and contract the lower breath, and so join the upper and lower breath. This is called the fierce vase breathing. One should concentrate one-pointedly below the navel. As breath and action are the same, wherever the mind’s visualization is concentrated, there the breath is concentrated. If the joint [upper and lower] breath escapes upward, it will cause problems. It should be pressed down into the belly. One should one-pointedly concentrate on the navel center, and while the breath remains in the belly, one should visualize the syllable Ā. One does the visualization one-pointedly as the belly is filled with air. When those two are mixed inseparably, that is called mingling the mind with the prāṇa, which is the “filling” aspect of the instructions.

In that state, if one cannot hold the joint breath for a long time, through both nostrils one should take another short breath and press that down into the navel center. In that way one can hold it a bit longer. To mix the breath that was there and the newly inhaled breath, one should rotate the belly three times to the right, three times to the left, and three times in the center. In this way, one will be able to hold the breath a little longer. That is called “spreading.”

When one cannot hold it any longer, one should exhale the breath through the two nostrils without leaving any behind. That is called “shooting like an arrow.” This arrow shot should be visualized as of the nature of HŪM. The inhalation should be visualized as the syllable OM, and filling and spreading should be visualized as the syllable Ā.

This is way the vajra recitation is combined with the vase breathing. If one meditates on the vajra recitation for a long time, for instance, if one holds the breath in the belly for an hour, two hours, or three hours, and then exhales, in the end one will be able to do one whole session with just one
inhalation. In that way, one will develop the qualities of the energy.

To recite with speech, one uses the support of the tongue and the lips, uttering the sound of the mantra with the right pronunciation. That is called verbal recitation. There is no difference in the benefit of the three types of recitation [mental, verbal, and “blocking”]. The vajra recitation with the right visualization is especially effective in taming the prāṇa and the mind. It can also prolong one’s life and make the prāṇa enter the avadhūti. Thus one should exert oneself in that recitation. As one does the recitation it is very important to know that the mantra and the deity are inseparable. As it is said, “The mantra is the form of the yogini, the yogini is the form of the mantra.” Even if one does not actually realize one’s yidam deity, when one has strong confidence that the mantra is the same as the deity, one will receive the blessings of the deity’s wisdom nature.

In the secret mantra, siddhi comes through confidence and devotion. If one has no confidence and devotion, but only an intellectual idea, one will not attain siddhi. If through devotion one thinks that one is actually the yogini, and if through devotion one thinks one’s karmic obscurations and defilements are being purified, that will happen.

Within the recitation there are three stages: approaching, accomplishment, and application of the activities. What is approaching? First one should know the source and the history of the teachings on the deity whose sādhanā one is going to practice. Then one should receive the empowerment. If one is going to do the practice after receiving the empowerment, one should have confidence that one can do the practice. Visualizing one’s body as the deity, reciting the mantra with one’s speech, and concentrating on the visualization with one’s mind in samādhi is called approaching. When the visualization has become very clear, from one’s
heart center one emanates light rays making offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. They purify the obscurations of beings and dissolve into one’s heart center. Then one recites the mantra while visualizing that it circles from the mouths of the principal and consort through their secret centers. This is the accomplishment. Why is it called accomplishment? For instance, if one wants to deal with a government minister, one should first make contact with him. That is called nyenpa, or “approaching.” Then, when one knows the minister and is familiar with him, if one has anything to ask, one can do so. That is the druppa, or “accomplishment.” When one knows the minister very well, since he has a high position, he can give one a position, and through that power one can accomplish one’s work. That is the lejor, or “application of the activities.”

Of the stages of approaching, accomplishment, and application of the activities, at first the most important is the approaching. When one has perfected the approaching stage, the accomplishment is the most important. When one has perfected both the approaching and the accomplishment stages, it will be easy to apply the activities. If one has not perfected the approaching and accomplishment stages, it is not suitable to practice the application of the activities. After perfecting the approaching and accomplishment stages, one can bestow the vajrāchārya empowerment, do the fire offering, perform consecrations, and so on. All that is called application of the activities. All such activity should be accomplished by means of the mantra.

If one recites the mantra one-pointedly with the confidence that the mantra and the deity are inseparable, one cannot help but attain siddhi. If one does not have strong confidence and one doubts whether there is benefit in reciting the mantra, or believes that there might be benefit
later but not now, as a result of such doubts the blessings of the mantra will not be able to enter one’s being.

There are different numbers of syllables in each mantra, symbolizing different things. For instance, the vajra-guru mantra has twelve syllables, which symbolize the twelve branches of the teachings. The six syllables of \textit{OM VAJRA-SATTVA HŪM} symbolize the six wisdoms, and the six syllables of \textit{OM MANI PADME HŪM} symbolize the six paramitās and the six wisdoms. Thus, one should one-pointedly concentrate on the visualization while reciting the mantra, and the prāṇa and the mantra should be inseparable. When the breath is going in and out of the mouth and nostrils, there is the sound of reciting the mantra, and there is the one-pointed samādhi on the visualization with confidence that the mantra is the deity, then cause and condition are combined. It is like when hot sun rays are shining on dry grass and one puts a magnifying glass between them, causing the grass to ignite right away. In the same way, it is very important that the three factors just mentioned be inseparable.

If the mind is not one-pointedly concentrated on the visualization, even if one recites a lot of mantras, one will not attain the signs of the deity. If one does not have the confidence and faith that the mantra and the deity are inseparable, one cannot attain accomplishment in the secret mantra. Thus one should properly recite the mantra with the confidence and devotion that deity and mantra are inseparable. In that way, one should recite as many mantras as required, such as 400,000 or 1,200,000. We should recite the mantra 100,000 times for each syllable in the mantra and 100,000 extra times to make up for mistakes, which makes 1,300,000 mantras for the vajra-guru mantra of 12 syllables. Since \textit{OM VAJRA-SATTVA HŪM} has six syllables, we recite that mantra 700,000 times.
The recitation can be done according to time, number, or signs. Recitation according to time is when one makes a commitment to do the recitation for one month, six months, or some other length of time. Recitation according to number is when one recites the number of mantras mentioned in the text. Recitation according to signs is when one does the recitation until one attains the signs. When the blessings of the inseparability of the deity and oneself descend, that is recitation according to the signs of accomplishment. When one does the recitation in this way, one’s obscurations of deluded ordinary speech will be purified, and the blessings of the buddha’s speech will enter one’s stream of being. One will be able to control the mind with the prāṇa, unlike the crippled rider who gets taken anywhere at all.

When one has perfected the mental and the verbal recitation, one should do the blocking recitation [cessation recitation]. Doing vase breathing and concentrating on the visualization of the mantra going around the seed syllable in the heart center is called the blocking recitation. When holding the vase breath, as a result of controlling the prāṇa, the mind will not fall into delusion. If the blind wild horse is bound, it will not be able to go anywhere. Similarly, if the prāṇa is bound, thoughts of duality are forcefully blocked. When one is tired of the visualization of the deity, one can do this recitation, if one does it one-pointedly. When one is tired of the recitation, one can concentrate on the visualization of the deity. One can alternate the two in this way. For instance, since our body and speech are mixed, we can explain our thoughts and understand what others say. If there were just the body without the speech and the mind, we would not be able to do that. It is very important to know that the deity and the mantra are inseparable. This is the binding force of the mantra recitation: our impure speech and the pure speech of the buddha are mixed
together, so that the pure blessings of the buddha’s speech purify the impure deluded speech.

THE BINDING FORCE OF THE UNCHANGING VIEW

The third binding force is the binding force of the unchanging view [Tib: gongpa mi gyurwe ser], using the mind to progress on the path. What is this mind? All samsāric actions are performed by the mind, and all nirvānic actions are done by the mind. The mind is not just one mind; it can be analyzed into mind and the nature of mind. If we have positive thoughts such as faith, devotion, and compassion, that is the mind. If we have negative thoughts such as desire, hatred, and ignorance, that is also the mind.

What is the nature of mind? Since we do not recognize the intrinsic nature of mind, we are caught in the delusions of the three worlds of saṃsāra. The binding force of the unchanging view is to know the intrinsic nature of mind. To know the intrinsic nature of mind, one should first understand the mind. If one does not analyze and examine the mind, it seems to be something that is very active. If one really opens it up from within, the mind has no shape, no color, and no substance. It is something that does not exist, and its nature is emptiness. But it is not just emptiness; that emptiness is inseparable from luminosity.

It seems that inside our body there is a mind, and since within the body there is a mind, we can see with the eyes and hear with the ears. If there is something pleasant, the mind will like it; if there is something unpleasant, the mind will dislike it. That is the mind within the body. When body and mind are separated, that is called death. When we die, where does that mind go? It goes into the pardo. When the
mind has gone into the pardo, the body is left behind. Inside that body which is left behind, there are eyes but they cannot see. There are ears, but they cannot hear. Though it may be treated nicely, it cannot like. Though it may be treated badly, it cannot dislike. The body could be compared to a hotel and the mind to a guest.

While the mind is in the body, the body can function. When body and mind have separated, it is like cutting the strings of a musical instrument—there will not be any musical sound. Similarly, when body and mind have separated, the speech will not bring forth any sound. One will not be able to talk.

How should we examine this mind? It is whatever is thinking all these different thoughts, such as thoughts of past, present, and future. Thoughts about this morning are past thoughts. What they are about has already gone. The thoughts about this evening are future thoughts, and we do not know when or how those future things will happen. As for present thoughts, for instance as I am teaching the dharma, concentrating on the sounds of the dharma is thought regarding the present. As all the students listen to the sound of the teacher teaching the dharma, reflecting on the meaning of the sound, that is the mind. Though it is the mind, it is the present mind.

If one wants to analyze it with awareness, one could examine, looking very closely, whether the mind is white, yellow, or red, whether it has a shape, and if that shape is square, round, or semicircular. If we think that the mind dwells in the body, we should examine where it dwells: in the flesh, the blood, the bones, the skin, the liver, the lungs? If it dwells in the body, we should be able to point out where it is. This would be similar to identifying a person by explaining where he is, whether he is young or old, and whether the person is a man or a woman. We feel that the mind is
present somewhere in the body, but we cannot point out where it is. As we cannot determine where it is, we might think there is no mind. Whatever we feel is the mind; it is the mind feeling the mind. There is nothing else that can feel.

Since the mind feels the mind, it does not find the mind. Not finding the mind is called emptiness. Is it like the emptiness of a container or empty space? If one throws dust into empty space, the space is not affected. If one lights a fire in empty space, the space does not burn. Similarly, if the mind had a shape or substance, that would be affected by dust or be burned by fire. But that is not so at all. Perhaps we should say that mind does not exist, but it is not like an empty container or empty space. Mind is something nonexisting that knows everything. That which knows everything, that knower, does it have eyes, ears, a nose, a tongue? That knower that knows what it did in the past and knows what to do in the future in order to be happy and what might make it unhappy, that knower does not have eyes, ears, a nose, or a tongue. When we say that it does not exist, what thinks that it does not exist is called the luminosity aspect of the mind.

If one were to try to separate the emptiness and the luminosity aspects of the mind, it would not be possible. The emptiness of the mind is luminosity. How would one analyze that nature of inseparable emptiness and luminosity? Without following past thoughts, without inviting future thoughts, leaving the present mind unmanipulated, there is a mindfulness watching and seeing whether this unaltered mind is distracted or not. If that mindfulness is sustained without distraction, we will recognize the natural state of the mind [Tib: neluk]. When we recognize this natural state of the mind and remain in that state of recognition for a long time without fabrication, that is called the
nature of mind [Tib: semnyi]. Recognizing that nature of mind is the pointing out given by the gurus in mahāmudrā and ati. If one has not recognized this nature of mind, one can refer just to mind, by saying that when one is practicing the development stage it is the mind that meditates, and when reciting mantras it is the mind that meditates. If one does not eventually permeate the practice with that understanding of the nature of mind, there will be no benefit. If one has recognized the nature of the mind and practices the development stage within that state, there will really be accomplishment. If one recites the mantra within that nature, the blessings are much stronger. That is called the binding force of the unchanging view.

Even if a very skillful teacher tries to describe this binding force of the unchanging view, it is not possible to understand it. A devoted student who meditates for a long time with confidence and devotion will understand it through his own experience. If a teacher explains it and one just thinks that the nature of mind is like that, that will not help. First one should look and see whether the mind is empty. Starting from the nature of emptiness, look and see how the mind is. Though it is empty, is it just empty? Are emptiness and clarity inseparable? If one recognizes that they are inseparable, one should rest in the nature of that recognition.

The life of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa comes down to the nature of mind. On the secret-mantra vajrayāna path, the nature of mind is recognized through confidence in and devotion to the guru. If through confidence in and devotion to the guru one recognizes the nature of mind, one can attain wisdom. For instance, a deity has the wisdom of the two knowledges, and the nature of that wisdom is the nature of mind. If one recognizes that, it will be helpful. It is the same as when someone gets to know a friend and can really rely on that friend. If one recognizes the nature of
mind, the development and completion stages are all included in that. There is nothing that is not included in that. If one does not recognize the nature of mind, one will be deluded by the three worlds of samsāra. If one does not recognize the nature of mind, the mind very actively accumulates the karma of attachment and aversion and is deluded by samsāra. If a horse is bound by a rope, it can only go as far as the rope allows. Similarly, if one has recognized the nature of mind, the mind cannot be deluded. If it is not deluded, one will recognize the state of nondelusion. That state of nondelusion is called the binding force of the unchanging view.

All the great siddhas have had the power to make visible things invisible and manifest things that are invisible, fly in the sky, and go through rocks without obstruction. When we realize the nature of mind, the nature of emptiness, we realize that all phenomena are based on this powerful energy, so that we too can move freely through objects without any obstruction. We think that the sky is empty so we cannot walk in it, and that the earth is solid so we can walk on it, but all those concepts are made by the mind. If we would realize that in the nature of mind the earth is just as empty as the sky, we could remain in space like Milarepa and go through earth without obstruction. That is called the binding force of the unchanging view.

If one brings this binding force of the unchanging view into practice, the life force of meditating on the deity and reciting the mantra is captured. Through this binding force of the unchanging view, the deluded mind is cleared up and the undeluded nature of mind is understood. When the undeluded nature of mind binds deluded mind, even when there is movement, we recognize the emptiness nature of it, and the deluded mind comes back to its intrinsic nature. When a horse is controlled with a rope, it can only go as far
as the rope allows. Similarly, when the nature of the mind has unfolded, the mind cannot fall into delusion. As the great siddhas said, if we take a pigeon out into the ocean on a boat and set it free, it will fly around the ocean, but as it will not find any trees or rocks to sit on, it will come back to the boat. Similarly, though the mind fabricates countless past, future, and present thoughts, it cannot help but come back in the end to its natural state of emptiness.

How does one know that this mind is empty? The mind of this morning is not there now; the present mind will not be there tonight. Who knows what tonight's mind will be? Trying to look at this mind, we have the feeling that there are thoughts about past, present, and future. If we analyze them with our awareness, the past thought is like a dead man, already gone. It has no form, color, or shape. We do not know what the future mind will think—positive or negative thoughts, who knows? Where is this present thinking mind? Looking inside and examining oneself, one will not be able to find the mind. The nature of not finding it is empty. Resting in that nature without fabrication and recognizing the nature of that resting is called the binding force of the unchanging view.

THE BINDING FORCE OF APPLYING THE ACTIVITIES

Since body, speech, and mind are joined, one is able to perform useful actions, such as working in the fields, doing business, and so forth, which involve body, speech, and mind. If we perform harmful actions such as fighting a war and subduing enemies, those also involve body, speech, and mind. Similarly, when one meditates on one's body as the deity with the binding force of appearances as the deity,
recites the mantra with the binding force of sound as the mantra, and understands the nature of mind with the binding force of the unchanging view, that realization is the body, speech, and mind of whatever deity one is meditating on. When the body, speech, and mind are joined together, one can perform many activities to benefit beings. For instance, Buddha Shākyamuni manifested his body in Jambudvipa, his speech turned the wheel of the dharma, and his mind guided sentient beings on the path of liberation. Thus he performed the twelve acts. Guru Rinpoche displayed the twelve acts in twelve months.

Now in meditating on ourselves as the deity, we use the acts of the Buddha to progress on the path. Using the Buddha's actions to progress on the path, we visualize ourselves as the deity with the seed syllable and the mantra in the heart center. Unfolding the binding force of the unchanging view through radiating light rays that purify obscurations and illness, increase life and merit, tame those who need to be tamed, and destroy enemies and obstacles, and doing the visualization in a state of samādhi, we combine the binding force of the unchanging view and samādhi. This is accomplished just by meditating in samādhi. That is called the power of interdependent connection.

When substance, mantra, and medicine are combined, there will naturally be inconceivable potential. [The reference here is to certain special medicines, such as an eye balm that allows one to see precious stones underground.] Just as Western gadgets are made from the potential of various substances, when performing pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and destroying activities through fire offerings, purifications, or empowerments, if substance, mantra, and samādhi are combined, the benefit will be much greater. When an individual meditates on the body as the deity, speech as the mantra, and mind as the play of dharmatā, if he performs a
purification, cures a disease, removes a defilement, bestows a long-life empowerment, or does long-life practice, that is called the binding force of applying the activities. When buddha activity and one's actions of body, speech, and mind are inseparable, through pure buddha activity one's impure actions transform into pure activity. That is the fourth binding force. If one could practice this, it would be the infallible cause of attaining supreme siddhi, as Guru Rinpoche said. Thus, if one can apply the binding force of the unchanging view, there is no way that one will not attain liberation.

If you listen to these teachings I have given, understand them by reflecting on them, and integrate them with your practice, you will gradually attain the signs. Remember that.