

# **Choden Rinpoche's Holy Speech: A Commentary on the Difficult Points of How to Train in Calm Abiding, the Essence of Concentration**

## Explaining the Need for the Union of Calm Abiding and Special Insight

In order to achieve the state of a Buddha, we must train in a path that unifies calm abiding and special insight, and thereby become a Buddha. Even if we are able to place our mind in equipoise, until the end of the eon, in a calm abiding that is devoid of the special insight realizing selflessness, by not seeing as a fault the determined object of the apprehension of a self, this meditation will only become a cause for further cycling in samsara, not a cause for liberation. Likewise, the wisdom realizing selflessness alone, devoid of calm abiding, cannot do much to harm the ignorance, apprehending a self, which is the root of samsara. Therefore, we definitely must rely on a meditation which is the unification of calm abiding and special insight.

As the Victor's Child Shantideva has said in his *Entering the Bodhisattva Deeds*:

Know special insight endowed with

Calm abiding destroys the taints

To begin, seek calm abiding.

[2] As I said, the root of our circling in samsara since beginningless time is none other than the ignorance apprehending a self. Thus, as an antidote to subdue this ignorance apprehending a self, we must generate the wisdom realizing emptiness. Furthermore, if we don't have calm abiding, this wisdom realizing emptiness alone cannot subdue ignorance: since we must mount the wisdom realizing emptiness on the horse of calm abiding and thereby subdue confusion, we must meditate by unifying calm abiding and special insight.

"Calm abiding": because it is mainly the pacification of the mind's distraction to external objects, and a stable abiding on a single object of observation, it is called "peaceful" or "calm abiding". From the space of stable factor of stability on the object of observation, one maintains not a loose but a firm manner of apprehension. If one maintains this tight manner of apprehension with an intense factor of clarity, it becomes the practice of calm abiding. Otherwise, without the factor of stability, calm abiding's obstacle excitement arises, and without the intense factor of clarity, laxity arises. Thus, for calm abiding, we definitely need to be free of these two faults. That alone is also not enough: we also need to be able to elicit the mental and physical bliss of pliancy that comes through the force of meditating free of these two faults.

[3] Well then, what is this thing called "eliciting the bliss of pliancy"? Having pacified the bad states of body of mind that make the body and mind unserviceable for virtue, one gains "pliancy", the serviceability or ability to utilize the body and mind as much as one likes for

virtue. If through that force comes a strong blissful experience, we have "elicited bliss", and a meditative concentration supported by that special kind of bliss is called "calm abiding".

As for the nature of calm abiding, it is a common practice of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Thus a stable calm abiding does arise even in the continuum of non-Buddhists. Non-Buddhists meditate on calm abiding and actualize the four concentration absorptions and the four formless absorptions. When they achieve the absorption of the peak of cyclic existence, they think "I've achieved liberation!" In each meditative session, they may be able to stay in absorption for many hundreds of thousands of years, or even until the end of the eon. However, without being supported by the thought of definite emergence (footnote—this is my translation of "renunciation"), their meditation does not become a cause of liberation. For example, when our teacher (Buddha) came to this world, a Forder [footnote] named Alaka Ramaputra, on achieving the absorption of the peak of cyclic existence, thought "now I have achieved liberation!", and placed his mind in equipoise on calm abiding for a long time. [4] Arising from his absorption and seeing a rat gnawing on his dreadlock, he became angry, causing his absorption to degenerate. He generated the wrong view thinking, "there is no liberation!", and was subsequently born in hell.

Also, some Forders place their mind in absorption on calm abiding and stay until the end of the eon. By their enjoying the bliss of absorption and staying for a long time in that state, all of the merit they previously accumulates exhausts. Although at first they had thought, "I've achieved liberation!", later when they arise from concentration and see with clairvoyance that they will again be born in samsara by the force of karma and afflictions, they generate the wrong view thinking "there is no liberation!" By the force of that they are born in the lower realms. Because this is a common occurrence, we can conclude that in order to achieve our ultimate aim, calm abiding alone is of no benefit.

### How it needs to be supported by the mind of refuge

When we are practicing to actualize calm abiding, we must do so in conjunction with generating a pure mind of refuge in our continuum. That refuge in turn must be based upon a) fear of all of the suffering of cyclic existence, and b) belief that one's lama and the Three Jewels have the power to save us from this suffering. If we actualize calm abiding in conjunction with this mind of refuge, it will become a practice of Buddhadharma. If we do not aim merely for the next life, but conjoin our practice of calm of abiding with a thought of definite emergence that sees all the wonders of samsara as like a pit of fire and wishes to attain liberation from that, it will become a cause for liberation. [5] If we conjoin it with bodhicitta thinking, "For the purpose of all mother sentient beings, I must achieve the state of a perfectly completed Buddha. For that reason, I am actualizing calm abiding," it will become a cause of complete Buddhahood.

The difficulty we face in generating the realization of calm abiding in our continuum is not like that of non-Buddhists, who meditate on calm abiding in order to actualize progressively

the four concentrations and four formless absorptions. Because our mind is under the power of afflictions, we tend to recall all sorts of useless, meaningless things, so whatever we meditate on does not become a path to liberation and we do not make great strides. If and when we achieve calm abiding, we can use that as the mental basis for meditating on death and impermanence, bodhicitta, the path realizing naturelessness and so forth. Then it will be easy to generate realization in our continuum of whatever we meditate on, we will make great strides on the path, we will swiftly achieve yogic accomplishments, and so forth. In light of such a great difference, we meditate on calm abiding for that reason [and not in the non-Buddhist manner described above].

Without calm abiding, we will be unable to generate clairvoyance, bodhicitta, or the paths of accumulation, preparation, seeing, meditation, [footnote] and so forth. [6] If we have calm abiding we will quickly generate them, so we must meditate on calm abiding. If we achieve calm abiding, we will achieve control over our own mind. Since calm abiding is like, for example, a king who controls the mind, Je Tsongkhapa said "Concentration, mind-control king." [footnote]

Concentration, mind-control king.

When placed, immobile mountain lord.

When sent, enters all virtuous things.

Prompts functional bliss, body and mind.

At the moment, because we have not gained control over our mind, we are under the control of the afflictions. If someone achieves calm abiding, he achieves control over his mind, and because such a person can control his mind such that it stays wherever he places it, [Tsongkhapa] said "Concentration, mind-control king." That is, calm abiding is like a king who controls the mind. [Tsongkhapa continued] "When placed, immobile mountain lord." That is, whatever object of observation you place it on, it stays there firmly. For example, if you place it on a thought such as "May I achieve Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings," you can stay on that thought for a long period of time. Thus, "when placed, immobile mountain lord"—if you place your mind on an object, like the lord of mountains it remains firmly without moving. Also, if you elaborate the object, that is, send the mind to various objects, on whatever virtuous object you place your mind, your calm abiding will engage just that object. [7] Thus, [Tsongkhapa then] said "When sent, enters all virtuous things." If you achieve calm abiding, such abilities will come.

[Tsongkhapa continues], "Prompts functional bliss, body and mind." Having achieved calm abiding, if you meditate or engage in any other virtuous activity, your physical and mental bliss will only increase. Weariness and fatigue will not arise, so he said "Prompts bliss." As I said before, no matter how much you meditate on calm abiding alone, you will be unable to cut the root of cyclic existence and thus will not be liberated from samsara. But if on top of having

calm abiding, you are able to generate special insight realizing emptiness, unifying those two you will achieve liberation from samsara.

### Special Insight

You might wonder, "well then, what is this thing called 'special insight'?" You analyze [an object] from within the space of equipoise in calm abiding. A wisdom conjoined with bliss elicited by the force of such analysis is called "special insight". If you achieve a stable calm abiding, from the space of equipoise in that, you will be able to perform analysis with a wisdom that individually investigates objects. When we haven't attained a stable calm abiding, when we analyze, the factor of stability degenerates. [8] If our calm abiding achieves a stable factor of mental stability, it does not degenerate [when we analyze]. For example, although under a deep body of water fish swim back and forth, they are unable to disturb the surface. Likewise, from a space of stable mental settling on an observed object, although we analyze, the intensity of our factor of clarity only becomes stronger, and through the force of that we generate an even greater bliss than before. Bliss elicited by the power of analysis is the bliss of special insight. Bliss at the time of [mere] calm abiding is bliss born through the force of the stability factor.

Calm abiding is an indispensable [tool]. From the point of view of sutra, there are the "five paths and ten grounds", and during mantric practice there are realizations of the path of completion. Without calm abiding we will be unable to correctly generate any of these. If we are to actualize calm abiding, we must actualize it in conjunction with the minds of refuge, renunciation, and bodhicitta. If we are able to generate bodhicitta and a calm abiding that abides stably on an observed object, and if from the space of calm abiding we analyze the meaning of emptiness and are able to generate special insight realizing emptiness, on the basis of a path that unifies those two [calm abiding and special insight] the attainments of liberation and the state of a Buddha will arise. [9] For example, if at nighttime there is a fresco on the wall in a house, to view that painting we need a bright torch. That torch must also not be disturbed by the wind. If the wind disturbs the torch, we will be unable to see the painting clearly, and even if there is no wind, if the torch is not bright, we will likewise be unable to see the painting well. Special insight is like the bright torch, and calm abiding that is a stable mental settling on an observed object is like being unmoved by the wind.

This manner of actualizing calm abiding is explained in many great texts like Protector Maitreya's *Five Religious Treatise* and Arya Asanga's *Five Treatises on the Levels* and so forth [footnote]. The Lord Mahatma [Tsongkhapa] unerringly delineated the meaning of those texts. Likewise, the holy lamas like His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama, Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen, Panchen Losang Yeshe and so forth took those great texts as a basis and clarified [the meaning—footnote—mention their texts]. The very essence of all of those is what I am explaining now.

To actualize calm abiding, stable recollection and introspection are very important requisites. For example, we may recognize that it will be easy to actualize calm abiding with stable recollection and introspection, and with unstable recollection and introspection it will be difficult. [10]

### As a Preliminary, Assembling the Provisions for Calm Abiding

In order to actualize calm abiding, in the beginning it is important to rely on the preconditions for calm abiding. "Relying on the preconditions for calm abiding" means that in order to actualize calm abiding, there is a particular collection of causes that we definitely need to assemble. If we do not assemble these conducive conditions, then even if we practice for thousands of years we will not achieve calm abiding. Thus Atisha said in his *Lamp for the Path*:

Calm abiding's branches decline:

Now though you meditate with zeal,

Even over thousands of years

Concentration is not achieved.

It is said that if you assemble the collections of causes for calm abiding—that is, assemble the necessary conducive conditions for actualizing calm abiding—then in six months of the actual practice of maintaining an object of meditation, you will achieve [calm abiding].

The assembly of causes is sixfold:

1. Staying in a conducive place.
2. Having few wants.
3. Contentment.
4. Thoroughly abandoning the bustle of many activities.
5. Pure ethical discipline.
6. Thoroughly abandoning discursive thoughts [add footnote—connotation of superstition, rumination etc. Point out that you NEED conceptual thought, but this is wrong or excessive thought] of desire and so forth.

You definitely need to assemble all of these.

[11] *First, "staying in a conducive place"*: In order to actualize calm abiding, the site of achievement, that is, the residence where you abide must be as explained in *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*:

The place where wise ones practice is:

Found well, and a pleasant abode,

Pleasant env'r'n, with pleasant friends,

With assets that please the yogi.

You need "an abode possessing the five characteristics": a) Found well, b) a pleasant abode, c) a pleasant environment, d) with pleasant friends, and e) possessing pleasing requisites. Mainly, it needs to be an isolated place in accordance with the mind of the practitioner, and one where he feels at ease.

*Found well.* One can obtain the means of subsistence without relying on sinful means or wrong livelihood, thus "subsistence is found well". Since we need to rely on subsistence in order to live, for the purpose of that we may have to leave our hermitage and go down to the town. Unlike that, [in a place that is "found well"] subsistence is easy to come by. Also, that subsistence definitely must be unmixed with acquisition through sinful means or wrong livelihood, such as marketing the holy speech [of the Buddha—footnote].

*A pleasant abode.* An important point is that if previous lamas have practiced in a place and thereby blessed it, by virtue of those blessings a beginner who stays there will easily generate realizations. [12] Even if we can't find such a place, a place where there are not many people and such moving about during the day, and at nighttime is without loud sounds such as water and dogs is called a "pleasant abode." In short, we need a place free of noise and commotion, which are irritants to concentration.

If the place we stay has people whose samaya with their lama has degenerated, this will create obstacles to our generating realizations. Thus we need a place without such samaya degenerates. Likewise, if the place is one that has experienced a split in the Sangha and subsequent disturbance in the community, it will be like, for example, grass not growing on earth burnt by fire: through the force of the degeneration of samaya, all classes of qualities of abandonment and realization will not arise. So we need a place unlike that one. Furthermore, we need a place without the kinds of beings who will harm us, such as ferocious animals, thieves, non-human elemental spirits and so forth. If it is such a place where non-humans stay, if we stay anyway thinking "I'm not afraid of non-humans. I won't be unable to stay here," then later there is a danger of these non-humans delivering harm to us. So if it is a place inhabited by non-humans, we must be gentle to them and offer tormas and the like. [13] If we get to know them, they might help us, but if we use wrathful means, while there may be some limited benefit in the short run, they will wait for an appropriate time and then harm us. For example, once a retreatant was staying in a cave inhabited by a *tseu* spirit [footnote—a kind of violent spirit]. Because the retreatant employed wrathful means to expel the demon, the demon was not able to harm him right away. However, the demon subsequently waited for an appropriate time to deliver harm. One day the retreatant's two benefactors fell into a quarrel. When the retreatant came to act as a mediator, the demon seized the opportunity [got the upper hand?] to harm him, striking his head with a stone and killing him. Since such things happen, we shouldn't inspire hostility in non-human beings. If instead we meditate on love and compassion for them, it will purify their continuum, and they won't harm us.

*Pleasant environment.* Some retreatants develop bodily illness due to not tolerating the environment [where they stay]. Then they say, "now my practice of meditation won't come about," and in the end they must stay and recover, working [for a living]. Since these things happen, instead we need a pleasant environment which won't cause us illness.

[14] *Pleasant companions.* Bad companions are those with views and behavior at odds with our own, those who enjoy distractions, or carefree people who act without restraint. Rather we need harmonious Dharma friends who share our view and behavior. Furthermore, it must be such a friend to whom you will abide showing respect, keeping him "looming heavily in the corner of your eye" [footnote—in Tibetan culture, one does not look directly at somebody one holds in authority, but rather bows down and glances sideward at them, even when speaking to them]. For example, if you are about to engage in an unwholesome activity, you might hesitate, thinking, "mightn't it upset him?" It is good if we have such a person to whom we afford such respect, and generally there is no fault in having many such harmonious Dharma friends.

*Possesses requisites that are pleasing to the yogi.* This doesn't mean that one stocks up all kinds of conducive conditions in terms of external things and that everything goes smoothly. For example, if you are a practitioner of meditation, when you are actually going to meditate, you acquire the requisite texts and essential instructions in the way of empowerments, oral transmissions, commentaries and the like. Before entering retreat, you engage in hearing and contemplation on the object of meditation in order to clarify uncertainties. In such a way, when you are ready to meditate, this is called "possessing requisites that are pleasing to the yogi."

The Protector Maitreya [in the *Ornament*] has said that we need such a place with the five qualities of being found well, a pleasant abode, a pleasant environment, with pleasant companions and possessing requisites pleasing to the yogi.

### Having few wants and contentment

[15] *The second of the collections of causes, having few wants.* Having few wants, and contentment, are two of the most important things for actualizing the Dharma. If we don't have few wants and contentment, then we won't be satisfied merely having food, clothes, and a place to stay. Instead, we will put great effort into achieving all the perfect conditions. In the course of achieving that, lots of work will come about, leading to the greatest obstacle of not having time to actualize the Dharma. So, it is said that we need few wants and contentment.

The opposite of few wants is avarice [literally, "great wants"]. Avarice is when we see things we don't have and think, "I need something like this, I need something like that." Such great need and desire is called "avarice". The opposite of that, like an antidote to it, is not craving for excellent or excessive food, clothing, residence and such, but considering just what is needed to be adequate, is called "few wants".

*Third, contentment.* [16] Even when you have one thing, you aren't satisfied with it but think "I still need something else". This is called "discontent." The antidote to that is abiding with the thought, "if I have food, clothes and shelter and such just enough to sustain me; if it's just able to sustain my body, that's okay." This is called "contentment." If we have contentment, even if we don't have a lot of things, having contentment will satisfy our desires, and thinking "now I'm okay," our mind will become rich and won't have any problems. If we don't have contentment, then no matter how good or how many things we have, our mind will be like a beggar's, and we will still be thinking "I have nothing."

For example, when our teacher [Buddha] came to this world, there was a beggar named "Poor Peaceful" [footnote]. Since he had a kind heart and pacified, subdued manner, he got the name "peaceful." One day Poor Peaceful found a priceless jewel. When he found this jewel, somebody asked "what do you plan to do with that jewel?" He said, "I want to give it to the poorest, most destitute person in this land."

[17] One day he carried the jewel and gave it to the country's king, "Clear Victory" [King Prasenajit—footnote]. The king asked, "you said you were going to give this to the poorest person, so why are you giving it to me?"

Poor Peaceful replied, "since your lack of content is the worst, you are the poorest person in this land", and gave him the jewel.

There is a history to this story. Earlier in India, the king Clear Victory invited the Buddha and his Hearer disciples for alms offerings. For three days the king respectfully made offerings, and Poor Peaceful meditating on rejoicing in that. When we meditate on rejoicing, if our realization is greater than the person in whose actions we rejoice, we achieve greater merit than they do. So when Poor Peaceful meditating on rejoicing, he achieved greater merit than the king.

After receiving his alms, the Blessed One asked king Clear Victory, "today, to whom shall I dedicate the virtue? To the one with the strongest roots of virtue, or to somebody else?"

Thinking that, as sponsor, he himself had achieved the most extensive roots of virtue, the king replied "Please dedicate to the one with the strongest roots of virtue." [18] With the king replying like that, the Blessed One dedicated the merit to Poor Peaceful.

Again on the second day, again the Blessed One asked the same question, but the king, unable to say "please dedicate to me", replied "please dedicate to whomever has achieved the greatest virtue." Again, the Buddha dedicated to Poor Peaceful.

On the third day, the king conferred with his servants, saying "today, we must find a way to make it so Poor Peaceful will not secure the roots of virtue, but rather that they will be dedicated to the king." The servants beat Poor Peaceful. Having been beaten, on that day Poor

Peaceful didn't meditate on rejoicing. Consequently, the Buddha had to dedicate the virtue to the king. This is just a tangential point.

For these reasons, having few wants and contentment are extremely important qualities, and so those seeking liberation definitely must rely on them. Without contentment, a king will in actuality be no different from a beggar, as the stories above illustrate.

[Fifth (fourth one comes below)] For one of the collection of causes, we need what is called "pure ethical discipline". Ethical discipline is the foundation for all good qualities. [19] For example, it is like the ground where we plant crops, and it becomes like the root of a tree. If we have pure ethical discipline, on that basis good qualities will arise, while if we don't have pure ethical discipline, there will be no foundation for good qualities to grow, so we definitely need pure ethics. Also, if we have pure ethical discipline, we will be able to cast away gross external distractions. The Buddha explained to his Hearer Sangha that while they definitely required the most basic requisites of living and the three monastic robes [footnote], they were not allowed to keep more than that. So if we have pure ethics, we will come to see the faults of objects of desire, and since we won't require many external things, distraction to external objects will stop of its own accord. Thus, we need pure ethical discipline.

[Fourth] On top of that, we must avoid the bustle of many activities. "Bustle" refers to things like the commotion of many people gathering, or attachment to trifling activities that leads to lack of leisure time and lots of work [footnote—in Tibetan, "phal pa" could also just mean ordinary worldly activities not related to Dharma]. We definitely must abandon such bustle. If we don't, many meaningless activities will come our way, [20] and through things like excessive conversation our time will go to waste. So without a lot of frantic bustle, we need few goals and few activities. If we have few wants and contentment, we will come to have fewer goals and activities, gross distraction will subside, and it will be easier to achieve concentration.

When practicing single-pointedly, if our body and mind abide in isolation, realizations will arise in our continuum, and from that vast benefits for many beings will follow. Other activities like astrology, medicine, divination, and performing rituals or pujas in the homes of lay people generally do benefit others, but when we are practicing to achieve calm abiding, they become causes for our mind to be distracted externally, so we should forsake them.

*Sixth, thoroughly abandoning discursive thoughts like desire and so forth.* Through the force of attachment to the enticing objects of the five senses and so forth, many discursive thoughts arise, so we must let go of attachment. To do so, we need to think about the faults of objects of desire, and meditate on impermanence, etc.

If you assemble well such a collection of causes, it is easy to achieve calm abiding.

[21]Second, the actual method of achieving calm abiding

Well then, what is the actual method for actualizing calm abiding?

From Maitreya's *Differentiating the Middle from Extremes*:

[Concentration] arises from relying on

Eight formations halting five faults.

The Lord Maitreya explains that calm abiding is a concentration that arises from meditating by relying on the eight applications [translated above as "formations"], antidotes for the purpose of abandoning the five faults.

As for the five faults, from the same text:

Laziness, forgetting advice,

Laxity and excitement, not

Applying antidotes, apply'ng

Antidotes: we accept five faults.

When preparing [to develop] concentration, the laziness that doesn't want to engage in virtuous activities like calm abiding and so forth arises. That is the first fault.

The second fault: at the actual time of practicing concentration, we need to choose a particular object of observation and abide on it with a stable mind. On top of that, having identified that basis [footnote—base means object, but implies that the mind stabilized on the basis of it] of observation, we need to familiarize our mind with it. Whereas we need recollection to keep such an objective support immediately in the space of mind without losing it [footnote—"thur re" implies "appearing as though it was right in front of you, right now"], lacking recollection and losing the objective support in our space of mind is called "forgetting the instructions" [footnote—so it's not a literal forgetting what somebody said, but losing the object; give quote].

The third fault: When actually meditating on concentration, if laxity and excitement arise they will obstruct concentration, [22] so during the actual session of concentration we reckon these two, laxity and excitement together, as a single fault.

The fourth fault: When laxity and excitement arise, not relying on the antidote to them is called "not applying the antidote". Although when laxity and excitement arise, we need to apply the antidote, "not applying" means that even when they arise we do not apply the antidote, so it becomes a fault.

The fifth fault: when we are free of laxity and excitement [at the seventh stage], if we strongly apply an antidote it will actually harm the factor of stability [footnote], so at that time,

rather than applying an antidote we need to place [our mind in equanimity]. If we don't place [our mind in equanimity] but instead apply an antidote, it becomes a fault.

Among the eight applications [to counter the five] faults, four are said to be [antidotes] to laziness. "Laziness" is not wishing to achieve roots of virtue, or a mind that does not delight in virtue. The actual antidote for such laziness is called "*serviceability*" [footnote—only *after* calm abiding]. [This pliancy has two kinds:] physical serviceability, and mental serviceability. When our body and mind become suitable to put to use in whatever way we wish, it is called "physical and mental serviceability". [23] Before achieving such serviceability, as a basis we begin by making effort and meditating, so we need *effort* as a cause for serviceability. In order to generate such forceful effort, as a basis we need a strong aspiration that aims to achieve concentration. For example, in any worldly activity or other virtuous practice, if we have an aspiration aiming for it, we will be able to bear hardship for the sake of it. So we need a great aspiration seeking after concentration. In order for such an aspiration to arise, we need a faith that thinks over the various benefits of concentration. If such faith arises in our mind, through the force of that, there is no way we will not achieve concentration: the aspiration to strive that thinks, "I definitely must achieve concentration" will naturally induce it. These four—faith, aspiration, effort, and serviceability—are the antidotes to laziness.

The antidote to laxity and excitement checks whether or not laxity and excitement are arising in the mind, like a scout who reconnoiters an army. We need the sentry of introspection [to check] whether laxity and excitement arise or not. Although that is not literally the antidote to laxity and excitement, since it is like a spy watching over whether laxity and excitement arise or not, we call it "introspection." [footnote—describe what actual antidotes are] [24]

"Forgetting the instruction": in this context, forgetting the objective support, or its slipping from our active memory, is called "forgetting the instructions" [footnote—so not literally forgetting during post-meditation]. It is said that before even beginning to prepare for meditative stabilization, laziness is a fault, while forgetting the instruction is a fault at the actual time of making preparations for stabilization. So the reason for positing "forgetting the instructions" as a fault is that when meditating on stabilization, we definitely need an objective support, and if we forget this basis, we will not achieve stabilization. Thus, at the time of preparing for meditative stabilization, forgetting the instructions is a fault.

Regarding the antidote to that fault: it's not merely that if somebody else asks "what is your objective support?", or if we try to remember the support ourselves, that we are unable to recall it. Rather, through remembering the objective support, we don't forget it and are able to hold it vibrantly in our active memory. Also, to merely achieve calm abiding, any objective support will do. [25] For example, some non-Buddhists take rocks, sticks and so forth as a basis and manage to achieve calm abiding.

### The Means of Taking the Buddha as the Objective Support

Generally speaking, we can take anything as an objective support and, through practice, actualize calm abiding, but for us [Buddhists], it is more meaningful when achieving calm abiding if we can take as a support the holy body of a Buddha, the holy body of our teacher Shakyamuni, or the holy body of our yidam deity, and practice with that. In addition to achieving calm abiding, since we rely on the Buddha as our object, we will remember the Buddha and so forth. In light of such a significant difference, we take the holy body of the Buddha as an objective support and achieve calm abiding.

When achieving calm abiding, if we keep changing from one object to another, we will not succeed, so whatever object we take from the start, we should focus on that very one and actualize calm abiding. Taking the holy body of our teacher Buddha as the objective support, if when our lama describes it to us we can ascertain his holy body with a golden hue, endowed with a crown protrusion, his right hand pressing the earth and his left displaying [the mudra of] equipoise, and with the three monastic robes [footnote] adorning his holy body, and if such a complete form can appear to our mind, that will do. [26] Otherwise, we can take a good look at a picture or relief of the holy body and bring it to mind. Even [just before] the time of meditating, it is permissible to observe that very representation and meditate [footnote—the point here being that *just before* meditating, one observes the image, not *during* meditation].

Regarding the preparations when we first practice to actualize calm abiding, we practice the complete six preliminary practices [footnote]. Then, having withdrawn the preliminary practice [footnote—jorcho] merit field, we imagine that it dissolves into the lama Thubwang [or Munindra?] at our crown. If we mentally shrink that holy body of the lama Thubwang and take that as our objective support, a firm stability factor of mind will arise, so we reduce the size of the lama Thubwang at our crown to a mere finger width. If that mere finger width is too high in front of us, excitement will arise, and if it is too low, laxity will arise, so imagine it in the space in front at the level of one's navel [footnote—a few feet away, not at the navel itself], and meditate. Take as an objective support an [image which is the] mere width of a thumb. When observing this object, at the beginning we won't be able to cause a clear image with complete facial features and hands to appear. Since at first we need an objective support for the mind to abide on, beyond just remembering the appearance of Shakyamuni's golden hued holy body as our object, if we try to cause all the features like hands, feet, eyes and so forth to appear, there is a danger we will lose the object. [27] If we lose the objective support, we won't achieve calm abiding, so it's very important not to lose it. As for the objective support, we need something obstructive [to ground] the mind, so if we find just that, we can be content with it. Even if at first all the parts of the holy body—head, hands, feet, etc.—do not individually appear to the mind, and whether or not the color of the holy body of our teacher Buddha is clear or not, if something like an upright yellow form appears, we can be satisfied and observe just that. Without our mind being distracted to various other objects, we need to hold it in mind with a firm mode of apprehension and an intense awareness.

Furthermore, observing just that object that we first observed, we need to meditate with a firm mode of apprehension, not distracted to other objects. Since the holy body of the Buddha on which we are meditating is of a golden hue, we think "I must meditate on a golden holy body", and if other colors like blue and so forth appear, it is inappropriate to follow after them.

As for the size: in the beginning, we should meditate on [the body] merely the size of a thumb width, and shouldn't try to cause a larger one to appear. If an object that grounds the mind arises, beyond just observing that, if first we check "is it appearing clearly?", that will harm our factor of stability, so in the beginning we can be content with merely that [grounding appearance]. [28] Later, if we get a slight factor of stability towards the object, it is good if we can slowly imagine in succession the hands, feet, wheel marks [on the palms and soles], face, hair-tuft [on the fore-brow] and so forth, and gradually clarify [the appearance]. If we achieve calm abiding in this way, as described in the great texts, on the basis of that we will be able to advance to the higher and higher paths. In the past some people, relying on so-called "pith advice" that does not accord with the great texts, have said "don't engage in any conceptual thought at all. Don't direct the mind anywhere. Relax, and abide: that is calm abiding. That is meditative stabilization." Even today, there are those who say such things. It is our own fault if we don't understand this important point. We need to practice and actualize [calm abiding] as it is described in the great texts.

When actually tending to the object [we use to achieve] calm abiding, [staying] in a fully qualified abode for actualizing calm abiding, first we need to do the six preparatory practices such as cleaning the place, arranging a representation of the Buddha's holy body, speech, and mind, and so forth. Generally speaking, whether we are meditating on calm abiding or engaging in some other practice, initially it is very important to prepare well by means of these six preparatory practices. [29] Preceded by a good preparation, the actual session will also go well. However poorly the preparation is done, to that same degree the actual session will go poorly.

Having done the six preparatory practices, withdraw the merit field. Having withdrawn the merit field, imagine that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha comes to the crown of your head. Make the request to him: "please bless me, in general, to cleanse and purify all wrongdoing and obscurations, and to quickly achieve the state of a guru Buddha. In particular, please bless me to generate easily the realization of calm abiding." Through our requesting in this way, from the holy body of the guru flows a stream of nectar-light rays, which enter into your crown, cleansing and purifying all wrongdoing and obscurations that create hindrances to actualizing calm abiding. Imagine that you are blessed to achieve quickly the realization of calm abiding.

There are non-Buddhists who, for an object of calm abiding, take "stones and sticks"—small rocks and small twigs—and actualize calm abiding. Mainly, calm abiding arises more easily if one observes whatever object with which one has the greatest familiarity. [30] However, if we observe the holy body of the Buddha, while abiding in calm abiding we will accumulate merit and cleanse obscurations. We will be reminded of a special objective basis of prostration

and offering. Because of observing the holy body of the Buddha, the great difference [from merely observing stones and sticks] is that we will remember the Buddha, and on the way we will easily accumulate vast stores of merit and virtue, will be reminded of the objects of refuge and field of merit, and so forth.

### Teaching on where to meditate on the object-of-observation support

Through our having made requests to the Guru Shakyamuni at your crown, imagine that a mere thumb-sized replica of his holy body separates from his heart and comes to rest in front of the space between your eyebrows or at the level of your navel. If you place it in front of your navel, a firm factor of stability will arise, and if you place it in front of your eyebrows, it is good for the factor of clarity. Imagine in the space of your mind whatever aspect of observation, with its various characteristics and so forth, on which your lama has clearly instructed you.

When meditating, place in the space in front of your navel the holy body of the Buddha, the size of a mere thumb, that has separated from the heart of Guru Victor Shakyamuni at your crown. By placing your mind single-pointedly on that, you must actualize the factor of stability. [31] It is important to secure to that object a tight manner of apprehension that does not wander to other objects. If from the very first session you make the duration especially long, laxity and excitement will arrive and you will lose the object, so at first it is best to practice in short sessions. If we break the session during a period of the session when the factor of stability, an intense factor of clarity and so forth are going well, afterwards we will think "it will go well again next time" and will want to engage in concentration again. If instead we hold out hope for a clear object right away, and make the session very long, after a while we will lose the object we are [trying to] sustain, and we will become exhausted. Thus we won't want to engage in the practice again. So at first, we are better off not mainly focusing on trying to attain a tight mode of apprehension and clear object of observation, but rather making many [short] sessions. Later when we do get a firm factor of stability to the object, we can lengthen the session and mainly focus on trying to get an intense factor of clarity. However, whenever a factor of stability arises, we must be cautious about laxity, and whenever a factor of clarity arises, we must be cautious about excitement. Furthermore, when the state of mind gets especially low, there is a danger of laxity, and when it gets especially high, there is danger of excitement. [32] A yogi mainly has to infer these things from his [should we say "he or she"?] own experience; others' words cannot describe it exactly as it is.

When observing an object in that way and actually practicing to achieve calm abiding, if one meditates uninterruptedly—not taking breaks except to sleep, eat, and use the bathroom—calm abiding will quickly arise. For example, there is a kind of wood called a "rubbing stick"—if we keep rubbing two of them together, we will get fire. If we keep taking break after break in rubbing, they will become cold and we won't get fire, but if we rub without break until fire arises, soon the fire will blaze. Likewise when we meditate on calm abiding, it is said that if we place our mind just on that object we have chosen and meditate without break for a day, a month,

or a year, as long as the collections of causes for calm abiding are complete, we will achieve it in six months.

As for "forgetting the objective support" or "forgetting the instructions": if we lose recollection of the objective support and can't hold it in mind, this is called "forgetting the instructions". As an antidote for that, we need strong recollection—[33] we need to rely on a forceful recollection that can hold the objective support immediately [see footnote on pg. 10] without losing it. Some people naturally have stable recollection and introspection and do not forget things. Others are forgetful and immediately forget things. Therefore, it is important to rely on recollection and introspection without forgetting. For somebody with unstable recollection, it is difficult to achieve calm abiding, while for somebody with stable recollection it is easier.

### Teaching on Recollection with three characteristics

Well then, what kind of thing is this that we call "introspection"? Just like worldly people usually say "I remember that", "I don't remember that", "recollection" is a mental factor possessing three characteristics:

1. **Object.** It observes an object that one has seen and known, and with which one has familiarity.
2. **Mode of apprehension.** It holds immediately [see footnote above] in its mode of apprehension that very object with which one is familiar.
3. **Function.** During that time, it does not scatter from that object to others.

Considering such a recollection as very important, one should make effort not to forget the object by continuously relying on recollection. [34] It is said that if one knows the manner of nurturing concentration, just that manner of nurturing recollection is it.

If you are going to meditate taking the holy body of our teacher Buddha as an object, before that you yourself must observe a drawing or carving of his holy body and ascertain [its characteristics], or you can become familiar with it through the explanations of your lama. Through these methods, the object becomes a "familiar thing". Because recollection observes the object single-pointedly, generating a tight or forceful manner of apprehension and holding it, it is called a "tenacious manner of apprehension". By causing just that object to appear to the mind without scattering to other objects, recollection becomes endowed with three characteristics.

Like that, the fault of "forgetting the instructions" that I explained above is a losing of the objective support. Regarding an antidote to lose the objective support, the forceful recollection that holds tightly without losing the objective support is that antidote.

### How to Identify Laxity

The third fault [obstructing calm abiding] is called "laxity and excitement". Laxity and excitement create obstacles during the actual session of cultivating meditative stabilization, so we need to stop laxity and excitement. [35] If at first we don't identify laxity and excitement, we won't be able to stop them and won't know how to stop them, so it is said that we must identify laxity and excitement.

Generally among the different [mental factors] spoken of such as "laxity", "lethargy", and "excitement", there is a difference between laxity and lethargy. *Lethargy* is like a looming heaviness of body and mind just before falling asleep that initiates the onset of sleep. Such a one that causes a lack of mental clarity is called "lethargy". [Footnote—lethargy and laxity] There is no virtuous mind that is of the nature of lethargy; whatever is lethargy is necessarily not virtuous. Lethargy must either be non-virtuous, or a defiled neutral mind [footnote]. There *can* be a virtuous mind that is of the nature of laxity. "Laxity" is when, through one's not maintaining a tight manner of apprehension, the factor of clarity lacks intensity, and the mind sinks and becomes loose. Like procrastination, "laxity" is the one of the greatest obstacles to concentration.

Laxity has two kinds: gross laxity and subtle laxity. "Gross laxity" is when we observe the holy body of the Buddha, recollection maintains the objective support, and the mind stays on the object, but consciousness has no factor of clarity or factor of subjective clarity [footnote—this is Hopkins' translation. Difference of the two is like *sred pa* and *len pa*—same type of thing, just intensified] at all. [36] As if something else was obscuring the object, although one has a mere factor of stability to it, because there is no factor of clarity it is called "gross laxity". [Alternatively,] one does not lose the mode of apprehension of the object, maintaining both a factor of stability and also a factor of clarity. Although there is a factor of clarity, there is no tight mode of apprehension, and the force of the mode of apprehension loosens slightly. If that happens, there is no intensity of the factor of clarity, so we call it "subtle laxity". For example, if we are holding an object with our hand, there is a difference between a kind of holding without a tight grip, versus gripping tightly and holding the object. Likewise, the kind of apprehension of the object of observation that lacks a tight mode of apprehension lacks an intensity of the factor of clarity, whereas if we focus and tighten the mode of apprehension, then hold the object in mind, that holding has an "intensity of the factor of clarity".

Although subtle laxity has a factor of clarity and firmly holds to the objective support, its mode of apprehension stays as though relaxing. Since it is a fault of not holding the objective support by tightening the mode of apprehension, we need to tighten the mode of apprehension and hold the object. If we tighten it, there is a risk of excitement, and a risk of scattering to another object. Generally speaking, if one relaxes the mind it is good for the factor of stability. [37] Since one then has a good factor of stability, many earlier Tibetans mistook that for meditative stabilization.

We definitely need to understand this so-called "subtle laxity". For example, if there is an obvious enemy intent on harming us from afar, it is relatively easy to stop him. But with

somebody who acts like our close friend and pretends to benefit us, we don't know when he will turn around and harm us, so this is our most serious threat. Likewise this subtle laxity, which has a factor of stability and a factor of clarity, is similar to meditative stabilization, so we are apt to mistake it for meditative stabilization. Thus it is the greatest obstacle. When it comes to identifying subtle laxity, although somebody may say "you need a factor of stability. You need a factor of clarity", these words cannot adequately describe to another person what is clear and what is good. So through our own experience, while meditating we should occasionally check whether our mode of apprehension is tight or not. If a focused, tight mode of apprehension is there, "intensity of the factor of clarity" has arisen. [38] If we have the factors of stability and clarity but the mode of apprehension lacks tightness and is slackening, then it is turning to laxity.

These are things that we need to analyze based on our own experiences. If subtle laxity accumulates and we think that this subtle laxity is actual meditative stabilization, then air may even cease to flow through our nostrils and we may abide for many days with a stable mind. At the beginning, our mind might experience a pleasant sensation. However, that is an obstacle to meditative stabilization. For example, yesterday when I returned to Sera I met a Sera monk. He has a very good [understanding] of scripture, and a clear ascertainment in his mind of all scriptural explanations of the manner of actualizing calm abiding. However, he said that he had gone to a solitary place to practice meditation, and meditated on calm abiding for eight months. During those eight months, while meditating he had a stable factor of stability capable of inducing [some level of] bliss. Because of that, he thought, "ah, now I have achieved actual calm abiding." However, there was a geshe of one of the new sects [footnote] who had [39] previously stayed in Bhutan, practiced and attained calm abiding. The Sera monk says he asked the geshe for advice, and the geshe replied "the intensity of your mode of apprehension is a little too weak. You still need to meditate a bit."

So, although he had a good [understanding] of scripture and knew based on scripture all about the manner of actualizing calm abiding, the objects of abandonment and the antidotes, when slight laxity or mental scattering arise, however much one lacks familiarity with the great texts, one might be prone to mental scattering, so at that time we need to be careful. If we mistake the subtle laxity that is not actual meditative stabilization for actual meditative stabilization and meditate for a long time, because our recollection's mode of apprehension lacks a forceful intensity, it has no benefit other than becoming a cause in this life for forgetfulness to increase, lack of mental clarity to worsen, and a cause for stupidity [as an] an animal and so forth [in future lives] [footnote—not literally non-virtue].

These are important points that are not made completely clear in the great texts, so let me repeat: "gross laxity" is when there is a factor of stability but no factors of clarity or subjective clarity. [40] "Subtle laxity" is when there are both factors of stability and clarity, but a tight mode of apprehension is lost, or the intensity of the clarity factor is lost.

### How to Identify Excitement

What is this excitement that is spoken of in "laxity and excitement?" Excitement belongs in the category of [the mental affliction of] desire-attachment [that is, it is a specific kind of desire-attachment]. A mental factor that scatters the mind to another object through the force of attachment is what we call "excitement". Generally speaking "meditative stabilization" is something that needs a factor of stability, so if the mind scatters to another object, that is an obstacle to meditative stabilization. However, in this context, not all manners of scattering are spoken of as obstacles, while excitement is said to be the greatest obstacle. When we distinguish "scattering" from "excitement", scattering can be of three types: (1) excitement is a scattering to another object through the force of attachment, while distraction to another object through the force of (2) hatred or (3) a virtuous mind are [also] "scattering" [but not excitement]. In actuality these [latter two] also create obstacles to meditative stabilization, but in this context excitement which is scattering through the force of attachment is spoken of as an obstacle, [41] while the other two are not mentioned as obstacles here. If [other kinds of] scattering cause obstacles to meditative stabilization, why are they not posited as obstacles [here]? Scattering to objects of virtuous minds and hatred is less [frequent], while scattering to objects of attachment is much more common. Also, from the point of view of duration, scattering to objects through virtuous minds and hatred is of a short duration, while scattering to objects through attachment is of a long duration, so [the former two] are not spoken of as obstacles [here] [footnote—third reason].

How does that happen? Attachment is like soaking a piece of paper with oil. If a piece of paper is soaked in oil, it is extremely difficult to clean the oil. Likewise, excitement which scatters to objects through the force of attachment is said to an obstacle to meditative stabilization. When meditating on calm abiding, the mind needs to stay only on the objective support, so any scattering to other objects is an obstacle. For that reason, when meditating on calm abiding, if other thoughts about practicing generosity, making prostrations, or even love and compassion arise and cause distraction, [42] for the time being these are obstacles to meditative stabilization so one should not follow these thoughts. If we follow them we will lose the object of calm abiding, so scattering to objects through virtuous minds is also, at the time of cultivating meditative stabilization, an obstacle and we must stop it.

Excitement also has both gross and subtle kinds. At the time of observing an objective support like the holy body of the Buddha, if the mind scatters to another object and we lose the object support, that is called "gross excitement". In the case of "subtle excitement", the mind does not get drawn away and lose the objective support, but from the space of holding the objective support an enticing object is on the verge of arising in a corner of the mind. Subtle excitement is like, for example, water flowing under ice.

As an antidote to such laxity and excitement, one must rely on "introspection", the sixth of the eight antidotes to apply to the five faults [as explained in *dbus mtha'*—footnote]. Introspection is not the actual antidote that cuts laxity and excitement, but it recognizes laxity and excitement: it is the sentry that inspects whether or not laxity and excitement are arising. By

keeping watch when laxity or excitement is about to arise, if introspection is able to be aware of them, it is best.

[43] Well then, what is this thing called "introspection"? An observing consciousness that stands guard or spies to see whether or not the object held by recollection is being lost or not is called "introspection". If however we continuously make recourse to this introspection to check what is happening, it will harm our factor of stability, so we should prepare an investigating introspection and occasionally check just a bit. For example, if we hold in our hands a vessel full of water, we need to grip it tightly while also checking whether or not it is spilling out. Holding with the hands is like the factor of stability, and gripping tightly is like the intensity of the mode of apprehension. If the water starts to churn it will spill out, so in order for it not spill, one corner of the mind has to check whether or not it is churning: that is introspection.

Now, the fourth fault: when laxity and excitement arise, if we fail to make recourse to an antidote, it becomes the *fault of not applying the antidote*. [44] Therefore before laxity and excitement arise, introspection stands guard, and if it sees that laxity is about to arise, one tightens the object of observation, and if it sees that excitement is about to arise, one lowers the level of the mind [lessens/eases off arousal?]. Since we need to apply these methods to stop laxity and excitement, if they arise we definitely must make recourse to an antidote.

Introspection is the inspector to see whether or not the enemies of laxity and excitement are approaching. For example, like a spy: if a spy sees an enemy approaching from a distance, he will send word and somebody else will come to actually do the work of stopping the enemy. Likewise, introspection is the mere sentry to check whether or not laxity and excitement are approaching. If laxity and excitement arise, the actual thing that stops them is "application of the antidote": an associated compositional factor [?-footnote].

Well then, how do we actually apply the antidote? If subtle laxity arises—from the two laxities explained above, "subtle laxity" is the one that has the factors of stability and clarity, but due to lacking a tight mode of apprehension, has lost the intensity of the factor of clarity—to stop that we do not need to break the session, [45] nor do we need to let go of the object of observation. If we try to generate an intensity of the factor of clarity by tightening the mode of apprehension, when such an intensity arises we have succeeded in stopping subtle laxity.

Furthermore, if we concentrate intensely on the object and it becomes *too* tight, there is a risk that the mind will slip into excitement. If instead we make the object too loose, laxity will arise, so we need to put effort into a technique which brings about a balance between tightness and looseness. One needs to confirm this through personal experience. If you concentrate too strongly and you think your mind is starting to scatter, you should loosen the object, and if you're too relaxed and you think that laxity is arising, you should tighten your concentration, and so forth: these are things you need to know from experience. The Blessed One also explained that we need to have balance between tightness and looseness. He himself explained: "if the strings

of a sitar are too tight, one won't get a sweet sound, and also if they are too loose, one won't get a sweet sound, so by finding a balance between tight and loose, a sweet sound will arise. Likewise, by holding the mind not too tightly focused, and not too loose, in a balanced state, meditative stabilization will arise." [46]

In addition, we have the story of the Acharya Chandagomin: Chandragomin possessed the signs of one who has directly seen the Arya Avalokiteshvara and others, and proceeded to high levels of accomplishment. Nevertheless, [early on] when he was practicing calm abiding, he applied fierce effort and over-tightened his mind, leading to excitement. When he subsequently relaxed too much, laxity arrived, so he asked "what should I do?" [footnote]

"Subtle laxity" is a condition that has factors of clarity and subjective clarity but lacks intensity of the factor of clarity. When subtle laxity arises, one must tighten the object. During subtle laxity, although there are factors of clarity and subjective clarity, an experience of an unclear mode of apprehension arises, followed by subtle laxity which has lost the intensity of the factor of clarity. To counter this loss of intensity, one needn't end the meditation session, but by tightening the object of observation it is said that one can counter it. At that time, if even by tightening the mode of apprehension one does not counter it, and having lost the intensity of the factor of clarity it is like the mind is deteriorating, or if there is no intensity, the mind is slack, the mode of apprehension is unclear and it is as though one is about to forget the object, then gross laxity has arrived. [47] When gross laxity comes about, what method should we employ to counter it?

"Laxity" is not the mind gone into scattering, but a case of the mind being too withdrawn inwards, so through a fault which is like a slight sinking of the mental state, laxity comes about. Therefore, when gross laxity arrives, as a method to pacify it one needs to elevate the mental state. In order to elevate the mental state, initially as a means of bringing joy to the mind we can do as described in the *Lam Rim Chenmo*, in the section on how to actualize calm abiding, within the context of the being of great capacity, where [Tsongkhapa] explains the advice on the six perfections for one engaging in the bodhisattva's conduct. If we do as described there, then even before that we would have had some experience of the great meaning of and difficulty in finding the leisure and fortune [of a perfect human rebirth], and of the benefits of the mind of enlightenment. In that case, then when [the mind becomes depressed], if we reflect on the benefits of relying on a spiritual friend, the great meaning of and difficulty in finding the leisure and fortune, the benefits of the mind of enlightenment and so forth, then a vibrant mental joy will arise, and the mind's abiding low in depression will clear up, so we should do like that. If we don't have a great deal of familiarity with those virtuous minds, it will be difficult for [that joy] to arise. If we have adequate familiarity, then when we recollect those benefits, like freshening up by throwing or sprinkling cold water on our face, [48] the mind will become clear and bright.

Once there was a retreatant staying on Cagpori Hill (in Lhasa). That Cagpori retreatant was practicing and meditating well on the mind of enlightenment. Also at that time was one

called Phurchok Jampa Gyatso [footnote], a master of the lam rim teachings, who would always give lam rim teachings in the summer and autumn. When Phurchok arrived in the presence of the Cagpori retreatant, they spoke about the mind of enlightenment. While they speaking together, the retreatant remarked, "when you arrived, like once again lightening the load of my pack, we fell into a talk about the mind of enlightenment. If you were to talk about this to others, they wouldn't take to it. When we spoke about the mind of enlightenment, I remembered its benefits and faith and respect arose [in my mind]. On the basis of that, my pack has again become light."

If we meditate on recollecting the benefits of the mind of enlightenment and so forth but still are unable to pacify laxity, there is an oral instruction on a forceful method for cutting laxity. [49] What is it? Imagine your mind in the aspect of a white light at your heart. Reciting "Phat!", imagine that with the sound of "Phat" [your mind] emerges from the crown of your head and merges with the sky. If you do like that, it can help to pacify laxity. Also, if you think in this way when you have wind disease or an unhappy mind, it can benefit. You need to imagine that your mind merges with the sky above. Alternatively, if you say "Ha!" and exhale outwards, then imagine that that air pervades all of space, it can also benefit an unhappy mind.

Even by thinking in this way, if you still can't clear away laxity, then you should break the meditation session and go to a high place and/or a place where wind blows. Staying in a high, distant place where you can see far, look around. If by looking around your mind becomes spacious and relaxed, then return to your meditation. These are manners of relying on the antidotes for laxity.

"Subtle excitement" is when, without losing the objective support, the mind is on the verge of distraction to a familiar object. That subtle excitement arises by virtue of the mind being a little too tight. [50] Since that onset of excitement is [due to] the fault of the mind because excessively tight, one should loosen the mode of apprehension slightly. If one loosens a bit, it will help with the mental distraction. If it doesn't help, [it means] gross excitement has arrived. What is that onset of gross excitement? It is a fault of the mind being too elevated. If we have a vibrant mental joy, we shouldn't increase the joy too much. With excessive joy, there will be the fault of excitement arising, and it will also be an obstacle to generating good qualities. For example, Shuddhodhana, the father of our teacher the unequaled king of the Shakyas, was excessively joyful because his son was the teacher Buddha-Bhagavan. No matter how much the Buddha explained the Dharma to him, he couldn't attain the results of stream entry and so forth [footnote]. That is the fault of the mind being too excessively joyful.

One day the Buddha employed skillful means such that when Shuddhodhana was coming to meet the Buddha, the four great kings [footnote] guarded the doors of the east, south, west and north, and when they saw him coming they said to him "you aren't allowed to go into the presence of the Buddha". On account of that his pride diminished slightly. [51] Even though he was the Buddha's father, since he was unable to ascend into his presence his spirits dropped.

Later when [the Buddha] taught the Dharma his mind descended to the right place and by listening to the Dharma in the end he achieved stream-entry.

For that reason, if we have excessive mental joy, excitement will arise so we need to bring down the mental state. As a method for bringing down the mental state, if we reflect again and again on death and impermanence, the suffering of the lower realms, the faults of samsara and so forth, a distinct mental sorrow will arise and excitement will in turn become weaker. Like before, when we haven't meditated [much before on these subjects], it is a bit difficult, whereas when he have meditated, when we think of death and impermanence, if we are sitting we will soon need to stand. Having stood and gone about, if we remember death and impermanence we will soon need to sit down—such is the terror that will arise [in our mind]. If that arises, the mind of sorrow [with samsara] is definite to arise.

Even having practiced like that, if you are still unable to dispel excitement, there is a forceful method for cutting excitement. Observing the rising and sinking of the breath, do as if you are deceiving your mind on it and exhale one breath, then inhale one [footnote—like distracting a rambunctious child with something else]. The again should you should exhale one, and inhale one. [52] Not merely counting the coming and going of that breath, but also with your mind not wandering to another object, think "exhale...inhale...", counting "one...two...". When you are able to count about twenty-eight breaths, you are posited as having achieved the first among the "nine mental settlings" [the nine stages leading to calm abiding] called "placing the mind". If by thinking in this way you are able to dispel excitement, then again you can continue meditating.

Initially, without falling under the power of laxity and excitement, in a relaxed manner meditate for a short while. Then, when the meditation improves slightly, slowly and carefully increase the length of the session. Otherwise, if you instead insist on meditating for a long time right from the start, laxity, excitement and so forth will cause obstacles, and thoughts like "My mind is a mess!", "Now, this isn't working!", and "This is too hard!" will arise. So in accordance with the advice "leave off when the meditation is enjoyable", if you manage to get a clear object of observation, break the session right there. If you do that, then later when it is time to meditate again, you will want to meditate. Otherwise if even without a clear object of observation, you insist and continue meditating anyway, you will lose what slight clarity of the object you have. [53] When you see the meditation seat on which you have practiced, you will feel anguish and revulsion. So at first, you should break the session when the meditation is clear.

If you break the session when the meditation is clear, it's like, for example, two close and mutually comfortable friends who part ways: later, if they see each other, both will feel distinct joy. Likewise with meditation: if you break the session when you have clear concentration, when you're about to sit for your next session you will have a clear object and will want to meditate. Thus, you should definitely break the session in a state of clarity.

Otherwise, if you break the session after your mind has become unclear, then when it is time to sit again for the next session, the object will be unclear and you won't want to meditate. For example, once there was a great accomplished practitioner named "Drubtop [Mahasiddha] Losang Namgyal". While he was giving an oral transmission of the *Assorted Sayings of the Kadampa Masters* [footnote—this is a particular text?], he saw the words "these days, during the degenerate era, is the time to subdue your own mind, not the time to subdue somebody else's mind." Seeing these words, he started to cry, and after crying it was time to finish the teaching session for the day. [54] The next day when he began teaching, he started right from those very words, so having spoken them, again he started crying. In that way, he was unable to complete the teaching. Likewise, if you stop the session while the meditation is unclear, you will stay in that lack of clarity, so from the beginning, without sitting for a long time, if you can have a short session free of the obstacles of laxity and excitement, you should stop right there. It is okay even if you need to complete eighteen [short] sessions in one day. Then in a relaxed manner, through your own power you will be able to stay in meditation, and you can increase the length of the session. At first, beyond having many short sessions with relaxed exertion, it is unskillful to apply great forceful effort.

With regards to the fifth fault, *applying the antidote when laxity and excitement are absent*: laxity and excitement have ceased through your relying on an antidote. Even if after laxity and excitement have ceased, if through a great exertion of introspection you still rely on intention [the seventh application], considering it an antidote, it will harm your abiding in a firm meditative stabilization, so without applying an antidote, you should just leave [your mind as it is]. At that time, if even though free of laxity and excitement you still apply an antidote, it will harm your mental settling, so such application of an antidote is itself a fault. [55] As an antidote to *that* [over-application], there is what is called "desisting from application" [footnote: literally, "equanimity [with regards to] application"]. Leaving aside application of an antidote, you must rely on desisting from application, which does not apply an antidote.

### How it becomes a fault if you let go during or before the eighth mental settling

Since it is said that "on the basis of nine means of settling the mind, one actualizes calm abiding," [I will explain about the last two of these [footnote]]. During the eighth of the nine mental settlings which are a method [for actualizing calm abiding], if at the beginning of the session a practitioner exerts a slight effort, then until the session is completed laxity and excitement will not create obstacles. Although at that time one does not need a great effort of guarding introspection to check whether or not laxity and excitement are arising, there is said to be at that time a "mere effort of introspection". With a firmness of mind [certain that] laxity and excitement will not arise, although a person places their mind in equipoise in meditative stabilization for a long period of time, laxity and excitement do not arise. Furthermore, since they don't need to rely on introspection that checks whether or not these two arise, they are said to "let go of the effort of introspection."

The two, (a) letting go of the effort of introspection and (b) a more general need for effort, are not mutually contradictory. Although it is said that one should not let go of effort until the ninth mental settling, in this context of the eighth mental settling it is said that it is *like* being able to let go. [56] Since these two statements are not contradictory, in this context because a person is able to complete the session without laxity and excitement creating obstacles, it is said that "one needn't rely on strong effort like before." Not needing to rely on even a slight effort comes about during the ninth mental settling. Although one lets go of effort during the *ninth* mental settling, it is said to be inappropriate to let go of it before arriving at the *eighth* mental settling. Many earlier Tibetans, saying "supreme letting go is supreme meditation" and not [correctly] apprehending the stage at which one should let go [of effort], would let go before that [eight stage]: that was inappropriate. According to the great texts, one must definitely continue [with effort] until reaching the eighth mental settling. Until Je Tsonkhapa arrived [on the scene], what these people spoke of as "supreme letting go is supreme meditation" was that very lack of intensity of the factor of clarity, which though having a slight factor of stability has turned to subtle dullness. Because it has a slight factor of stability, they would err thinking that subtle dullness was [actual] meditation.

Je the Great [Tsongkhapa], in accordance with the great texts and relying on the personal instructions of Manjushri, said "that is nothing but dullness. It is not an actual meditative stabilization of calm abiding. To achieve actual calm abiding, you need [to practice] according to the great texts." [57] Because Je the Great dispelled such faults entering into the teachings of the Buddha, and the teachings' sliding into degeneration and so forth—all stains of not realizing or of holding opposing views—he was indeed extremely benevolent towards Tibet.

Saying that "supreme letting go is supreme meditation", if somebody mistakes that subtle dullness without an intensity of the factor of clarity for [actual] meditation, and meditates for a long time, they will end up farther away from meditative stabilization.

### The Actual Manner of Sustaining the Object of Observation

After that, how should one sustain the object of observation? If you fulfill all the necessary conditions for calm abiding, such as an abode with five characteristics [see pg. . .] and so forth, sit down on a comfortable seat. If you elevate your back slightly, there is the advantage of not causing pain the rear, so arrange a seat like that. Your body [should be arranged in] "the sevenfold posture of Vairochana", so called because it is similar to the sitting style of the Buddha Vairochana [footnote]. The seven characteristics of Vairochana's posture are: 1) The legs arranged in the vajra [lotus] position, 2) The hands placed in [the mudra] of equipoise, 3) The hips straight, 4) The teeth and lips even and the tip of the tongue lightly pressed against the roof of the mouth, 5) The head slightly bent [forward], 6) The eyes cast towards the tip of the nose, and 7) The shoulders straight [footnote—grouping into seven based on rnam grol lag bcangs—see note in text, quote by Ensapa]. By sitting in such a sevenfold posture of Vairochana, the body

will be straight, causing the energy channels to be straight. [58] If the channels are straight, the energy winds will flow straightly through them, making it easier for one to develop realizations.

Tradition has it that in old times in India, when the Sravaka disciples [footnote] of the Buddha sat to practice meditation, they would meditate sitting in the vajra posture. Once in the surrounding area was a monkey, who would always see the Sravakas sitting to meditate in the vajra position. Later, when the Sravakas moved to another place, a group of Tirthikas [footnote] [came to] meditate in that place. These Tirthikas engaged in practice as though lying down, and would sit with their legs outstretched. When the monkey came and saw them sitting with their legs outstretched, he arranged their legs in folded position, and lifted those lying down into the vajra position. When he had done that, the Tirthikas [wondered], "what is this way of sitting? If we [sit] in this way, there appears to be some difference." Because they sat in the vajra position, they quickly achieved meditative stabilization.

Still, some people are different than others. Another story holds that in old times there was a Sravaka Arhat named "Ox Lord" [Skt. name?]. [59] This "Ox Lord", no matter how much he meditated in the vajra position, was unable to generate realizations. Since he wasn't generating realizations, the Blessed One said to him, "The makeup of your body's energy channels is not like that of [most] men. Rather, it is like the makeup of the energy channels of an ox, so lie down like an ox and meditate." Lying down and meditating, he quickly achieved meditative stabilization.

Placing your body in the sevenfold posture of Vairochana, in accordance with the lam rim, do the Jorchö [preliminary practices]. Withdraw the Jorchö merit field, and imagine that your lama in nirmanakaya aspect [footnote] sits at the crown of your head. From your lama seated at your crown comes [a replica] said to be "merely a *tson*" [distance from central knuckle to tip of thumb, i.e. half the length of the thumb", that is, "merely a thumb width". That mere thumb width separates [from the lama]: now place it in the space in front of your navel, and meditate observing that. Although at first all the [features like] hands and feet will not appear clearly, if you have an appearance to your mind like a clear, upright shaft of yellow, focus merely on that, and hold it in memory without forgetting it. If you maintain a tight mode of apprehension without letting your mind wander, you will be able to generate a faultless meditative stabilization. If you [intend to] actualize calm abiding by observing [the body of] Vajrapani Mahacakra [a form of Vajrapani], [60] visualize in front of you Vajrapani Mahacakra. Although at first a [body] complete with three faces and six arms will not clearly appear, if an upright blue shaft appears to your mind, it is adequate at the start just to be able to maintain that appearance without your mind wandering to other objects. With regards to calm abiding, since one needs a single-pointed abiding free of laxity and excitement, through your holding a tight mode of apprehension laxity will be unable to intrude, and through not wandering to other objects excitement will be unable to intrude. So, one must meditate like that. As for clear [appearance] of the hands, arms and so forth, if a stability factor has arisen, one needs gradually

to clarify the appearance, but from the beginning one will be unable to have clear [appearance] or abide for a long time.

When the factor of stability arises, you must make ready for the tarnish of laxity. If the factor of stability arises, laxity draws near [footnote—no laxity for ordinary people], so as a method for dispelling laxity you must tighten the factor of clarity and the mode of apprehension. Again, if having tightened the mode of apprehension the factor of clarity becomes very strong, excitement will draw near. If excitement draws near, loosen that taut mode of apprehension a bit and seek again a [steadier] factor of stability. [61] Doing like that, as the factor of stability arises, one must gradually be cautious about laxity, and as a strong factor of clarity arises, gradually cautious about excitement. On top of that, establish a spy of introspection to check whether or not laxity and excitement are arising. Since introspection is like an examiner or a spy, when laxity or excitement are on the verge of arriving, you must notice right away. If you notice at that time, it will be easier to stop them, whereas it will be more difficult to stop them once they have actually arrived.

### Stepwise Explanation of the Nine Mental Settlings

With regard to the nine mental settlings spoken of [in the statement] "to actually calm abiding requires the nine mental settlings": the first mental settling is called "setting the mind". The second is called "continuous setting". The third is "fixing and setting". The fourth is "close setting". The fifth is "disciplining." The sixth is "pacifying". The seventh is "thorough pacifying". The eighth is "making one-pointed". The ninth is "setting in equipoise".

The first mental settling, "setting the mind", holds the objective support in mind, but in addition to that does not have a significant mental factor of stability, so at this point is called [merely] "setting the mind". During that "setting", apart from merely setting the mind on the objective support, [62] one is unable to abide there for a long time so it is called "setting". In the process of actualizing such a concentration, one seeks an objective support. When the mind is set on that objective support, it will seem as though your conceptual thoughts have increased. But if you ask, "have my conceptual thoughts increased?": it is not that they have increased. [Whereas before] you didn't analyze how many conceptual thoughts arose over time, now that you have to put a stop to the various conceptions, you are analyzing how many of them arise, and so it seems to be more. Therefore that is [the sign of] recognizing conceptual thoughts. For example, if there are many people coming and going from a check-post in the road, when you don't check how many people there are, you don't get a clear idea of the amount. If one day you count how many there actually are coming and going, it will seem as though there are more than usual. So in that way, you must identify conceptual thoughts. [As we discussed] yesterday, by counting your in and out breaths, if for a period of twenty-one breaths you are able to stay on the objective support without your mind wandering, you have achieved [the first stage] "setting the mind".

[63] The mere setting of the mind on the objective support through the first mental settling is achieved through the "*power of hearing*". The manner of achieving through the power of hearing is to sustain the object of observation on the basis of an explanation by one's lama, who explains "as a part of achieving calm abiding, you need an objective support such as the holy body of the Buddha. He has one face and two hands, with the right pressing the earth and the left in equipoise. He has a crown protrusion and his holy body is gold in color." Thus it is called "achieving through the power of hearing."

*The second mental settling is called "continuous setting"*. The [stage] called "continuous setting" is slightly longer in duration than the first stage [discussed above]. That is, sometimes you are able to slightly extend your sustaining [concentration] without distracting thoughts, so there is a slightly longer duration of the factor of stability than before. Your mind is able to abide for the duration of, for example, the counting of one rosary of the mani mantra [footnote]. At this stage, sometimes thoughts arise, and sometime it is like being without thoughts, so it is as though thoughts have taken a rest.

These nine methods of settling the mind contain the entire six powers, and also the entire four mental applications [footnote]. First of all, the first mental settling [correlates with] the first of the six powers, the power of hearing. As described above, [64] you listen to the instructions from a lama. Just as he or she explains, you place your mind on the object of observation in that way, so it fulfills the power of hearing. Because at the second stage you continuously think again and again on the meaning of what you have heard, it [the second mental settling] is achieved through the *power of reflection*. Since during the first two mental settlings one newly establishes concentration, laxity and excitement are frequent, and a factor of stability only arises a little bit, among the four mental applications it is the stage of *the mental application of focused engagement (or, "focusing and engaging")*. At this stage, between the two, the factor of stability and distraction, distraction lasts longer and it is as though there is no factor of stability.

*The third stage is called "fixing and setting"*. What is that? If, for example, you tear a hole in your clothes, you will quickly fix it with a patch. Likewise [here] if the mind wanders from the objective support, as you recognize the distraction, you apply a method to place the mind on the basis [again]. Since you do like that, it is "fixing and setting". As the [duration of] meditation becomes longer, distractions become less. Even if you occasionally lose the objective support, again you enforce/insist the mind onto the objective support like patching your clothes. [65] That is "fixing and setting". At this stage, one must rely on strong recollection. At the time of [actual] calm abiding, thoughts will exhaust themselves, like a man who becomes exhausted from working a lot. If you are free from laxity and excitement, you must continuously place [the mind], and if you are able to place it for slightly longer, you should extend the session.

*The fourth mental settling is called "close setting"*. At this stage, if relying on strong recollection you start by placing the mind on the objective support, then until [you arise from meditation], forgetting or losing the objective support must not arise [does not?—NC describes

this as meaning "until the fourth settling, you must make effort to not forget or lose the support]. Since one establishes the previous stage, fixing and setting, and this present stage of close setting by relying on strong recollection, they are achieved through the *power of recollection* among the six powers.

*The fifth stage is called "disciplining"*. Since at the fourth stage of close setting one withdrew the mind inwards by relying on strong recollection, now at the stage of "disciplining" there is a danger of laxity arising by virtue of drawing the mind too strongly inwards, so one must make recourse to the antidote for laxity. For that purpose, initially one must generate a powerful introspection that checks whether laxity is coming. [66] Since laxity is a low state of mind that arises on account of being too loose, as an antidote one must heighten the state of mind and so forth. Although at the fourth mental settling gross laxity arose, during this fifth settling, by relying on the power of recollection and a strong *power of introspection* one is able to block gross laxity. However, since there is a danger of subtle laxity, as a means of dispelling that one must be on guard for subtle laxity and [if it arises] meditate on mental joy, faith, happiness and so forth. You must encourage and uplift the mental state.

*The sixth mental settling is called "pacifying"*. During the fifth mental settling you encouraged and uplifted the mind, so there is a danger of excitement. Since there is a danger of subtle excitement on account of too much encouragement, one generates a forceful introspection in order to block that danger of subtle excitement. When introspection brings awareness and blocks excitement, it is called "pacifying".

*The seventh mental settling is called "thorough pacifying"*. During the fifth and sixth mental settlings, one must generate a forceful introspection and, taking precautions for the dangers of subtle laxity and subtle excitement, block them. [67] From among the six powers, those two stages are achieved through the power of introspection. From that point on, one is [said to] "be endowed with the powers of recollection and introspection", or "have fully matured the powers of recollection and introspection". It is like, for example, a person growing up and reaching adulthood. During the seventh mental settling of thorough pacifying, since the powers of recollection and introspection have fully matured, it is difficult for laxity and excitement to arise. Although it is difficult for them to arise, they are not abandoned, so one generates the *power of zeal* and, seeing even subtle laxity and excitement as faults, abandons them.

During this seventh stage, since one relies on forceful effort and stops laxity and excitement as soon as they arise, laxity and excitement are unable to respond with significant harm. When laxity and excitement do arise, forceful effort harms them [that is, it stops them arising in the first place] During the first two mental settlings, among the four mental applications, [one practiced] the mental application of focused engagement. From the third to the seventh stage, [one practiced] the mental application of "*interrupted engagement*". What is the meaning of calling the mental application practiced up to that point "*interrupted engagement*"? Although one has a factor of stability, still occasionally distractions will come. Since there is

such a slight obstacle like that, here the mental application is called "interrupted engagement" [footnote].

[68] *The eighth mental settling is called "making one-pointed"*. When you reach this stage of making one-pointed, at the beginning [of a session] you place the mind in meditative stabilization thinking "I must not allow laxity and excitement to arise", relying on strong effort. Subsequently if you are in equipoise, laxity and excitement will not arise until you break the session.

Laxity and excitement are the main obstacles when actualizing calm abiding. Although at first when stopping laxity and excitement one must apply strong effort, afterwards when the force of laxity and excitement becomes minimal, it is sufficient to rely on an antidote occasionally, ever so slightly. When the force of laxity and excitement has thoroughly waned, then to stop them one needn't apply effort. For example, in a war, when the enemy has power, one must rely on ferocious effort [to stop them]. If that power wanes a bit, one can relax slightly, and if that power completely wanes, one becomes totally relaxed. Likewise we rely on effort [in meditation] in that way.

During the eighth mental settling, if one first relies on a slight effort, he or she will be able to stay until the end of the session without distractions creating obstacles, [69] so among the four mental applications, here is *the mental application of "uninterrupted engagement."* Since during the seventh and eighth mental settling a practitioner must rely on effort, these two are achieved through the power of zeal.

*The ninth mental settling is called ["setting in equipoise".]* [During this stage, concentration] is achieved spontaneously without requiring effort. For example, if you have practiced well a recitation like Tara, then placing Tara on your crown, even if you do some other activity, Tara will stay with you until you complete it, likewise [here] since concentration arises spontaneously without relying on effort, it is said to be "achieved spontaneously without effort". At this stage, since the mind has a secure factor of stability, one gains the ability to engage in activities of walking, lying down, and sitting while keeping the mind placed in equipoise on the objective support.

This ninth mental settling is [also] called "a single-pointed concentration mind of the desire realm" [footnote]. During the ninth mental settling, one does not achieve actual calm abiding. Although it is not actual calm abiding, it is posited as a similitude of calm abiding. At the stage of the ninth mental settling, one needn't apply the slightest effort, so among the four mental applications, [70] *the mental application of "spontaneous achievement"* is fulfilled. Among the six powers, [this mental settling] is achieved through *the power of thorough familiarization*.

### The Differences between the Nine Mental Settlings

What is the difference between the first and second mental settlings? Although neither of these two has a secure factor of stability, compared to the first mental settling, the second mental settling has a slightly longer lasting factor of stability. Thus these two have a difference in terms of the duration of the factor of stability.

What is the difference between the second stage—continuous setting—and the third stage—fixing and setting? During "fixing and setting", if a distracting thought arises, then immediately—as though patching up clothing—you recognize the distraction as a fault and stop it, so the duration of distraction is shorter. During the second stage distraction lasts a little longer, so [these two] have a difference in the duration of distracting thoughts.

What is the different between the third stage—fixing and setting—and the fourth stage—close setting? During the third stage of fixing and setting it is possible to lose the objective support, but during the fourth stage of close setting one generates a powerful recollection and completes the power of recollection, so the difference is that one cannot lose the objective support.

What is the difference between the fourth and the fifth stage—disciplining? [71] The difference is that during the fourth stage, gross laxity can arise, while from the fifth stage onwards gross laxity cannot arise. At this stage, although there is no gross laxity, still one must take great caution in regards to subtle laxity.

What is the difference between the fifth and sixth stages? During the fifth mental settling, one must take great caution regarding subtle laxity, while during the sixth mental settling, one does not need to take great caution for subtle laxity. Thus there is a difference in needing or not needing to take great caution. Not only that, but also [at this stage] subtle excitement arises less than before.

What is the difference between the sixth and seventh mental settlings? During the sixth stage, one must take significant precautions for harm from laxity and excitement [doesn't this contradict the statement above?—NC explains that there is still danger from *excitement* at sixth stage, even if not from laxity]. At the seventh stage, if distraction arises, then immediately one generates zeal and is able to stop it. On account of that, since one doesn't need great caution for the harm from subtle laxity and excitement [at the seventh stage], there is a difference in terms of needing or not needing to take great caution for the danger of falling prey to subtle laxity and excitement. When I say "not needing to take great caution for the danger of falling prey to subtle laxity and excitement", it's like, for example, if when quarreling with an enemy you cause the power of the enemy to completely decline. From then on there is no great danger, [72] so it is adequate just to take marginal means to stop him.

What is the difference between the seventh and the eighth stage? During the seventh stage, although the faults of subtle laxity and excitement arise, one can stop them with zeal. During the eighth stage, by merely relying on zeal at the outset of the meditation session, laxity

and excitement will not arise until the session is complete. Thus there is a difference in terms of laxity and excitement arising at all.

What is the difference between the eighth and ninth stages? During the eighth stage one exerts a slight effort at the outset of the session, while at the ninth stage no effort is required at all. So there is a difference of relying or not relying on effort.

### How the Nine Mental Settling Fulfill the Six Powers and Four Mental Applications

Fourth, [NC—this is based on outline from rnam grol lag bcangs, since he is teaching from that] How does one actualize these nine mental settlings by means of the six powers? As I explained before, the first mental settling is achieved by means of the power of hearing. The second is achieved through the power of reflection. The third and fourth are achieved through the power of recollection. The fifth and sixth are achieved through the power of introspection. The seventh and eighth are achieved through the power of zeal. The ninth is achieved through the power of thorough familiarization.

These nine mental settlings also fulfill the four mental applications. During the first and second mental settlings, [73] [a practitioner] is endowed with [relies upon] the mental application of focused engagement. From the third to the seventh stage, he is endowed with the mental application of interrupted engagement. During the eighth stage he is endowed with the mental application of uninterrupted engagement, and during the ninth with that of spontaneous achievement.

During the first two stages, there is no more than a just a short-lived factor of stability, so although we don't call it "interrupted engagement" at this point, there is interruption and [re-]engaging. However, as for not calling it that: by virtue of the factor of stability being ever so slight, there is not even a basis for talking about "laxity and excitement do or do not create obstacles". So it's not as though we take there to be no interruption and then don't call it [interrupted engagement]. [In other words, it's not that there is uninterrupted engagement, but rather there is no real engagement at all]. From the third to the seventh stage, the meditation acquires an increasingly strong factor of stability, and one engages [in meditation] with laxity and excitement occasionally creating obstacles, so we call it "interrupted engagement". During the eighth stage, if at the outset of the session a practitioner relies on a slight effort, she will successfully complete the session without laxity and excitement creating obstacles, so at this point we call it "uninterrupted engagement". As I explained before, just as somebody who has practiced recitation can begin reciting, and even if their mind is distracted elsewhere will keep reciting from memory, likewise at the ninth stage one does not rely on effort. [74] A practitioner engages effortlessly and naturally from the state of meditative stabilization, so we posit the "mental engagement of spontaneous achievement".

## The Means of Achieving Actual Calm Abiding

Sixth, the means of achieving actual calm abiding. The ninth mental settling has stable concentration, but it is not actual calm abiding, so at this point one has not achieved actual calm abiding. What, then, do we need for actual calm abiding? A practitioner meditates again and again on concentration, becoming intensely familiar with it. Relying on intense familiarity, the power of the factor of stability gradually induces pliancy of body and mind, and the bliss [of pliancy] [footnote—explain the four stages from lam rim, all in one session, and explain that bliss is not actual bliss]. First pliancy of body and mind arises, and then the bliss of physical and mental pliancy is induced. A meditative stabilization supported by such a bliss of pliancy is called "calm abiding".

With regards to "physical pliancy, and "mental pliancy": [the state achieved at this point] is called physical pliancy because, having pacified all assumption of bad [physical] states in which the body is not serviceable just as one desires for virtuous practices, the body becomes serviceable just as one desires for virtuous practices. [Likewise] mental pliancy is a state wherein, having pacified all assumption of bad [mental] states in which the mind is not serviceable just as one desires for virtuous practices, the mind becomes serviceable just as one desires for virtuous practices. [75] Regarding assumption of bad physical states, these include jumping around like a monkey, while assumption of bad verbal states includes calling others "mangmo" [footnote—refers to a low caste woman or a servant] and so forth [footnote—mention how the point is obstruction in the energy channels, and that leads to coarse behavior. Also a doubt—if calm abiding gets rid of these, how can an Arhat have them?]. In short, it is suitable to say that all vulgar behavior of body and speech is "assumption of bad states".

What is the sign preceding the generation of mental pliancy? One has pacified away assumption of bad physical states, and as a sign of pacifying that, one experiences a pleasant physical sensation, as though somebody were to place [the palm of] their hand on your freshly shaved head, causing a sensation of [warm] heaviness in the brain. That is a pleasant sensation, not an unpleasant one. First the mental pliancy in which the mind is serviceable just as one desires for virtuous practices arises, and the force of that induces physical pliancy. A wind energy that induces physical pliancy pervades all parts of the body. Through that wind pervading all parts of the body, one is freed of the assumption of bad physical states, and there arises a distinctive pleasing tactile sensory object which is physical pliancy, which makes the body light and free of discomfort, serviceable as one desires for virtuous practices: "physical pliancy", a pleasant tactile object, arises. This is an especially pleasing inner object of tactile experience. [76] There arises [immediately thereafter] a great bliss called "the bliss of physical pliancy", which is the experienter of that tactile object [footnote]. On account of that bliss of physical pliancy there arises in the mind a great experience of joyful bliss. That experience is called "the joy of" or "the bliss of mental pliancy". This great experience of joyful bliss elates the mind such that one is [temporarily] unable to stay on the object of observation. During that experience, one

does not have steady meditative stabilization. Afterwards, as the overly joyful experience subsides a bit and the joy becomes more stable, one attains "the meditative stabilization supported by the bliss of pliancy".

Does the joy become less intense? Although the joy does not actually become less intense, the joy no longer unsettles the mind, and as it stabilizes, we call this state "the mind supported by unwavering joyful bliss." When that arises, one has actualized calm abiding, and is also at the same time said to have actualized preparation of the first concentration called "not unable" [footnote]. On the basis of that [mental] path, whatever realizations there may be, both mundane and supramundane, one is able to generate them, so it is called "not unable". It's like, for example, in worldly parlance when [somebody] is not unable to do the work, whatever it may be, we say "he is able".

### Questions and Answers

[77] Question: What is "preparation [of the first concentration]"?

Response: "Preparation of the first concentration" is a preparation for the actual meditative absorption. On the basis of that, one is able to achieve an actual meditative stabilization of the first concentration and so forth [that is, on the basis of the preparation for the second concentration, one achieves the second, and so on]. If the practitioner is a non-Buddhist, he actualizes the eight concentration-formless—that is, the four actual concentrations, and the four actual formless absorptions. When he achieves those, the thought arises "now I have attained liberation". There are even those who subsequently get angry, whereby their meditative stabilization degenerates and they are born in hell [footnote]. In the Buddhist tradition, even without achieving the actual [first concentration], if one can actualize the preparation, it is possible on that basis to achieve the state of Arhatship which has abandoned all afflictions without exception [footnote—debate about this point].

If one can actualize such a state of calm abiding, then while making requests to the object of refuge, one can have clear appearance [to the mind] of the refuge object, and also when meditating on bodhicitta, because the observed object is stable one can quickly generate realizations. In these and other ways, there is a great distinction [from not having achieved calm abiding].

Furthermore, with such a strong factor of clarity secured in the mind, if one analyzes microscopic particles [footnote—describe what this means, see note in book] from within that clarity, she will even be able to count, "one, two..." [78] [Even] if she continuously sees objects of desire that are the bases for the arising of afflictions, by remembering the drawbacks of afflictions, the mind will not be distracted. By drawing the mind inwards into the space of meditative stabilization, even sleep can become meditative stabilization: such benefits will develop.

[In a similar way] the roots of virtue of observing [the body of] the Buddha, even if not supported by a pure motivation, can become a cause for liberation. Perhaps if one is meditating on the generation stage [of tantra], then through meditating on deity yoga, one observes the Buddha—we should consider this point [footnote—see notes in book]. When meditating on the self-generation of the deity, one does not meditate on [the deity] in the space in front, and must generate oneself as the deity and meditate. Saying "all becomes emptiness", remember the meaning: one's aggregates, oneself at present, and the self that abides when you say "I" are all empty of inherent existence. Remembering that, purify into emptiness of inherent existence. Imagine that this mind you have generated that realizes emptiness, and the wisdom truth body [of a Buddha] that you will achieve in the future, are inseparable, and on that basis generate a new body [as a deity]. Imagine that the new body is a Buddha's body, and meditate observing that.

Question: Must one necessarily observe that object as being outside, or is it appropriate to observe the HUM syllable at one's heart?

Response: [79] If one generates oneself as a deity, then it is acceptable to observe oneself. There are also some who check inwardly at how the mind is doing, and meditate observing the mind. During the generation and completion [stages of tantra], there are many [objects of observation] like the syllable HUM, the short AH, the drops and so forth [footnote]. From among those, if one observes the one with which he has the greatest familiarity, it will be easier to actualize calm abiding.

If one takes the holy body of the Buddha as an objective support, then making requests to the object of refuge, the holy body of the Buddha will clearly appear as requested. If one continuously remembers the Buddha, bad behavior will gradually stop, and by remembering the Buddha at the time of death, one will not be born in lower realms. On account of such useful effects, observing the body of the Buddha is said to be an excellent [method]. Other than that, merely to actualize calm abiding, it is acceptable to take any object of observation. Once there was a cattle herder who was actualizing calm abiding. He was unable to achieve calm abiding practicing with other objects. Since he was a cattle herder who usually went around with cows, he always was seeing cow horns. [80] For that reason his master said to him "observe the horn of a cow, and practice!" Practicing in that way, he quickly actualized calm abiding.

Question: How is it for one of inferior faculties initially, before practicing tantra, to actualize calm abiding as explained in the Perfection Vehicle, and then subsequently to combine that with the practice of tantra?

Second question: When meditating on the generation stage [of tantra], since [one practices] in six sessions per day, how does one go about beginning to apply a method for actualizing calm abiding?

Answer: If one initially [intends to] actualize calm abiding in accordance with the Perfection Vehicle, it is said that if one does not assemble the collection of causes for calm

abiding then even practicing for a thousand years one will not achieve it. Since we don't know how long this human life will last, getting caught up in just that practice one incurs a loss. Thus it is better if one doesn't just do merely that, but meditates on the higher and higher paths, trying to make an imprint. If one gains familiarity with the lam rim and the generation and completion stages, he will be able to plant a firm imprint [on the mind]. If somebody of sharp faculties thinks over the entire path, it becomes a supreme [practice]. When meditating on the generation stage, one generates the celestial mansion of the deity, his hand symbols and so forth. [81] That meditation is meditation on the coarse generation stage. If one is able to have a clear appearance of all of that at one time, she should meditate on calm abiding. If one willfully actualizes calm abiding during the generation stage, he should then complete the gross generation stage and during the subtle generation stage meditate observing [the mandala of the deity] on a subtle drop.

Question: When meditating on the generation stage [of tantra], is it necessary to actualize calm abiding separately, or can one actualize calm abiding together with [the generation stage meditations]?

Answer: [One can actualize it along with the generation stage meditations]. In order to generate the realization of the [coarse] generation stage, it is not necessary to actualize calm abiding. There are even those who first have the realizations of the generation stage, and then achieve [calm abiding] during the completion stage. As it is explained [in great texts], if one is to actualize it during the generation stage, one does *not* actualize it while first generating the inestimable mansion and the deity [visualization]. Meditating on the supporting and supported mandala [the mansion and the deities], one achieves the ability to cause this all to appear as an object of mind. After that, one meditates on the "subtle drop", that is, a small drop [which contains miniature supporting and supported mandalas]. One must observe that drop and meditate [to actualize calm abiding].

Question: What is this thing called "the six-fold collection of causes"? How should one identify each of these individually, just as they are?

[82] Answer: The first of the six-fold collection of causes is "staying in a conducive place." The abode must be an agreeable one. For example, it must be free of harm from dangerous animals, thieves and the like. It is said that "sound is the thorn of concentration", the meaning being that if there is sound from dogs, water, and so forth, these will create obstacles, so the place must be free of these. It must be a place where sickness and such will not arise on account of one's not tolerating the environment. If one is a monastic, it ought to be a place where holy lamas of old have stayed. One's livelihood [means of obtaining supplies] should not be mixed with wrongdoing. It should be easily accessible. If one has a good helper, he is said to be "looming heavily in the corner of one's eyes" [see earlier footnote]: thinking "if I engage in corrupt behavior, he will take notice", one thereby must be careful. One needs such a helper as this one.

"Pure morality" refers to the need for pure morality of the three classes of vows [pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and tantric vows].

"Thoroughly abandon the bustle of many activities": since it becomes difficult for us to abandon [things that we have already undertaken], we shouldn't engage in many activities. As I said above [end of pg. 41 in Tibetan], "even though they are virtuous activities, one must put aside prostrating, circumambulation and so forth", let alone the need to put aside all other various kinds of base activities.

"Having few wants": If one [constantly] thinks, "I need one thing, and I need another thing", [83] the mind will not be able to stay put, so it means to be without such kind of desires.

"Contentment": If one has a particular thing, practicing contentment thinking "now I'm all set", there is a difference in terms of the mind not being distracted. So, counting "few wants" and "contentment", we come to five [causes].

If one has those [five], then next is "to have thoroughly abandoned discursive thoughts about desire and so forth". It is taught that one should not engage thoughts of desire; "and so forth" brings in all other kinds of unnecessary thoughts.

Also, meditating on the faults of desire, as well as death and impermanence, one must put a stop to [desire] as much as one can. These six are called "the six-fold collection of causes". If one assembles the collection of causes, it is said that one can actualize calm abiding in six months. And as for the manner of actualizing it, one puts aside all other activities. For example, except for those recitations which one continuously recites [commitments], one puts aside reading other texts and doing prostrations and the like. Making a firm decision "I will do only this" and practicing, it is said one will achieve in six months.

For example, there is a kind of wood such that if you rub two sticks of it together, you will get fire. If you rub it without break, fire will blaze forth, but if you rub a bit, then take a break, then rub a bit again, fire will not erupt. [84] [Achieving calm abiding] is like that. If you are to actualize calm abiding, primarily you must assemble well the collection of causes for it. If you assemble the causes without leaving anything out, the result is certain to ripen.

When actualizing calm abiding, there are the "nine means of settling the mind", which are like nine stages. First [the mind] merely stays on the observed object. Next, one gradually increases the duration [of that abiding]. There are nine of these stages of [concentration] gradually getting better and better. After the nine stages, one achieves the bliss of pliancy and calm abiding. When actualizing calm abiding, if one does not assemble the collection of causes one will not achieve it even if practicing for a thousand years. Regarding this point, Jowo Je [Atisha] said: [footnote]

Calm abiding's branches decline:

Now though you meditate with zeal,

Even over thousands of years

Concentration is not achieved.

He is saying that if you don't assemble the causes, then even if you meditate for a thousand years you will be unable to generate actual calm abiding.

Generally to actualize calm abiding, you definitely need to have a [place] free of commotion. Beginners like us have a great variety of non-Dharmic projects, while Dharma practice only arises occasionally. Even if we meditate on something like calm abiding, it will be difficult to achieve on account of not completing the collection of causes. If instead [for the time being] we train well in going for refuge, [85][contemplating on] karmic cause and result and so forth, guarding well the ethical discipline of abandoning the ten non-virtues [footnote] and so forth, and do so emphatically, the reward for us will be greater [footnote—this is addressed to a particular person, a foreigner. Not general advice per se].

Question: How should one meditate when meditating on the lam rim? When meditating on special insight [footnote], since one is engaging in analysis, does meditation on the lam rim become analytical meditation or not? Is such analysis special insight or not? Does it have some relation to special insight or not?

Answer: When you first meditate on the lam rim, you need to engage in analysis. For example, even when you meditate on the freedoms and endowments [footnote] or whatever else, you need to sustain a forceful mind for a long time. You can understand that point through the explanation that a forceful mind over a long period of time will not come about unless you engage in analysis. When meditating on the lam rim, except for it being unsuitable to engage in analysis at the time of [practicing] calm abiding, you need to engage in analysis on the other [topics]. Having analyzed, if a thought arises that "it is just like that", then hold it there for a bit. Such analysis is also called "meditation". Meditation includes both analytical and placement meditation. Calm abiding is "placement meditation", while analyzing impermanence and so forth is called "analytical meditation".

[86] When meditating on the lam rim, although one should engage in analysis on [all topics] except calm abiding, such analysis is not itself special insight. For it to become special insight, one [first] needs to achieve calm abiding. First one actualizes calm abiding. Having actualized it, if one is able from that space of calm abiding to induce bliss supported by pliancy through the force of analyzing [an object], one has actualized "special insight". Therefore, analysis when one has not achieved calm abiding is not called "special insight".

Question: To achieve calm abiding, will it take one's entire lifetime?

Answer: This is said to differ depending on whether or not one has stable recollection and introspection. So if one has stable recollection it is a little easier to achieve. Mainly, as I explained yesterday, one must assemble the collection of causes. As I quoted before, "if you assemble the causes, you will actualize it in six months; if you don't assemble the causes, you will not actualize it in a thousand eons."

Question: Which is better: first to settle on the view [of emptiness] and then to actualize calm abiding, or first to actualize calm abiding and then to settle on the view?

Answer: That depends on your degree of familiarity [with these two topics]. If you have greater familiarity with emptiness, it is better first to meditate on emptiness [87] and then to actualize calm abiding. If you have greater familiarity with calm abiding, then you should actualize that first.

Question: What can I do to know whether I have a stronger propensity [due to past imprints] for emptiness or calm abiding?

Answer: Merely through hearing about about the subject, you develop strong interest in it. For example, [Candrakirti] says in his *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

Even as a common being, when he hears about emptiness

From deep within a fervent joy, arises again and again.

Arising from this fervent joy, come tears that make his eyes moist and,

His body hairs all stand on end. Such a person possesses the

Mental seed of full Buddhahood .

People who, when they hear the words "profound emptiness" experience a joyous feeling in their hearts, and who think "wouldn't it be wonderful if I could realize that", have a strong imprint for emptiness. Those who on hearing the words "calm abiding" think "since that is extremely marvelous, how wonderful it would be if it arose in me" have a stronger imprint for that.

[88] Question: It is explained that when actualizing calm abiding, one should not change whichever object he or she has initially selected until achieving [calm abiding]. That being the case, if one is staying in a retreat for calm abiding and is reciting practices like self-generation for which one has a commitment, since one must take the deity as an object of observation, does this constitute changing the object?

Answer: When one is meditating on the self-generation, the generated deity is not the observed object of calm abiding. Beyond explaining that one should not change the observed object of calm abiding, there is no mention of not being allowed to observe other objects [when doing different meditations].

Question: Regarding the holy of body of the Buddha mentioned in the phrase "one must meditate on a holy body the size of a mere thumb as the observed object of calm abiding"—should one meditate on a lifeless holy body [that is, a statue], or meditate on an actual holy body of a Buddha?

Answer: One should meditate on an actual holy body of a Buddha. Normally when we meditate, we should meditate on an actual holy body of a Buddha, not meditate on a statue.

Question: Since we have never seen directly the holy body of our teacher [Buddha], regarding this "thumb-sized holy body of the teacher, the observed object of calm abiding" that is spoken of: how exactly should we imagine that it is the actual Buddha?

Answer: [89] It is explained as being unlike a statue that you place [in front], but a holy body with light rays, flames blazing and in the shape of a man. Although the fire flickers and blazes, the shape is said to be like a human form, but without the heaviness of flesh and blood. Instead, it is the holy wisdom truth body appearing in the form of the Buddha's [form] body, a Buddha-Bhagavan in nature of light. Furthermore, one should think that he is in the process of enacting deeds [for the welfare of sentient beings, even while seated in the space in front—footnote]. As for the shape, after taking a good look at a statue you should imagine that it is just like that.

Question: Calm abiding does not analyze the object, but is placed on it single-pointedly. Also, as for the object of observation, if you create something with your mind and then abide observing it with your eyes, will you be able to actualize calm abiding? [footnote—questioner is confused]

Answer: You won't achieve [calm abiding]. Calm abiding must be actualized in the mind, not in the eye consciousness. In previous times, there were some [who practiced like that], but it is said that they did not understand that method for actualization. Mainly you should take a good look [at the object] with your eyes, then cause that image to appear to your mind. Meditating on that very object with your mind, you should actualize [calm abiding] in your mind.

[90] Question: Since the holy body of our teacher [Buddha] is a mass of light with complete sense faculties, do we not see the five inner objects and six vessels [in his body—footnote—see notes in book]?

Answer: There is no need to think like that. Since the Buddha is a holy body established by the appearance of wisdom itself, what need is there for such things [as the inner sense objects]? The need for the five inner sense objects and the six vessels is for cases where you need a basis for the mind to abide. Since the Buddha is established by the appearance of wisdom itself, there is no such need. When you are establishing [for yourself] that such things are not needed, it is sufficient to think that "this is the actual teacher, in the nature of light".

Question: When actualizing calm abiding by observing the deity's holy body, is it better to observe oneself in the form of the deity, or to generate a front generation deity and then do calm abiding meditation on that?

Answer: If it is during the generation stage [of tantra], then since you need to generate yourself as a deity, it is better to observe that. Otherwise, if it is during a front generation [practice], then you should generate the deity in front and observe that in the manner of observing the Buddha's body explained above.

Question: Can one achieve Buddhahood without relying on tantra?

Answer: One cannot achieve Buddhahood without relying on tantra.

[91] Question: Can the continuity of samsara be severed [for] all beings without exception?

Answer: It is said that it can be. We can understand that to be so from the statement, "samsara does not have a beginning, but there can be an end."

Question: Is it so that without relying on tantra, one is not a Mahayanist, and sentient beings who do not practice tantra can never become Buddhas?

Answer: One can be a Mahayanist without relying on tantra. Such a one can traverse [the path] as far as the tenth [bodhisattva] ground [footnote], but then in order to become a Buddha he or she definitely must enter the tantric [path]. One must meet a virtuous friend teaching the path of secret mantra in this or another lifetime and enter the tantric path to become a Buddha. Without entering the tantric path, one will not become a Buddha.

Question: Yesterday when Rinpoche was teaching on the *Heart Sutra*, he mentioned achieving the state of Buddhahood by relying on the three [principal aspects of the path]: renunciation, bodhicitta, and the correct view [of emptiness]. Today he has explained that without relying on tantra, one will not become a Buddha. Aren't these two statements slightly contradictory?

Answer: Yesterday when I explained that by relying on the three principal aspects of the path one becomes a Buddha, I was speaking from the point of view of Sutra. In that context, there is no talk of not becoming a Buddha without relying on tantra, so there is no fault [of contradiction]. [footnote]

[92] Question: Don't bodhicitta and the view realizing emptiness, without relying on tantra, have the strong potential that is able to achieve the state of Buddhahood?

Answer: Without relying on tantra, they don't have [such a potential]. The reason is that [in order to achieve Buddhahood] one must realize emptiness with a subtle mind, and that

realization must arise in the nature of bliss [footnote]. Such a thing does not exist except in the tantric path.

Question: Is it not possible to achieve the five paths—the paths of accumulation, preparation and so forth—without achieving calm abiding?

Answer: It is said that one cannot achieve them [without calm abiding]. There are some who accept that one can achieve a mere path [of accumulation without calm abiding], but in accordance with Gyaltsab Rinpoche's explanation in *Clarifying the Path of Liberation* [footnote], we say that in order to achieve a path, one must achieve calm abiding.

Question: If one is staying in a retreat for calm abiding, do one's usual recitations and virtuous practices not create obstacles for calm abiding?

Answer: Generally engaging in many activities will create many obstacles to calm abiding, but if you break [the continuity] of the recitations for which you have a commitment, you will incur a fault, so you should do them without fail. Other than that, if you have many other recitations for which you do not have a commitment, it's okay to put them aside.

Question: It is possible to actualize calm abiding during the practices of the generation and completion stages of tantra?

Answer: It is. When actualizing calm abiding, mainly one must actualize a factor of stability. An example for how that comes about is how you get fire if you rub two flint sticks together without break. If you merely rub them for a long time but take a break before you get fire, even if you do that again and again you won't get fire. Since you will get fire if you rub them without break, you need to keep rubbing without break until you get fire. Likewise, when you are practicing for calm abiding, it is important to stay with the observed object until you achieve calm abiding.

Question: Since you said that it is possible to achieve calm abiding during the two stages [of tantra], does one meditate on it along with them? [I think the point is, does it come naturally without special effort, just by meditating on the two stages]

Answer: Since at first it does not come in that way, first you must actualize calm abiding [intentionally]. If it is during the generation stage, you observe the holy body of the deity and actualize calm abiding. When meditating by generating yourself as the deity, if initially you observe a rather large body [of the deity], it will be difficult to get a factor of stability. However small you can make the objective support, to that degree the factor of stability will lengthen in duration, so first you should imagine a small holy body of the deity. However, there are also some people who achieve the mental settlings by observing a large deity's body. [94] During the completion stage, there are some people who achieve [calm abiding] by observing drops and letters [footnote].

In order to cut the root of samsara, one needs both calm abiding and special insight. For example, if you need to cut down a tree, you need a sharp axe which will cut it directly, but it is not sufficient just to have the axe. You also need a strong, steady shoulder which will swing the axe. Likewise, special insight is like the axe that directly cuts the root of samsara, and calm abiding is like the steady shoulder that swings it. Another example is if you need to look at a detailed painting at nighttime. You need a bright lamp, but even if it is like lightning, if it is flickering, it will not allow you to see clearly. Another lamp may be fluttering in the wind. Since you won't see clearly, so you need a clear, [steady] lamp. Likewise you need special insight realizing emptiness that is like the brightness [of the lamp], and calm abiding that is like the quality of abiding steady and not being blown in the wind. If you have [a lamp like] that, you can see even the fine details of any painting. Likewise, combining calm abiding and special insight, [95] seekers of liberation achieve all their desired aims; the example is explained in that way.

Also, in the *Three Part Continuity* [footnote—see notes in book] it says "[the Buddha is] endowed with knowledge and holy legs." (In some versions of the text, it says "endowed with knowledge and legs" [lacking the Tibetan honorific—footnote]. In any case, "holy legs" and "legs" have the same [meaning].) What does this statement signify? Here, "legs" is an example for calm abiding. For example, if a person has great qualities and strong arms, but no legs, he won't be able to accomplish all his purposes. If in top of great qualities and power he has stable legs, he will be able to accomplish any endeavor. Likewise, "knowledge" is special insight, and "legs" are calm abiding. Furthermore, to get calm abiding you need pure morality, so both of these [morality and calm abiding] are similar to legs.

In a general sense, a Buddhist has as an object of practice the "Three Higher Trainings." "Endowed with knowledge" signifies the Higher Training in wisdom, "endowed with legs" signifies the Higher Training in Concentration, and also the cause of that, the Higher Training in Pure Morality.

[96] I have spoken with a number of monks and nuns who have practiced to achieve calm abiding. However, I have only met one person who actually said "I have actualized calm abiding". Some said "I have reached the fifth of the nine mental settlings, but however I try, I cannot advance beyond the fifth stage". Another one said "I have reached the seventh level"; it seems as though he had reached the actual thing. The one who said he'd reached the seventh level, when he sat focusing his mind, said that he could stay without any fault of laxity or excitement at all. For that reason he said he had reached the seventh level.

The one who claimed to have reached the fifth level had been unable to abandon the laxity and excitement that I explained earlier as obstacles to calm abiding. However, he had been able to stop the gross [manifestations of them], so he had reached the fifth level. He said, "I have reached just that level, but no matter how much I meditate, I can't advance further." Those are cases of not having assembled the collection of causes, or perhaps having a slight deficiency of conducive conditions.

It also seems that the one who claimed to have achieved calm abiding had not assembled the collection of causes well. It is said that one who assembles the causes well will actualize it in six months. [97] He also said, "the bliss of pliancy also comes [for me]; I'm all right". However, when he asked another lama, the lama replied "you still need an intensity of the clarity factor—that is, a tight manner of apprehension; aren't you a bit too loose?"

He then [came to me and asked], "now what should I do? If I meditate a bit more, is it agreeable, or should I stay okay as I am?" He had thought he had achieved it, but I told him "perhaps it would be good if you could meditate a bit more." He then said, "if now I meditate again, I won't need more than three months' time." Such is the confidence that arose in him.

# **[99] The Manner of Training in Special Insight, the Essence of Wisdom: A Commentary on the Difficult Points of Gedenpa [footnote] Mahamudra**

## Preliminary Teaching

This time around, we have attained a precious human body with the pleasures and endowments [footnote] which are difficult to obtain. We have met with the precious teaching of the Buddha, which are difficult to meet. We have encountered a Mahayana Guru, who is difficult to encounter. At this time when we have also from our own side a slight recognition of the points to be adopted and those to be abandoned, it is important that we make an effort to actualize a pure practice of Dharma.

Today those of us who have gathered here for a Dharma purpose will listen to the Dharma in order to put it into practice. For that to come about, first it is important to put effort into a method for remembering death and impermanence in the context of understanding the difficulty in obtaining the pleasures and endowments. Also, there is no certainty regarding young and old people: younger ones may die first, with the elder ones following after. There is also no certainty regarding sickness and health: [100] the sick patient may live on while his caretaker dies. Nor is there certainty regarding the coming together or not of conducive conditions: somebody might amass conducive conditions [for life], but suddenly a condition for death arises and he dies, while beggars without conducive conditions may live long lives. However you think about it, it is important to understand that the time of death is uncertain, and to try to generate a mind that reflects, "I, also, am not beyond such a nature, and thus the time of my death is uncertain."

Merely generating such a mind will not benefit you. Even if you generate it, but die without having practiced Dharma, you will not have fulfilled the purpose of obtaining the excellent basis with pleasures and endowments. You must strive to generate a mind that thinks, "now I will not waste this opportunity." Based on your reflection on the uncertainty of the time of death, you think "if I do not actualize a pure Dharma practice right now, there is nothing that can be done". If you were to die, what is the action that would benefit you after death? It is only having practiced pure Dharma. Youth and possessions will not benefit you, nor will friends, relatives, retinue or servants. [101] You will even have to leave behind the [physical] aggregates with which you were born. Like pulling a wisp of hair from the middle of a lump of butter, your consciousness alone will travel the precipitous path of the bardo leading to the next life. What is it that follows you at that time? The imprints of your white and black actions will follow after you.

When we speak of "reflecting on death and impermanence", the generation of a fearful mind that comes from thinking "won't I be separated from my wealth and enjoyments, friend, relatives, retinue, servants, and even my body?", will not in and of itself benefit you, because that is how ordinary people make themselves fearful by thinking of death.

### Taking the Essence [of the Precious Human Rebirth] by means of Contemplating Impermanence

Well then, if here we need to remember death and impermanence, what kind of reflection is meant when we say, "reflecting on impermanence and death, one must generate fear of death"? We need to generate a mind that fears death in the context of thinking something like, "if I die without actualizing the Dharma, I won't be all right at all." Also, if we die without having actualized the Dharma, we will have to take birth somewhere. As for where we will be born, there are only two possibilities: realms of misery, and realms of happiness [footnote—made it more general than "lower/upper"]. In our mental continuums, there many tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of karmic imprints of our negative actions accumulated since beginningless time which are only [causes] for being born in Avici, the greatest suffering among the hell realms.

[102] If we die now without actualizing pure Dharma, the result of the karma with which we have the strongest habituation will ripen first, so through the force of the karma to be born in Avici, with which we have habituated and which we accumulated first, we will be born in the Avici Hell. On that basis, we must generate fear at the prospect of dying without having actualized the Dharma.

If you are born in hell, there will be no opportunity to generate even the intention to practice Dharma. Generally if somebody dies without actualizing Dharma, there is no possibility but to be born in a lower realm. If you are born in the lower realms, there is limitless suffering of hot and cold, boiling and roasting in the hells, limitless suffering of hunger and thirst in the hungry ghost realms, and limitless suffering of stupidity, ignorance, and being used for labor and so forth in the animal realms. If such suffering were to befall you, you would be completely unable to bear it.

If on that basis we are able to arouse a mind of fear and dread towards the suffering of the lower realms, then as I explained before we have in our mental continuums many negative karmas that are causes for birth in the lower realms. If we properly confess these actions in the context of fulfilling the four opponent powers [footnote], we may be able to purify them such that we will not have to experience a ripened result. However, it is extremely rare for us to perform a perfectly qualified confession. For that reason, if we die now, there is no possibility except to be born in the lower realms.

### How to Go for Refuge by Contemplating Suffering

[103] Well then, what method can we employ to save ourselves from that? First we need to search for a source of refuge. If we take the Three Precious Jewels as our source of refuge, they fulfill all the reasons for being a suitable refuge. Mainly it is the Buddha Jewel who fulfills all of the qualifications for suitability: he is himself free of all fears, he is skilled in the method of freeing others from all fears, and with great compassion he engages equally for all without partiality, enacting their welfare whether or not they have benefitted him. For what reason does the Buddha fulfill all of these? Originally when he generated the holy mind [of bodhicitta], he generated that mind for the welfare of all sentient beings. In the middle, while he was accumulating merit, he accumulated merit for the purpose of accomplishing the aims of all sentient beings. Finally when he manifested complete and perfect Buddhahood, he did so for the purpose of all sentient beings. Thus he fulfills all the qualifications of suitability for being a suitable refuge.

Also, his having established himself as the Buddha Jewel was done in dependence on the cause of having practiced the holy Dharma. Likewise the Arya Sangha who practice the Dharma themselves arose by practicing the Dharma.

If you entrust yourself, not with a two-pronged approach, [104] but by completely turning your mind towards refuge in the Three Precious Jewels of refuge, it is impossible that they will not provide refuge for you, because we have already established that the Buddha completely fulfills all the causes of being a refuge for us.

Well, if the Buddha possesses such qualities as these, why is that right now we are left behind in this morass of suffering? Because from our side we have not completely directed our minds towards entrusting [ourselves for refuge], we are left behind at present. Now we recollect the suffering of the lower realms, and generate a mind of fear and dread towards that. Through understanding that the Three Precious Jewels have the power to provide refuge from that, we place our hopes [in them] from the depths of our hearts, thinking "Precious Jewels of Refuge, I beseech you: please provide refuge from that [suffering]". That is called "going for refuge". If we train going for refuge in such a way, and from the bottom of our hearts entrust ourselves to the Precious Jewels, even for the time being we will be able to accomplish not being born in the lower realms.

For example, in a worldly context, if a person commits a crime and is about to face execution as a punishment, and he places his hopes in a powerful person who is able to save him, that powerful person may be able to provide refuge for him just this one time. But if he later commits many wicked deeds again and again, it will be very difficult to save him. Therefore the powerful person advises him, "If you wish to be completely free of punishment, from now on you will have to take responsibility for your own behavior. Now, just once, [105] I will employ a method to save you." If he puts this advice into practice, he will save his own life. Likewise if we go for refuge to the Three Jewels and practice as the Buddha instructed, we will be free from the suffering of the lower realms and enter onto the path to liberation.

Well then, what is it that the Buddha advised us to practice? It is the practice of karmic cause and effect, engaging and abstaining: guarding yourself by considering it important to properly guard in accordance with karmic cause and effect, accumulating white karma and abandoning black karma. And as for "white and black karmic cause and effect": because we have been strongly habituated to afflictions since beginningless time, whatever non-virtuous, sinful black action we accumulate, we do so fulfilling completely the three stages of preparation, the actual action, and the conclusion [rejoicing—footnote, explaining how often there are four factors mentioned]. It becomes a karma whose ripened result is certain to be experienced [footnote]. When we exert ourselves in white virtuous actions, even though we have a good motivation, either the preparation, actual action, the concluding dedication prayer or some other factor does not come about exactly right. In some cases, although we do the actual action well, we don't have a good motivation, or in other cases, even with a good motivation and action, when we dedicate it we dedicate for the purpose of this life alone, and so forth. [106] Whatever virtuous action we do, there is a danger that it will become very weak. For that reason, by means of fulfilling the four opponent powers, we must practice confession and restraint in regard to the [imprints of] non-virtuous, sinful actions in our continuum.

Generating the mind of refuge and bodhicitta is the *power of the basis*. Generating fierce regret towards the negativity you created in the past, as though it were poison that had penetrated into the depths of your system, is the *power of remorse*. As an antidote for the negative actions, one recites mantras and dharanis, chants the names of Buddhas, erects statues, makes offerings, reads scriptures and so forth. In short, whatever roots of virtue one creates for the purpose of purifying the negativity becomes an antidote, and so it is the *power of relying on an antidote*. Without a mind of restraint that thinks, "from now I, I will not do this action", one will be unable to purify the negativity, so one definitely needs a mind of restraint [and this becomes the fourth power, the *power of not repeating the fault*].

Having generating such a mind of restraint, now you must examine your own continuum: even regarding the faults and downfalls which you are very close to committing, you can think "at the very least, I must restrain myself for one day, or two days." After one or two days have passed, again think "for another one or two days, I will restrain myself." If you gradually rely on the mind of restraint in that way, through the power of mental habituation you will eventually be able to abandon the actions completely. [107] If you rely on the mind of restraint that thinks "from now on, I won't do it", performing confession by fulfilling the four powers, then it is said that you will even be able to purify karma that is definite to be experienced [footnote]. Therefore if by believing that statement you practice confession properly, definitely you will purify your negativity.

When practicing confession, you shouldn't entertain doubts wondering, "although I did confession, I don't know if I purified the negativity or not." If you do confession, definitely you will purify negativity. While the Buddha said that if you create negativity, you definitely must

experience a large collection of ripened results, he also said that if you practice confession, you can purify the negativity.

Because the Buddha's explanation that negativity can be purified is an incontrovertible one [footnote], it is important to have the belief that "I practiced confession by fulfilling the power opponent powers, so my negativity has been purified."

If you go for refuge, guard against karmic cause and result, and perform confession fulfilling the four opponent powers, then not only will you not be born in the lower realms in the future, but also it is definite that you will achieve a distinctive physical basis of high status [that is, in the upper realms].

Merely achieving such a physical basis of high status once or twice is not sufficient. Until we are free of this samsara, since we haven't abandoned afflictions we will continue to accumulate negative karma under the power of afflictions. [108] Because there is no certainty whatsoever—through the power of that karma, we will again have to be born in the lower realms, and so forth—we must employ a method to be free of samsara. Samsara is also in the nature of suffering. Whatever contaminated happiness [we might experience], it is only the suffering of change, so it is definitely not a sublime happiness [footnote].

### How to Practice the Three Higher Trainings, the Means of Achieving Liberation

What method should we employ to be free from this samsara, which is in the nature of suffering? Even if the Buddha was to visit us directly, he would not describe anything superior to the practice of the Three Higher Trainings. For that reason, we definitely must put into practice the unsurpassed method that he has taught. Among the Three Higher Trainings to be practiced, the primary one is the Higher Training in Wisdom, which cuts the root of samsara. Furthermore, the root of all various minds of attachment and hatred in our continuum is delusion, the ignorance that conceives a self. That itself is the root that binds sentient beings in samsara.

In order to cut such a root of samsara, other than meditation on the wisdom realizing selflessness, whose mode of apprehension stands in direct contradiction to that ignorance, nothing else at all is able to cut the root. Therefore, we definitely must generate the wisdom realizing selflessness and meditate on it. [109] In order for that Higher Training in Wisdom realizing selflessness to become an antidote for the apprehension of a self, it needs a firm meditative stabilization as a basis. Because without a stable meditative stabilization, wisdom alone cannot abandon the apprehension of a self, as a cause for that abandonment we need the Higher Training in Concentration. In order to generate the Higher Training in Concentration in our continuum, we must guard pure ethical discipline as a cause for that. Because we have adopted many vows—Pratimoksha, Bodhisattva, and Tantric—mainly it is important to guard these. If one has gone forth [as a monastic], one must guard the Pratimoksha trainings of novices, fully ordained monks and so forth, whereas if one is a householder, one guards the vows of an upasaka and so forth in accordance with the level of one's mind.

Even if one is unable to guard these vows, one can take the eight branched vows of near abiding [footnote], which are one day vows, and guard these. In that way, something that we are able to practice right now with immediate, visible benefits is guarding the Higher Training in Ethical Discipline. One must guard whatever he or she is personally able to do. If on top of that it is excellent if one is able to generate the Higher Trainings in Concentration and Wisdom. Even if you can't generate them, develop a mind wishing to do so, and make a prayer thinking "may I generate these trainings". If you practice the Three Higher Trainings, then on that basis you will yourself be able to achieve the state of liberation. [110] But is it sufficient merely for oneself to achieve the state of liberation? No, that alone is not sufficient.

What is the reason [that it is not sufficient]? Since all sentient beings have only been supremely kind to me, if I were to put aside [the welfare of] all these kind beings and work merely for my own liberation, it would resemble the following example. If I was [together with] all of my family—parents, siblings and so forth—in a place with great terrors like thieves and predatory animals, but did not give the slightest thought to work to free them from these fears, and escaped alone, others would consider me the worst scoundrel, and completely shameless. Likewise, while all sentient beings are undergoing the sufferings of samsara and the lower realms, if I were to disregard them and work only my own liberation, it would be like that. Therefore, it is not sufficient simply to liberate oneself; one must enact the welfare of sentient beings.

Since your rebirths have no beginning, each sentient being has been your mother countless times. When they acted as your mother, they kindly nurtured you, just as your mother of this life nurtures you now. You must contemplate their kindness in that way.

### Generating Bodhicitta by means of the Seven Point Cause and Effect Instructions

In short, just as I explained above about the benefits of relying on a virtuous friend, whatever collection of good qualities we possess comes about on the basis of sentient beings. [111] Our food, clothing, and reputation all must depend on sentient beings, and even our achieving the state of Buddhahood depends on sentient beings. For that reason, when it comes to achieving Buddhahood, it is as though sentient beings and the Buddhas are equal in their kindness [to us]. How is that? Achieving this human body with leisure and endowments depends on sentient beings. In the past life, in relation to sentient beings we guarded morality, practiced patience and so forth, and based on that we have achieved the body, possessions, and health that we have now. In order for this bodily basis to arise, we must depend on sentient beings. Likewise to have possessions and enjoyments, we must have practiced generosity, and for that we needed to depend on sentient beings. To achieve high status [again] in the future, as a cause for that we must [again] guard morality that abandons harming others together with the basis [footnote—"harming others" refers to the first 7 of the 10 non-virtues; "the basis" refers to the latter 3]. Even to achieve that states of liberation and omniscience, we must rely on sentient beings, so sentient beings are extremely kind. For that reason, in order to generate the mind

wishing that all beings might attain the state of Buddhahood, we must first remember the kindness of sentient beings and give rise to the mind wishing to repay that kindness.

[112] If we remember their kindness, the mind wishing to repay that kindness will arise. "Repaying kindness" and "returning kindness" have the same meaning. Even if we consider this lifetime, when somebody who has benefitted us in the past meets with hardship, we think "before, he benefitted me and so he is very kind. Now, it is inappropriate if I don't return that kindness somehow." In the same way, now we consider "I have attained high status. I have met with the teachings of the Buddha. I have encountered a virtuous friend teaching the path [to liberation]. From my side, I have generated, just a bit, the thought to abandon negativity and accomplish virtue. Many other sentient beings, obscured by ignorance, are undergoing unwanted suffering. Though they wish for happiness, they don't know how to create its causes. Though they don't want suffering, they instinctively create its causes." From the space of considering their suffering, generate the mind wishing to repay their kindness, thinking "now, I must do something for their well-being."

Somebody who merely gives food and clothing to other sentient beings who are deprived of food, clothing and the like is called [in ordinary parlance] "chief of those who repays kindness". We can't possibly care for all beings by means of food and clothing, and even if we could, it might only serve to bring them additional suffering. It would have no benefit in terms of stable happiness. Why? For example, if they get something, then based on that thing they might give rise to all kinds of desire and hatred. [113] By the power of that they will have to undergo suffering.

Well then, what should we do? We must create [the causes] to free them from all suffering, and be endowed with the sublime happiness of liberation and uncontaminated bliss. For that, we need to generate compassion that thinks "how wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from the suffering of samsara and the lower realms", and love that thinks "how wonderful it would be if they had all happiness." By meditating again and again on love that wishes them to have happiness, and compassion that wishes they were free of suffering, compassion grows increasingly powerful. When the mind arises that thinks "I myself alone will endow them with happiness and free them from suffering", the altruistic intention is born. Spurred on by that altruistic intention, now we must do something to endow them with happiness and free them from suffering.

You may ask, "do I currently possess the power to do such a thing?" If you yourself are not currently free of samsara, how could you possibly free others from samsara? For example, for a person sinking in the mud to get out of the mud, he definitely needs somebody who is standing on dry land. [114] If two people sinking together in the mud pull each other, they will only sink deeper; there is no way for them to pull each other up. Likewise, if an uncontrived thought arises that considers, "in order that I may extricate all these sentient being from the mud

of samsara and the lower realms, I shall swiftly attain the state of a Buddhahood", we call that "bodhicitta".

With regards to the limitless benefits of generating the mind that wishes "for the welfare of all sentient beings, I shall achieve Buddhahood", in his *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, [Shantideva] explains that it is because of [the following reason]. If it is explained [in scripture] that there is limitless benefit even in generating the mere thought, "I must dispel the headaches [of all beings]", what need is there to speak of the limitless benefit that would accrue if the thought were to arise, "I shall endow all sentient beings, reaching the end of space, with all happiness, and free them from all suffering"?

Well then, if that thought has such endless benefit, is that mere thought able to bring us to the state of Buddhahood? That alone is not sufficient: one must make effort in a method for achieving the state of Buddhahood. [115] Therefore, generate an excellent motivation thinking, "for the welfare of all sentient beings, I must achieve the precious state of Buddhahood by whatever means I can. For that purpose, I will listen to the holy Dharma." Also think, "from my side, however long I must bear hardships for the welfare of sentient beings, for just that long, sentient being will continue to undergo suffering, so there is no way I can remain indifferent to them. For that reason, for the welfare of sentient beings I must achieve that state of Buddhahood *swiftly*. For that, today, in this place, I will receive the explanation on the Ganden [footnote] tradition of Mahamudra, and by practicing that I will swiftly attain the state of Buddhahood." You must listen with that thought in mind.

As I mentioned yesterday, generally there is both the "sutra system of Mahamudra" and the "mantra system of Mahamudra". Here I will explain based on the [tradition of] unsurpassed [yoga tantra], so in order to receive this teaching, it is best if you have received an unsurpassed [yoga tantra] empowerment. Since this is an uncommon instruction of the Ganden Oral Instruction Lineage that traces back to Je Rinpoche, then if you have time you must recite 108 migtsemas [footnote] every day in the context of the Ganden Lha Gyama practice [footnote]. If not, you must at least recite it a mere 21 times. As I explained before, generally please listen with a bodhicitta motivation, [116] and specifically please listen supported by a special kind of bodhicitta that thinks, "in one short life of this degenerate age, I will swiftly, swiftly achieve that state of a perfectly completed Buddha. For that purpose, I will listen to the holy Dharma."

### The Meaning of the Name [of the Text], and the Expression of Homage

The Dharma text that we will listen to is called, *The Root Text of Precious Geden Instruction Lineage Mahamudra entitled "The Thoroughfare of the Victors"*. Generally speaking there is another Tibetan Dharma lineage called "Instruction Lineage [Kagyü—footnote] Mahamudra", but this one is called "Precious Geden Instruction Lineage Mahamudra". Of the root text and its commentary, this is the root text composed by Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen [the 4<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama—footnote]. The "Victor" in the phrase "Thoroughfare of the Victor" is a

victor on account of being victorious over the four Maras [footnote]. [The text] explains how to achieve the state of a Buddha by means of a skillful path that accords with the vast and extensive textual path which is free of wrong paths and faults of inferiority, so it is called by that name ["textual path"]. When holy beings engage in a great activity, traditionally they begin by going for refuge to a special object, the Three Jewels. Likewise here, [117] in order that we may know that he is himself a worthy person, the author pays homage not to somebody like our teacher Shakyamuni Buddha, but to Mahamudra itself [footnote—skyes bu dam par shes pa].

And so, "*Namo Mahamudraya*". "Mahamudra" is the great seal [footnote]. "Namo" means "I prostrate", so "Namo Mahamudraya" is "I prostrate to the great seal". Here "Mahamudra" is Mahamudra at the time of the path, and the resultant Mahamudra achieved by meditating on that path. [The author] says "I prostrate" to them both.

All-pervasive, nature of all, Mahamudra.

Insep'nable, ineffable, mind's vajra expanse.

Pervasive realized master who nakedly shows [these two]:

At peerless lama's feet I bow respectfully.

Through this passage, Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen pays homage to his root lama who taught him this instruction. "*All-pervasive, nature of all, Mahamudra*": with regards to emptiness, which is the Mahamudra of the sutra system [footnote]: that which pervades all phenomena in the sense of being the nature or final mode of abiding<sup>1</sup> of all phenomena is called "Mahamudra". "*Insep'nable, ineffable, mind's vajra dance*" [footnote—in Tibetan, Rinpoche used "gar" rather than "dbyings"]: [118] that object, emptiness, and great bliss [the mind realizing that object] are *inseparable* like water poured into water.

As it is said, "without speech, thought or expression..." [footnote—this verse is said to be spoken by Shariputra] Because verbal expression is unable to imitate the way an Arya's meditative equipoise directly perceives the [final] mode of abiding, [it is called] *ineffable*.

"*Mind's vajra*" is the innermost innate wisdom, which engages clear light emptiness as one taste with it. Panchenpa calls his root lama, Sangye Yeshe, who *nakedly*--without obscuration--*shows* such [innate wisdom], the "*pervasive master*", meaning he is inseparable from the Sixth Victor, the Great Master Vajradhara [footnote—along with the Buddhas of the Five Families, Vajradhara is the sixth one who pervades all the five families]. Also, [his master] has practiced as the text has instructed, and reached the elevated *realized* state. Panchenpa pays homage saying, "*At the kind lama's lotus feet I bow respectfully.*"

### Promise to Compose

Geden Kagyu Mahamudra, condenses and teaches well the

Ocean's essence of personal advice on sutra and tantra.

I will compose instruction on the Mahamudra tradition

Of the supremely accomplished Dharmavajra, father and sons.

This passage makes a promise to compose. The teachings of the great Tsongkhapa are like the condensed essence of all Sutra and Tantra, [119] and the lineage the quintessence of those teachings, coming from Je the Great [Tsongkhapa], is clear in the requesting prayer to the Mahamudra. From Je Rinpoche, [this lineage] passed on to Tokden Jampal Gyatso, followed by Baso Chokyi Gyaltsen, and then Drubchok Dharmavajra (Chokyi Dorje [in Tibetan]). Thus the author states, "I will offer a teaching on becoming a Buddha in one life according to this oral tradition." The name of the author of this treatise is named "Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen."

This sort of instruction on Mahamudra was extant at the time of Je Tsongkhapa and Sons [Khedrub and Gyaltsab], but putting together the lineage of instruction in the form of a text did not arise until the time of Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen. Also, before Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen, there was the great Gyalwa Ensapa, who discovered the state of union [enlightenment] in that very life. As he [Panchenpa] explains in the colophon of this treatise, one part of his explanation includes an instruction on Mahamudra that the Gedenpa have, dissimilar from other [schools]; however, he explains that this is not to time [to discuss that].

As for the great Gyalwa Ensapa, being untainted by the stain of the eight worldly Dharmas [footnote], he made the eight Dharmas of equal taste, [120] and manifesting crazy behavior externally, achieved the state of Buddhahood in that very life. Because he showed the aspect of being crazy to ordinary appearance, there are those who call him "Crazy Ensa [Solitary One]". Because he had already discovered the state of union, when he passed away his body shrank and was about to disappear into the sky as a rainbow. Because his disciples made requests, a body form the size of a mere cubit [15 inches, from elbow to fist middle finger--JV] remained.

As for Baso Chokyi Gyaltsen, he was a disciple of Je Tsongkhapa, the all-knowing Khedrub [Je], and Tokden Jampal Gyatso. He became a holder of the treasure of oral lineage instruction. His disciples were the three Dorje brothers [footnote—not literally brothers]—one named Drubchen Chokyi Dorje, who achieved the state of union in that very life, and also Palden Dorje and the Khampa Rinchen Dorje. The one from whom Gyalwa Ensapa listened to this instruction was the one called Drubchen Chokyi Dorje, from among the three Dorje brothers.

As for Drubchen Chokyi Dorje, he discovered the Vajra Rainbow Body, and it is said that even now he abides in Tibet, and that a few fortunate beings see him. When Ensapa was receiving this Dharma from Drubchen Chokyi Dorje [121], Drubchen Chokyi Dorje condensed into a coarse bodily form. Since he had already discovered the state of rainbow body, he did not manifest to the appearance of common trainees, but Gyalwa Ensapa met him in his meditation cave and listened to teachings from him.

Drubchen Chokyi Dorje's lama Baso Chokyi Gyaltzen was the younger brother of the all-knowing Khedrub [Gelek Pelsang]. He listened to personal instructions from Je Tsongkhapa, the all-knowing Khedrub and others, becoming like a master of the oral lineage teachings.

Baso Chokyi Gyaltzen's primary lama was Tokden Jampal Gyatso. Tokden Jampal Gyatso listened to Dharma teachings directly from Je Rinpoche. Before Je the Great [Tsongkhapa] saw Manjushri directly, Tokden Jampal Gyatso directly saw the Noble Lord Manjushri. Initially, he was among the "Eightfold Pure Retinue" when Je the Great was about to enter into retreat. Later when Je Rinpoche founded Ganden Monastery and was in the process of manifesting holy activities equaling the sky, he [Tokden] was a holy one able to undergo the hardship of remaining single-pointedly [in retreat for] attainment, and reaching attainment. Thus he was one who abided actualizing the essence of accomplishment. [122] His main lama was Je Tsongkhapa. In many sutras and tantras there are passages indicating that the great Je Tsongkhapa was an emanation of the Noble Lord Manjushri.

Even from the point of view of his showing an ordinary aspect, [Tsongkhapa] did as he described in "Lines of Experience" [actually this quote is from "Destiny Fulfilled"—should we change that?]:

First, I sought much vast learning

Next, all texts dawned as advice.

Last, I practiced day and night.

I dedicate that teachings spread.

Initially, he extensively studied and contemplated all the sutras and tantras. Furthermore, as for that vast learning, he was not content just to leave it at the level of learning, but put it into personal practice. On the basis of having practiced, he manifested realizations. Having manifested realizations, he composed many treatises on the [Buddha's] supreme speech of sutra and tantra, leaving them for the benefit of future trainees.

With regards to the compositions of Je the Great, he said that he never wrote something until he had attained stable ascertainment of the meaning of the scripture [describing it]. After a stable ascertainment had arisen in his holy mind, he would teach on it.

In order to demonstrate the noble source of the Dharma [I will teach], I have offered a brief description of the greatness of the composer of the treatise.

### [123] As a Preliminary, The Manner of Fervently Going for Refuge and Generating Bodhicitta

From the three preliminary, actual and concluding, here:

First as teaching's port of entry,

And Mahayana's chief pillar  
Not just by mouth, not just by words  
Fervently go for refuge and,  
Generate an awak'ning mind.

A meditator on this [system of] Mahamudra must initially perform the preliminary practices of accumulating merit and purifying obscurations. Since going for refuge [to the Three Jewels] is what distinguishes [a Buddhist] from a non-Buddhist, and is the port of entry for the Buddhist teachings, to begin one goes for refuge. And since bodhicitta is like the central pillar of the Mahayana path, one generates Mahayana bodhicitta. Thus it says, "*Fervently go for refuge and, generate an awak'ning mind.*" Although there are many different ways of going for refuge depending on the motivation, here it is the Mahayana [manner of] going for refuge. Among those, since this [text] is explained in the context of the practice of mantra, one definitely needs stability in the three causes of Mahayana refuge. Fear and faith alone are not sufficient; one needs fear, faith, *and* great compassion. The mind that fears and dreads the suffering of the lower realms as described above, and going for refuge on the basis of believing that the Three Jewels have the power to save you from that suffering, are refuge in common with the lower capable being [footnote]. [124] Having generated a mind of fright based on seeing not only the lower realms but all of samsara in general as in the nature of suffering, and going for refuge by seeking a source of refuge which saves from that suffering is refuge in common with the medium capable being. One not only has fear and dread towards the suffering of samsara for oneself, but generates a mind of fear and dread for the suffering of samsara and the lower realms for both oneself and all other sentient beings. Then going for on the basis of generating great compassion that thinks "how wonderful it would be if all these beings were free of suffering" is called "refuge of the great capable being". Saying "*fervently*", he indicates that one must not merely move one's mouth or speak the words, but definitely must mix their meaning with one's mind.

Also, seeing mind's nature  
Rests on first amassing merit, and cleansing obscurations, so  
At least a hundred thousand of the hundred-syllable mantra,  
As many hundred prostrations, with *Downfall's Confession* do first.

Since "Mahamudra" is explained as the nature of the mind, being able to see that definitely depends on having accumulated merit and purified obscurations. Generally speaking, the primary obstacle-makers to whatever qualities we generate in our mind are negative actions and obscurations. Since we need an accumulation of merit as a conducive condition, any quality, whatever it may be, [125] depends on purifying negativity and obscurations—discordant conditions—and accumulating merit, the conducive condition. Since actualizing Mahamudra also depends on having accumulated merit and purified obscurations, for the purpose of

accumulating merit we must make prostrations, and for the purpose of purifying obscurations we must accumulate [recitations of] the hundred-syllable mantra [of Vajrasattva] and so forth. Generally, as I mentioned above, any merit we accomplish will become an antidote for negativity. But as for "*At least a hundred thousand of the hundred-syllable mantra*": the "hundred syllable mantra" is a requesting prayer to Vajrasattva. Since Vajrasattva arose in the holy form of Vajrasattva for the purpose of purifying negativity and obscurations, if you make requests to him, the purification of negativities has a great distinction that is dissimilar from other [methods], so you must recite one hundred thousand of the hundred syllable mantra.

[With regards to] the statement, "*At least a hundred thousand of the hundred-syllable mantra*": in general, if you create negativity and do not confess it, each day it will increase exponentially. For example, if you create some negativity like killing and it remains without your being able to confess it, then the next day it will become [like] two negative actions of killing, the next day four, and so on. If you recite the hundred syllable mantra twenty-one times a day without break, then beyond whatever negativity you accumulate, you will be able to stop it from increasing. [126] If you recite it one hundred thousand times, then you will thoroughly purify negativity. It says in *Ornament of the Essence* [NC thinks this may be "rdo rje snying po'I rgyan gyi rgyud]:

Reciting just a hundred thousand

Thoroughly it purifies.

So it says even at the very least, you need to recite one hundred thousand.

Regarding the accumulation of merit, the text reads "*As many hundred prostrations...do first*", so you need to perform as many hundreds or hundreds of thousands of prostrations as you are able. By prostrating, you purify negativity accumulated with the body, and if you undergo hardship with your body there is a special forcefulness to the purification of negativity, so he explicitly says "however many hundreds of prostrations". Taking these [mantra recitation and prostrations] as an illustration, Panchenpa has described above the limb of confession within the seven-limbed prayer. On that basis, he implicitly indicates the limbs of prostration, offering, rejoicing and so forth [footnote].

Insep'nable from the three times'

Buddhas, to your root lama make

Heartfelt requests, again, again.

The root basis giving rise to all collections of good qualities without exception, in this and future lives, is making requests to the one's lama. It is said [text?]:

Though train so much in creation stage,

Not above lama meditation.

Though you count so many mantras,  
[127] Surpasses not making requests.

This passage explains that meditating on the lama is more beneficial than meditating on the deity and the generation stage, that it is more beneficial to make requests to the lama than to accumulate mantras of another deity, and that these will not deceive you in the long run. Thus, "*Make heartfelt requests, again, again.*"

### How We Need to Accumulate Merit and Purify Negativities in order to Generate Realizations

By putting effort merely into cultivating an object of observation for the purpose of generating realizations, realizations will not arise. So that we might generate realizations, as explained above we purify negativities and obscurations that are antagonistic conditions, accumulate merit as a supportive condition, cultivate an object of observation as our practice, and make requests to our lama, meditating on him as inseparable from the exalted deity. These and other practices we must combine and put into practice. This is extremely important.

Having examined for yourself whatever text you plan to put into practice, if you cultivate an object of observation as a practice, accumulate merit, purify negativity, and make requests to the lama [inseparable from] the exalted deity, then even though you may think "at the moment, I am unable to generate any realizations", in the future you will be able to generate them with ease. The Noble Lord Manjushri gave this advice to Je Rinpoche, and Je Rinpoche [128] himself also gave this advice. Likewise here it is explained that one must meditate on guru yoga and make requests to the lama. Also, if when you meditate on guru yoga, you meditate on the lama as an ordinary person and make requests to him, there will be no significant benefit. If instead you consider the lama as inseparable from all the Buddhas of the three times and make requests, on account of viewing him as inseparable from all the Buddhas of the three times there is in that respect a great blessing. If you make requests in this way, the blessing will come quickly, so you must consider the lama as inseparable from the exalted deity and make requests.

Usually when giving a commentary on Mahamudra, there is a tradition of combining commentaries on Lama Chöpa and Mahamudra and teaching them together. The reason it is done that way is that one must practice having taken guru yoga as the lifeblood of the path.

"Guru yoga" has many forms, both extensive and condensed. Lama Chöpa, the Six-Session Guru Yoga, Ganden Lha Gyama and so forth are all versions of guru yoga. As for the meaning of "guru yoga": a ritual on which one meditates in order to be able to transform one's mind into that of a full-fledged guru is called "guru yoga". [129] "Able to transform into a full-fledged guru" is being able to transform into the *actual* guru.

Recall the benefits of [correctly] devoting to a spiritual friend, and the drawbacks of not doing so. Then train in the root [of the path], faith. Remember the lama's kindness and generate respect. In that manner, make requests to the lama. Viewing the lama as inseparable in nature from all Buddhas, from the depths of your heart make requests to the lama and supreme deity. As it was clarified above in the Mahamudra requesting prayer:

Father, your holy form and my form.

Father, your holy speech and my speech.

Father, your holy mind and my mind.

Bless that inseparably one in fact.

Thinking "how wonderful it would be if my mind and the lama's holy mind were mixed" and making requests with intense longing in this way is also called "guru yoga". It is important to accumulate merit and purify obscurations in that way.

Having first accumulated merit, purified obscurations, and done guru yoga,

Actual practice, Mahamudra

Is posited many ways but

Split into two: sutra, tantra.

The latter is clear light-great bliss

From skillfully piercing the points

Of the vajra body, and such:

[130] Mahamudra of Saraha,

Nagarjuna, Naro, Maitri.

Taught in *Essence* and in *Siddhas*

It's highest tantra's quintessence.

Although in general former scholars had many points of view regarding that which is called "Mahamudra", these systems can be condensed into Mahamudra of the sutra system and Mahamudra of the mantra system. Of the two, sutra and mantra Mahamudra, [this text belongs to] the latter, Mahamudra of the mantra system.

"Mantra" means "secret mantra". Since that must be practiced in great secrecy, in this [text] it is only explained in a condensed way. Also, in Lama Chöpa, except for condensed passages such as:

Bless to actualize in this life

Merged path: clear light, illusory form.

it is not spoken of extensively. Since mantra must be practiced in great secrecy, in these texts it is only discussed briefly. The subject to be discussed includes both sutra and and tantra, but there is a difference in the number of words used to describe each one [many more words are used for sutra]. When there is no other particular need, it is the tradition of grammarians to first describe that which requires fewer letters. When the actual content of the subjects to be discussed also has both a condensed and an extensive subject, [131] it is also the custom to describe the condensed one first and the extensive one afterwards. So here as well, since there is no more than a brief bit to say about mantra, he explains that first.

### Explanation of the Mahamudra of the Mantra System

Again,

The latter is clear light-great bliss

From skillfully piercing the points

Of the vajra body, and such...

What sort of thing is this "Mahamudra of the mantra system"? The practitioner pierces the vital points of the channels, winds and drops in his own body, and practices according to the manner of meditation explained in the texts. By practicing in that way, he condenses all the winds into the indestructible drop. All the external signs appear as in the stages of death, and the clear light shines forth. That clear light, moreover, is not [manifested just] for some fanciful purpose. Rather, it becomes the nature of a mind realizing emptiness called "the mixing of the mother emptiness and the son clear light." Such a clear light is called "path Mahamudra". Having condensed all the winds into the indestructible drop, that innermost, simultaneously-born clear light becoming the nature of a mind realizing emptiness is the supreme essence of subjects explained in the ocean-like class of unsurpassed tantra, and is the "great bliss" that is praised again and again in mantra [teachings].

[132] The Kagyu school has a "Mahamudra" that was well known in old times, before Je the Great came. It is a Mahamudra passed down from Naropa and Maitri. In actuality the innermost, simultaneously-born clear light great bliss which has become the nature of a mind realizing emptiness, it is the final thought of Naropa and Maitri and is called "Mahamudra".

"The essence of accomplishment": there are many texts, such as the *Seven Treatises of Accomplishment* [Berzin 98 has "The Seven Texts of the Mahasiddhas". Note that this may be the text referenced in verse on pg. 129/57] and so forth. The intention of all of these is called "the innermost, simultaneously-born clear light". To meditate on this, one needs to meditate on the completion stage, and apply a method that condenses all the winds into the indestructible drop.

To condense the winds in this way, [one follows the instructions] on the "three channels and six chakras" as explained in texts on Guhyasamaja, Heruka Chakrasamvara, Vajrabhairava and so forth. At the outset of meditation, one meditates observing the navel, or meditates on the heart, or meditates observing the tip of the secret region and so forth: many modes of meditation have been explained. Again, if one meditates on Mahamudra combining it with Lama Chöpa, since Lama Chöpa is said to be mainly related with Guhyasamaja, [one follows the stages of the path of Guhyasamaja]. In the Guhyasamaja [system], the first stage is isolation of body, followed by isolation of speech and isolation of mind which combine to form the second "stage of mental observation". [133] Then comes illusory body, clear light, and unification: there are said to be these five stages of the completion stage. The ultimate object of accomplishment is actualizing the state of unification, which unifies clear light and illusory body. In order to actualize such a state of unification, one must [first] actualize individually the two parts that are to be unified, clear light and illusory. "Clear light" and "illusory body" refer to the illusory body of the third stage, and the meaning clear light of the fourth stage. In order to arise as the illusory body, one [first] needs to be able to condense all the winds into the indestructible drop, so one must cause to appear the example clear light which is the mental isolation of the second stage. In order for the example clear light of mental isolation to appear, one must make all the winds enter, abide, and dissolve into the heart. And for that, first of all, as a method for causing the winds to enter, one must loosen the knots in the channels. To loosen these, one must meditate on the vajra-recitation which is isolation of speech.

Initially, for the purpose of causing the winds to enter into the central channel, one meditates placing one's focus on either the navel or the secret place. Applying such a method to cause the winds to dissolve in the central channel is called "isolation of body". In order to meditate on such a bodily isolation, first one must ripen one's mindstream by meditating on the generation stage. [134] Of the "generation and completion stages", during the completion stage one gains the ability to actually arise in the holy body of a deity, the basis to be actualized [footnote—see notes in book]. During the generation stage, although one is not actually able to arise in the holy body of a deity, by means of aspirational mental engagement [note--the second of 6 yid byed's for bsam gtan], one must *imagine* arising as the holy body.

### Explanation of Taking the Three Bodies Into the Path

The "three bodies" in the context of "taking the three bodies into the path" includes the *three bodies which are the basis*, *three bodies which are the path*, and the *three bodies which are the result*. [Ordinary] death, intermediate state and taking rebirth are the basis: although they are not actually the three bodies, they are given the name "three bodies", that is, *three bodies which are the basis*. In the context of the completion stage, [a] meditation on the clear light, [b] meditation on the illusory body, and [c] the illusory body again entering into the old aggregates [are also not the actually three bodies but] are called "three bodies which are the path". On the basis of having purified the three bodies which are the *basis to be purified* by means of the three

bodies which are the *path which purifies them*, one achieves the *actual* three bodies which are the *result of purifying*, the Wisdom Truth Body, Complete Enjoyment Body, and Emanation Body.

Although the actual purifier of the three bodies which are the basis arises during the completion stage, to ripen the roots of virtue for that one must meditate on taking the three bodies into the path in the context of the generation stage. With regards to "purifying the three bodies which are the basis": although the wisdom realizing selflessness, which, having a discordant aspect with the apprehension of a self, purifies it by means of directly contradicting its mode of apprehension, this manner of purifying the three basis bodies is not like that. Rather, it purifies by means of having a *concordant* aspect to that [apprehension of a self] [footnote]. [135] When an ordinary person dies the elements of the body gradually withdraw, and the mind becomes more and more subtle. Finally the innermost mind manifests, so for "death which is the basis" one must meditate on taking death into the path as the Wisdom Truth Body, with an aspect similar to that [ordinary death].

### Taking Death into the Path as the Wisdom Truth Body

Moreover, with regards to this "meditation taking death into the path as Dharmakaya": when meditating on the self-generation, first one must meditate on emptiness, and while meditating on emptiness, one must meditate on this taking death into the path as Dharmakaya. One recites the mantra "OM SVABHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDO HAM" [footnote], and meditates on emptiness. At that time, the entire environment and the beings therein gradually condense and dissolve into oneself. Oneself also dissolve into the seed [syllable] of whatever deity one is meditating upon. For example, if it is Guhyasamaja, one dissolves into the HUM syllable. The *zhab-kyu* ("U" letter) of the HUM dissolves into the HA. The HA dissolves into its head [top portion]. Imagine the head dissolves into the crescent moon, the crescent moon into the drop, the drop into the nada, and the nada becomes emptiness which is not observed [footnote—by a consciousness holding to extremes, or "is non-observation [of inherent existence], or *the nada is not observed*: all three are implied]. These stages of dissolution are similar to the gradual dissolution of the coarse bodily winds at the time of death. When an ordinary person dies, the power of the earth [elements] among the elements of the body decreases, and when the power of the water [element] becomes manifest, it is called "earth dissolving into water". [136] When earth dissolves into water, the dying person perceives an appearance like a mirage, and feels as though he is sinking down into the earth. Take also the manner of water dissolving into fire to be the power of the water [element] decreasing and the power of fire becoming manifest.

As for the smoke-like appearance that occurs at that point: there is an appearance like the diffusion of smoke inside a house. What are the external bodily signs at that time? The mouth becomes dry, the throat becomes dry, and so forth. Also, "fire dissolving into wind": when the power of the fire [element] decreases and the power of the wind [element] becomes manifest, fire

dissolves into wind. One's own [inner] appearance is like the appearance of fireflies. It is like, for example, fireflies at nighttime, when an appearance like sparks darting and flitting about arises. "Wind dissolving into consciousness" is the power of the wind [element] decreasing and the power of consciousness becoming manifest. One's own [inner] appearance is like a sputtering butter lamp that is about to go out. It appears as though the wind does not move it, and it blazes brightly. At this juncture, one becomes unable to move one's body. After that, the [white] appearance, [red] increase and [black near-] attainment will arise. First, as appearances dissolve, there is a vacuous white appearance like a spotless autumn sky pervaded by moonlight. [137] Next is the "red increase": that [white] appearance vanishes and a blank redness dawns, like a spotless autumn sky pervaded by sunlight. After that is the "black near-attainment": a vacuous blackness arises, like at dusk-time when a thick gloom descends. The near-attainment has two stages: during the former stage, that black appearance shows itself, and during the latter stage one loses one's memory and there is no appearance at all. During this latter stage of the near-attainment, the "basis clear light" appears. This is the clear light that arises at the death time for an ordinary person. That clear light is said to be free of the three polluting faults: above [we discussed] the [appearance] as though pervaded by moonlight, pervaded by sunlight, pervaded by the thick gloom of dusk and so forth. [Here], without any of those faults, except for a vacuity that is like the self-radiance of the sky at dawn, there is no quality of color and so forth. Moreover, saying "the mind is the root of all, samsara and nirvana" refers to this clear light.

Practicing mantra, one employs a method to make that clear light manifest. By meditating on the basis clear light, also called the "mother clear light", [138] if one is able to mix it with the "son clear light", one can turn it into a path and achieve liberation and the state of all-knowing. As such, it is said to be the root of attaining nirvana. If one does not support this clear light with skillful means and instead slips into ordinariness, through the force of that one is born into samsara, so it is also the root of samsara.

In that way, if you need to meditate on emptiness, you meditate on emptiness before deity yoga. During that meditation, the entire world and the beings therein gradually condense and dissolve into your body. When it is dissolving in this way, it appears to your imagination that earth has dissolved into water. As a sign of earth dissolving into water, you think "the mirage-like sign has appeared", and then you should think "the smoke like appearance is about to arise".

If you are meditating on a HUM syllable at your heart, then imagine that your body gradually dissolves from the top and bottom into the HUM at your heart. During that, you should think "the smoke-like appearance, the sign of water dissolving into fire, has arisen. The mirage-like appearance has already gone. Next, the appearance like fireflies is about to arise."

After that, imagine the *zhab-kyu* ["u"-letter] of the HUM dissolves into the HA. During that dissolution, think "the appearance like fireflies, the sign of fire dissolving into wind, has arisen. The smoke-like appearance has already gone. At the end of this, the sputtering butter lamp-like appearance is about to arise." [139]

The HA dissolves into its head. As it dissolves, imagine "the sputtering butter lamp-appearance has arisen. The fireflies appearance has already passed. Now the sputtering butter lamp-like appearance is here, and afterwards the white appearance is about to arise."

Usually "HUM" does not have a crescent moon [on top of it], but here imagine that it does. Above that is a drop or a circle, and above that is a nada with three twists. When the head of the HA dissolves into the crescent moon, imagine that the white appearance arises. Think, "the sputtering butter lamp-appearance has gone. Next the red increase is about to appear." As I explained above, the white appearance is like a vacuity pervaded by moonlight that appears at the basis [that is, for ordinary people when they die]. When you are meditating, imagine that vacuity to be also the vacuity empty of inherent existence. At that time you must remember emptiness. You don't think it's the emptiness that is complete nothingness, but rather the emptiness which is empty of true existence. Imagine, "after this, the red increase will appear."

After that, the crescent moon dissolves into the drop. As the crescent moon dissolves into the drop, imagine that the red increase is appearing. [140] That is a red vacuity, and also it is the vacuity of inherent existence. Imagine, "next, the black near-attainment will appear."

The drop dissolves into the nada. As the drop dissolves into the nada, [think] "the black near-attainment is arising. The red increase has already gone. After this, the clear light will appear." Also think "when the clear light appears, I will not fall into ordinariness. I will recognize it, and will be able to transform it into the nature of a mind realizing emptiness." And when the clear light does appear, you should think "this is the actual Dharmakaya." That Dharmakaya possesses four special qualities. [1] The appearance factor of that mind is a vacuity. [2] The ascertainment factor is the ascertainment of lack of inherent existence. [3] The mind has become the nature of clear light great bliss, so [4] its experienced object is said to be bliss. [NC makes "clear light" no. 3, and "nature of great bliss" no. 4] You meditate by applying the pride that thinks "this is the actual Dharmakaya, and it is who I really am." That is called "meditation taking death into the path as Dharmakaya." During the generation stage you must meditate on taking death into the path as Dharmakaya. By meditating on that, you ripen roots of virtue to have the [actual] clear light appear during the completion stage. Through the force of meditating having pierced the vital points of the vajra body during the completion stage, all appearances appear as before, so the basis and the path are said to have a concordant aspect. [141] Meditating on emptiness before the self-generation is meditating on taking death into the path as Dharmakaya, and of the collections of merit and wisdom that you must accumulate to become Buddha, it becomes an accumulation of the collection of wisdom.

As for [the need for] purifying one's aggregates into emptiness of inherent existence: [if one does this first, then] afterwards when one places [one's mind] in the pride of the deity, it will be easier to stop the grasping at ordinary appearances and appear purified as a deity. Having purified into emptiness, imagine that the clear light appears, and place your mind in the pride thinking "this is the actual Dharmakaya." For most ordinary people, when they die they abide in

the clear light for about three days. At the end of that, the previous order of dissolution reverses, and the appearances come in reverse order without getting mixed up: the black near-attainment appears, then the red increase, then the white appearance. In your imagination, you think "I have achieved the actual Dharmakaya."

### Explanation of Taking the Bardo into the Path as the Sambhogakaya

As for arising as the sambhogakaya: in a corner of your mind, impel yourself thinking "if I remain for a long time in the space of Dharmakaya, there will not be vast benefit for sentient beings, because that wisdom truth body is only the object of experience of other Buddhas; others cannot directly comprehend it. Therefore, I will arise as the form body, which achieves the welfare of others by appearing to all sentient beings. [142] At the time of the basis, if ordinary people arise from the clear light, they encounter the black near-attainment. Simultaneous with that, they must actualize the bardo. In the imagination of the yogi, having recognized taking death into the path as Dharmakaya, one placed the mind in pride thinking "this is the actual Dharmakaya." After that, while in equipoise on the clear light, wind stirs and the near-attainment appears. At the same time, as a substitute for the bardo that appears for ordinary people at the basis, imagine that one directly arises as the very subtle body, the complete enjoyment body. Think "this is the actual sambhogakaya." If when meditating on taking [the three bodies] into the path, the deity one is meditating on is, for instance, Guhyasamaja, then one generates oneself as the Primordial Protector [a white form of Dvesha-Vajra?]. If it is Vajrabhairava, one generates as the causal vajra-holder, the youthful Manjushri. If Vajrayogini, the syllable BAM, and if Chakrasamvara, one meditates on a nada, and so forth. These are "taking the bardo into the path as the sambhogakaya." When meditating on the BAM syllable, meditate that it is in nature the sambhogakaya, and in aspect the syllable BAM. One must place one's mind in the pride thinking "this is the actual sambhogakaya. It is who I really am." That is called "taking the bardo into the path as sambhogakaya", and it is like a substitute for the establishment of the bardo that arises for ordinary people. At the basis, that bardo being [143] takes birth in a womb, and completely transforms into a physical body, so that is what is to be purified. The purifier of that has a similar aspect to it: during the generation stage, simultaneous with achieving the near-attainment, one manifests in the aspect of a very subtle body, the sambhogakaya, and thinks it is the actual sambhogakaya.

### Taking Rebirth into the Path as the Nirmanakaya

The sambhogakaya, moreover, is only able to be perceived by those who have achieved the Mahayana Arya stage, so it is unable to achieve vast benefit for sentient beings. For that reason, one impels oneself with the thought, "I will arise in a body that is able to be perceived by all trainees, both supreme and inferior." Out of that thought arises the complete supported [deities] and supporting mandala. One places one's mind in the pride thinking "this is the actual resultant time emanation body." This is called "taking birth into the path as nirmanakaya." If you habituate yourself well in this way, then at the time of death such signs of having meditated will

appear. You can encourage yourself thinking "now it is that time [of meditating on death as the Dharmakaya]. Later, I will recognize the actual ones." Also, if you think "I will not allow that clear light to slip into ordinariness; I will be able to transform it into the path", then even if you are unable to directly transform it, there will be great benefit. If you meditate extensively on these stages of dissolution, then when earth dissolves into water, you imagine that the earth element, form aggregate, eye sense power (a form that is included in your continuum), [144] and the basis-time mirror like wisdom all dissolve. Having meditated in this way, then gradually the twenty-five stages of gross dissolution [footnote—see note in book] will arise. If you can gain an understanding of those stages of dissolution, it is said that you will not be born in the lower realms.

This Mahamudra has both the sutra system and the mantra system of Mahamudra. Of these, the mantra system of Mahamudra, beyond a few brief verses, is not explained extensively in the *Mahamudra Root* [text that I am explaining]. As for the "Mahamudra exalted wisdom" in that context: [a] the exalted wisdom of simultaneously-born great bliss that arises from the winds having entered, abided, and dissolved into the central channel, and which is the example clear light which realizes emptiness by means of a meaning-generalty, as well as [b] the meaning clear light that directly realizes emptiness, are called "Mahamudra" in this context of mantra system Mahamudra. In order to generate in your continuum the exalted wisdom of simultaneously-born great bliss that arises from piercing the vital points of the vajra-body and causing the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve into the central channel, first, as a method for causing the winds to enter the central channel, you must take the isolation of body and isolation of speech as preliminaries. And in order to allow for such a realization to be generated, as a means of ripening roots of virtue [145] you must meditate on taking the three bodies into the path during the generation stage.

### Explanation of the Five Stages

The "five stages" are 1) Isolation of body, 2) Isolation of speech and isolation of mind, which together are called "the stage of mental observation" [see pg. 132/60], 3) Illusory body, 4) Meaning clear light, and 5) Unification. On the basis of practicing these, ultimately one will be able to achieve the unification of no-more-learning. In order to generate the simultaneously-born bliss on the basis of the winds entering, abiding, and dissolving in the central channel, you must understand the properties of the vajra body.

### Explanation of the Three Channels and Four Chakras

Many coarse and subtle attributes of the vajra body are described, but here the most important ones are the "three channels and four chakras". In your body, in the center of the left and right sides, and on the back side if you divide by front and back, is the central channel, blue on the outside and red on the inside, about the thickness of a wheat straw. On the right and left sides of this are two secondary channels, the red "roma" on the right, and the white "kyangma"

[use Sanskrit names?] on the left. At the channel-wheel at the navel, there is a knot where the roma twists around behind the central channel and kyangma, and the kyangma also twists around behind. [146] Also at the level of the heart, the roma wraps around thrice, and the kyangma wraps around thrice—that is, the roma twists once, then the kyangma one, then again the roma, the kyangma, and finally again the roma and then the kyangma twists around. This is counted as three knots. At the channel-wheel at the throat, there is said to be one knot—one [twist] for each, the roma and kyangma. At the channel-wheel at the crown, the roma and kyangma each wrap around, but when you combine the two, it is counted as one knot. Although I don't need to explain in detail the manner in which the secondary channels branch out, at the heart where there are eight secondary channels, the root of these eight secondary channels penetrates into the central channel in four places, from which four secondary channels branch out. Each of these again branches [into two], so there are said to be eight secondary channels at the heart [see drawing in book]. At the crown, there are thirty-two secondary channels, and at the throat, sixteen. The secondary channels at the crown are as though facing downwards, and those at the throat as though facing upwards, signifying the unification of method and wisdom. The sixty-four secondary channels at the navel face upwards, and the eight at the heart face downwards, again signifying method and wisdom. The uppermost tip of the central channel is called "the spot between the eyebrows." It is at the place where peaceful deities have a tuft of hair, and where wrathful deities have a wisdom eye. [147] The bottommost tip reaches the tip of the sexual organ. The uppermost tips of the roma and kyangma are penetrate into the nostrils.

When meditating, before you visualize the channels you must meditate on the hollow interior. Initially you meditate on yourself in the aspect of a particular deity. Having purified the inside of the deity's body into emptiness, it is good if you can imagine light rays filling that emptiness, and from that space visualize the channels. Since the roma and kyangma continuously abide as though constricting the central channel, wind flows through the roma and kyangma but is unable to flow in the central channel. The wind that flows through the roma and kyangma is the wind of karma for an ordinary person and is the cause of birth in samsara, so we need to be able to gather that wind inside the central channel.

### Teaching on the Method for Causing the Wind to Abide in the Central Channel

Although we mainly need to cause [the winds] to enter, abide, and dissolve in the indestructible drop at the center of the mantra wheel at the heart, if right away we meditate observing the heart, there is a danger that we will be unable to gather the winds and that "heart-wind"—that is, a disease of the heart—will arise. For that reason, initially we should meditate observing another vital point of the body. If our ultimate goal is to make effort at a method for generating realizations of the completion stage, first we need a stable realization of the generation stage. Take as an illustration first meditating on isolation of body. [148] Before that, we have to recite the hundred-syllable mantra in conjunction with the meditation-recitation of Vajrasattva. We then meditate on guru yoga, visualize the channels of the body and purify them.

Request to the lama, making a request "please bless me to generate an unmistakable realization of the completion stage." If your guru yoga practice is Lama Chöpa, request with the verse

Requesting thence, supreme lama

To bless, gladly alight on my crown.

If it is the Six-Session Guru Yoga, then meditate up until "Alights on my crown, samaja". Then request to the lama, "Please bless me to generate in my continuum the realization of isolation of body." Initially [when you] visualize the channels, request that the channels may appear clearly and that blockages in the channels and winds may not arise. After that, if you meditate on isolation of body from the space of clear appearance of yourself as the deity, it is said that realizations of isolation of body will arise. After that, the lama abides on your crown, or the lama abides at your heart, according to some texts. Wherever you visualize him, the main thing is to make your mind inseparable from the lama-yidam, and then generate [the visualization] of your mind entering into either a drop, a HUM syllable, or something like that. [149] Initially cause the HUM syllable to descend either to the channel-wheel at the navel, or to the tip of the jewel at the secret place. If you meditate in that way, then the winds will gather wherever you place your visualization. Since the wind and mind exist together and travel together, then wherever you place your mind, the wind will gather there. If you place your observation as explained above, it will be easy to gather the winds. [Imagine that] rays of light emanate from your heart or from the syllable there and purify the faults of the whole world and its beings. All worlds, in the form of celestial palaces, and all beings, in the form of gods and goddesses, melt into light. All worlds melt into light and dissolve into the beings, and those beings also dissolve into your body. You also melt into light from top and bottom, and then imagine dissolving into the drop. If you do so, the winds will condense inside. If the winds merely enter into the central channel but are unable to abide there, it won't benefit, so you must cause them to abide. By meditating again and again on the winds inside the central channel, you will cause them to abide there.

### The Sign of the Winds Abiding in the Central Channel

What kinds of signs arise when the winds abide [in the central channel]? The wind of the nostrils stops moving—that is, air ceases to flow through the nostrils. When doing concentration meditation, even when subtle laxity accrues, the wind of the nostrils ceases to flow. When wind ceases to flow through the nostrils *and* the abdomen is not moving, [150] that is a sign that the wind is abiding in the central channel. After that, one must dissolve the winds in the central channel, so as for the sign of that: as I explained above in the context of taking death into the path as Dharmakaya, there are the signs of earth dissolving into water, and so forth. The signs like a mirage, like smoke, like fireflies, like a sputtering butter lamp, the white appearance, red increase, and black near-attainment arise successively. When you meditate in that way, although the wind at other channel-wheels enters, abides and dissolves in the central channel, the signs of it dissolving exactly like at the stages of death do not arise. However, a similitude of that arises,

so at that time you make effort to recognize the signs. First the white appearance arises, followed by the red increase, black near-attainment, and finally the clear light. Before meditating on the completion stage, you must apply yourself to gain an understanding of emptiness, because when the clear light appears, that clear light appears as an utter vacuity said to be "an experience which is like the direct realization of emptiness". Rather than just using that vacuity for no purpose, you should be able to meditate by combining it with the emptiness which is empty of inherent existence. When you meditate like that, you can meditate on the tip of the secret organ or at the navel. By meditating in that way, the winds will gather there. [151] Through the power of that gathering, the tummo fire will ignite at the navel. The tummo will generate heat, which will melt the bodhicitta at the crown. [The bodhicitta] will descend from the crown to the throat, giving rise to the wisdom of joy. By descending to the heart, the supreme wisdom of joy, to the navel, special joy, and when it reaches the tip of the secret place, simultaneously-born joy will arise. The bodhicitta gradually descends, and if one has equal familiarity with the wind and bliss, the four joys and four emptinesses will arise. When the simultaneously-born joy arises, everything will appear as empty clear light. Thus, as to that [appearance], from the point of view of empty appearing, [is the appearance] of everything is empty clear light, and from the point of view of experiencing bliss, is simultaneously-born bliss. It is called "the innermost clear light of simultaneously-born great bliss", or, in the context of mantra, it is what we call "Mahamudra".

### Explanation of the Nine Rounds of Mixing

By first meditating on that "fundamental simultaneously-born clear light", when you combine it with the view it becomes the nature of a mind realizing emptiness by means of a meaning-generalality. That is called the "example clear light". In order for the example clear light to arise, you need to pierce the vital points at the heart. When you place your observation on the secret place and so forth and the clear light appears, [152] although you are unable to cause the example clear light of the final stage of isolation of mind to appear, a similitude of that will appear. When that similitude becomes manifest, you mix it with the Dharmakaya. That is called [1] "mixing the clear light with the Dharmakaya": you place your mind in the pride of having actually attained the Dharmakaya, and realize emptiness with the simultaneously-born bliss. When you arise from the equipoise, along with the reverse process of the near-attainment appearing, from your perspective you arise as the sambhogakaya. That is called [2] "mixing with the sambhogakaya." Then you generate the conviction in your mind that you are arising as the nirmanakaya, and that you are again entering into your old aggregates. That is called [3] "mixing with the nirmanakaya". When you are not sleeping, you meditate on the three rounds of mixing during the waking state.

When you get a good and stable meditation on that, then even while sleeping, things will appear as before [the reverse process from the clear light, etc.], and so you can [4] "mix sleep with the Dharmakaya". When sleep gets lighter and you are dreaming, you arise in a subtle

dream body and [5] "mix the dream state with the sambhogakaya". When you awake, you [6] "mix waking with the nirmanakaya". These are the three rounds of mixing during sleep.

If you get a good meditation on those three, then at the time of death, the winds will condense through the force of karma. As the winds condense, then when all the appearances come similar to those when you meditated before, [153] you will recognize them. Along with the all the stages of dissolution appearing [during your meditation] just as at the stages of death, you combine them with the stages of emptiness. [Later] when the clear light of death appears through the power of karma, you mix it with the clear light of the path that you meditated on before in the waking state, and generate it in the nature of a mind realizing emptiness. That is called [7] "mixing death with the Dharmakaya". If you get a good mixing of death with the Dharmakaya, then just as the bardo is established, then without even a slight volition the bardo will arise as the sambhogakaya. That is called [8] "mixing the bardo with the sambhogakaya". That subtle body itself which has arisen in the nature of the sambhogakaya will then arise as a gross body which is able to appear to common trainees. That is called [9] "mixing birth with the nirmanakaya". The nine rounds of mixing are thus: three rounds of mixing during the waking state, three rounds during sleep, and three at the time of death. If you get a good practice of those, then on that basis you will be able to actualize Buddhahood.

In order to gather the winds in the central channel, first you must apply yourself to be able to cause them to enter the central channel by piercing the vital points at a different place. In order for them to enter at the heart, you need to release the channel-knots at the heart. And to release those, you need to meditate on the vajra-recitation of the isolation of speech.

#### [154] The Manner of Meditating on the Vajra-Recitation that Releases the Channel-Knots

What we call the "vajra-recitation" is a recitation of the vajras of the three syllable [OM AH HUM]. At the center of the channel-wheel of the heart, at the indestructible drop, is a HUM, a drop, or a seed and so on—one meditates on whatever is appropriate to meditate on, based on the context. At that time, when the wind is going out, the tone of the wind is the sound of a HUM. It is not like listening to a HUM sound coming from somewhere else. Rather, the sound of one's own breath when one exhales is the sound of HUM, and when one inhales inwards, the sound of the breath takes on the tone of an OM sound. Imagine that when it again goes out from that drop, it goes out from the heart in the manner of a HUM sound, and when it comes back, it comes as the tone of OM. Since ordinary beings like us don't have anything except wind going out and coming back in, we need to observe that especially and actualize an abiding [see note in book]. When abiding, imagine that it abides in the tone of AH. By observing like that again and again at the crown, navel, or secret place, it will force the blockages out of the central channel ["like cleaning out a pipe"]. That is called "speech isolation vajra-recitation". It is a part of the isolation of speech; that is, it is included in the isolation of speech.

After you have purified the central channel in that way, you place your observation at the heart, and from within a gentle breath, gradually condense it inwards. [155] When you have condensed it, then as I explained before, the four empties will arise, and if you condense the winds along with that, the wisdom of the four joys will arise. The fourth joy is the wisdom of simultaneously-born joy and the clear light where everything is empty arising as one nature but of different isolates [footnote]. At that time, one realizes emptiness by means of a meaning-generality [footnote]. If the final stage isolation of mind that arises from causing the winds to enter, abide and dissolve in the heart just as at the stages of death is generated, then it pervades that you will achieve Buddhahood in this life.

### The Benefits of the Illusory Body, and an Introduction to Unification

When one arises from such an equipoise on clear light, then as I explained yesterday, along with the reverse process appearance of the near-attainment, one arises as the impure illusory holy body. Since the wind and mind are of one nature but different isolates, it is an illusory holy body that arises on the basis of wind as a substantial cause and mind as a cooperative condition. It appears though without nature, like a rainbow in the sky. It appears with all limbs complete—in the aspects of the complete supporting and supported mandala, as when one meditated on the yidam deity. In the end, one will be able to arise directly as the holy body of whatever deity [one meditated on]. Until that time, one meditates in the manner of faith of conviction [footnote]. [156] After that, one arises as the illusory holy body. Although according to the sutra system, one must accumulate the collections [of merit and wisdom] for three countless great eons and then become a Buddha, if one achieves the illusory body according to the mantra system, then it becomes a substitute for the collections of three countless great eons. To put it another way, achieving the illusory body is similar to having accumulated the collections of three countless great eons, so we say "by relying on mantra, the path is swifter". The "swift path of mantra" is like that.

You might want to know "what does one do to accomplish such an illusory body, and what kind of thing is this 'illusory body'?" Even by [merely] gaining a good understanding that "First one causes the winds to enter, abide and dissolve in the central channel. When from that one actualizes a holy body that is actualized merely from wind and mind, that is called 'illusory body'", it is said that one [thereby] achieves benefits similar to having completed the generation stage. The practitioner of illusory body also arises from the illusory body and again enters into the old aggregates, and goes about the activities of the post-meditation period. Having gone about those activities, again and again he enters into equipoise on the clear light. By doing that, when the fourth stage, the meaning clear light, arises, he directly realizes emptiness. [In the space of that realization], there is absolutely no dualistic appearance of conventional appearances and so forth; [157] in emptiness everything becomes [one taste, like water poured into water] [footnote—three meanings]. That clear light which directly realizes emptiness is called "fourth stage, the meaning clear light". When one enters into equipoise on the meaning clear light, not

only does one abandon grasping at the self of persons, but also illusory holy body one had before dissolves by itself, along with its similar continuum. When one arises from that meaning clear light, one arises as the "pure illusory holy body"—a pure illusory holy body which is different from the impure illusory holy body. The meaning clear light acts as the direct antidote to the afflictive obscurations. If one then arises as an illusory holy body, because one has abandoned or purified afflictive obscurations, that illusory holy body is called the "pure illusory holy body." From that time on, it does not change; one has gained the deathless vajra holy body, so the continuum of that holy body cannot be severed. When such a practitioner of the pure illusory body arises as that pure illusory holy body, although he has arisen from the clear light, when he again enters into equipoise on the clear light he achieves the main unification, called "realizational union".

When one achieves the learner's unification which is the fifth stage, one has not yet abandoned all the knowledge obscurations; they are left over. In order to abandon the knowledge obscurations, that practitioner of unification meditates on the rest of the paths, and by accumulating the collections of merit and wisdom [158] gains the ability to abandon all knowledge obscurations without exception. The exalted wisdom into which one enters in equipoise after attaining that ability is called the "meaning clear light of the end of learning". That is the end of the learner's path, and is also the direct antidote to the knowledge obscurations. If one achieves the path of release which is freed from knowledge obscurations and which is induced by that direct antidote, one has achieved the exalted wisdom that knows all aspects, and the state of a Buddha. At that time, according the sutra system one achieves the "sambhogakaya endowed with the five certainties" [footnote], and according to the mantra system, "the state endowed with the sevenfold kisses of perfection" [footnote].

On the basis of ascertaining those stages, one must meditate on mantra system Mahamudra, and understand the manner of traversing the paths. Since in the commentaries there are no more than brief explanations of this [Mahamudra] for mantra, I have explained it extensively. All the other points are clear in the two commentaries [footnote—the autocommentary by Panchenpa himself, and Ngulchu Dharmabhadra's "Dispelling Mistakes"—see pg. 202] that have come from Tibet, so there is no need to explain extensively beyond just that.

### Explanation of Sutra System Mahamudra

In that case, what exactly is this Mahamudra of the sutra system? [The root text continues]:

First is long, short, middle's direct [footnote]

teaching: voidness meditation.

Best Noble, Nagarjuna said:

"No liberation path but this." [see note in book for reference]

In line with his intention, here:

I'll comment on Mahamudra.

Like lineage lama's speech, I'll tell

[159] The way to introduce the mind.

[Usually we] speak of two [meanings] of the extensive, middling and condensed mothers [Perfection of Wisdom Sutras]: the explicit teaching, the stages of [meditation on] emptiness, and the hidden meaning, the stages of realization. Of these two, the manner of meditating on emptiness is the manner of meditation of sutra system Mahamudra. Without meditating on the mind realizing emptiness, it is impossible to attain liberation. The Protector Nagarjuna said "in order to attain liberation, one must generate the mind realizing emptiness. As for the need to take the Protector Nagarjuna as a valid authority when explaining the meaning of emptiness: the Blessed One prophesied "the Protector Nagarjuna will clarify the freedom from the two extremes of permanence and annihilation." Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen says that here he will explain the manner of meditating on emptiness in accordance with the intention of the Supreme Arya Nagarjuna. That is, he will first explain the meditation on the Mahamudra commentary, and then the introduction to the [nature of] the mind and so forth in accordance with the personal instruction of his lama Khedrub Sangye Yeshe. As for the view of the object [emptiness], there is nothing extra in the context of mantra over and above what the Protector Nagarjuna explained in his commentaries on the thought of the extensive, middling and condensed mothers. [160] In terms of delineating the object, emptiness, since there is nothing extra in mantra that is not in sutra, then in terms of the object emptiness there is no difference. However, in terms of the *object-possessor*, we come upon a difference. In the sutra system, the mind realizing emptiness is a gross consciousness realizing emptiness; there is no talk in sutra of a "very subtle wind and mind" or an "innermost mind". As I explained before in the context of mantra, there is a difference in terms of what object-possessor is combined [with realizing emptiness]. Having gathered all the winds in the central channel, one stops the gross winds and manifests the subtle, innermost mind. By observing emptiness [with that mind], one realizes emptiness with the simultaneously-born bliss, and so forth.

The Protector Nagarjuna explained the thought of the extensive, middling and condensed [Perfection of Wisdom] sutras, just as the Blessed One prophesied that he would explain the meaning of profound emptiness. There have been many followers of the Protector Nagarjuna, and they have had a variety of takes on his thought. However, among those, mainly one should follow after the glorious Chandrakirti. Although the glorious Chandrakirti was in fact a great

bodhisattva who had attained the grounds, he intentionally took birth as a man in order to spread the view that the Protector Nagarjuna explained. Therefore, said Jowo Je, the glorious Atisha, we should follow after the glorious Chandra's explanation of the thought of the Protector Nagarjuna.

[161] What should we do in order to realize emptiness? The Protector Nagarjuna was prophesied to explain the thought of the victor, and if we follow after his disciple the glorious Chandra we will gain an unmistakable realization of emptiness. If we follow after any system other than that, we will be unable to realize emptiness. Why must we call emptiness "Mahamudra"? The Blessed One himself said in the *King of Concentrations Sutra*, "all dharmas' nature is the seal [mudra]". That is, all phenomena are as though sealed by emptiness, and since any phenomena whatsoever is by nature empty, that emptiness seals it [rgyas btab pa]. Or, to use the non-honorific, it stamps it [dam phrug btab pa]. All phenomena are empty of inherent existence, and since nothing has passed beyond that seal, we call emptiness a "seal" [mudra]. Why do we need to call it "great" [Maha]? Because if you realize it you attain the liberation which is liberation from samsara, and are freed of all adversity, we call it "great".

[162] The Way in which all Mahamudras are the same in being a means of attaining unification

Innately born, amulet box,  
Five-endowed, same taste, four letters,  
Pacifier, object to cut  
*Dzogchen*, Middle View and so forth,  
many names applied to it, but...[see note in book]

Great holy beings of old had many diverse ways of asserting that Mahamudra. Some called it "simultaneously-born union", others "amulet box", "endowed with the five", "six-round of equal taste", and "the four letters". Still others called it "the pacifier", "the object to be cut", "the Great Perfection" [*rDzogs-chen*], "the view of the middle", and so forth [footnote?]. The different Dharma lineages each had diverse ways of naming it. However, as for the actual meaning,

Experienced yogis, masters of  
Scripture and reason analyze:  
Certain meaning falls to one thought.

He is saying that all the different ways of naming Mahamudra in accordance with the individual assertions of holy lamas of old—the holy great beings of the Kagyu Tradition stemming from Marpa, Milarepa and Dakpo [mnyam med dwags po lha rje, another student of Marpa], and also the Nyingma Tradition of the old translation, and so forth—all of these, in short, are the same in being a means of attaining the state of Mahamudra unification.

[163] Each of these teachers explained his thought in accordance with the level of mind of the intended trainees present when he spoke. At that particular time, speaking in that way became a pure Dharma in accordance with the level of mind of the trainees. Since that way of speaking did not go beyond the level of mind of trainees of inferior intellect, it is difficult to put it into practice. However, [it is said that] "it is possible that [teachers] who have not studied the textual systems a great deal may not know the way of applying terminology." That is, something that is unmistakable as to the meaning but doesn't have good terminology may be a case of somebody's not having studied the textual systems a great deal, not of their failing to understand.

The manner of counting the five and six in "endowed with five" and "six-round of equal taste" in this text, and the way it is calculated in the in the eight great commentaries and so forth, are clear in the commentaries, so there is no need to give a long explanation.

Thus this has two systems: upon

the view seeking meditation.

Upon meditation seeking

the view: here is the latter one.

What sort of stages of meditation does one require for this Mahamudra? There are two systems: searching for meditation within the view, and searching for the view within meditation. There are two [kinds of people]: a) those who first gain certainty about the view, realize the view, and from within view, actualize calm abiding, and b) those who first actualize calm abiding, [164] and having actualized calm abiding, gain certainty about the view. Of those two, the explanation in this context is an explanation of the means of first actualizing calm abiding, and then after that gaining certainty about the view.

### The Manner of Meditating on Calm Abiding

So if one first meditates on calm abiding, then the manner of meditating on calm abiding has two [sections]: 1) Preparation, and 2) The actual session. The preparation includes relying on the collection [of causes] for calm abiding. In the context of meditating on the lam rim, [before the actual meditation] one must first perform the six preparatory practices [footnote]. Likewise here as well, one must first perform the six preparatory practices.

On a seat good to concentrate,

Sit with the sevenfold posture.

Dispel stale air over nine-rounds.

Divide well clear and murky minds.

With a pure virtuous mind, first go

for refuge, and produce the mind.

Practice guru yoga's deep path.

Fervent requests, hundred tormas [see p. 181/81—maybe just means "100 times"]:

do then melt the lama in you.

He is saying that you need to do like that when meditating on calm abiding. Initially to actualize calm abiding, one needs to "rely on the collection [of causes] for calm abiding." The great Jowo [Atisha] explained that without relying on the collection of causes for calm abiding, then even somebody who meditates for many eons will be unable to actualize calm abiding. [165] Also, as an abode of meditation, one needs one that fulfills all the characteristics. [Maitreya] explains in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*:

The place where wise ones practice is:

Found well, and a pleasant abode,

Pleasant env'r'n, with pleasant friends,

With assets that please the yogi.

Since one must abide actualizing the Dharma, then at that time one needs to find food, clothing and so forth in a good way. That is, one must depend on a good way of finding them that is not mixed with food obtained by evil deeds. "*A pleasant abode*" means that previous holy beings have practiced meditation there and blessed the abode. "*Pleasant environ*" means a pleasant environment that will not give rise to illness and so forth. Since there are cases of Dharma practitioners being afflicted with illness due to not tolerating the environment, it should not be like that. A pleasant companion is somebody whose view and behavior accords with one's own. It should be a person who, among Dharma and worldly activities, mainly engages in Dharma activities, and somebody who sets an example of good behavior.

On top of that, "*with assets that please the yogi*"—a yogi who has already ascertained in his own mind all the requisite points of practice "possesses the requisites pleasing to the yogi". If somebody is practicing calm abiding, he should know well the way of sustaining the object of calm abiding, the way of dispelling faults of laxity, excitement and so forth if they should arise, and so on. It shouldn't be that one has already arrived at the retreat house but still doesn't understand something and needs to go and question others. [166] A secluded, tranquil abode without noises from people in the daytime, and water, dogs and so forth in the nighttime, is said to be a place conducive to calm abiding. "Possesses ethical discipline"—being pure in the ethical discipline to which one has committed is the most important factor. Generally it is said that "ethical discipline" is the basis for generating all good qualities. Especially for somebody meditating on calm abiding, pure ethical discipline is the most important factor. "Having few wants, and contentment": if somebody lacks the qualities of having few wants and contentment,

then he will be distracted to various activities and won't get around to meditating on calm abiding. If one is practicing for actual calm abiding, then it is said "thoroughly abandon the bustle of many activities": one shouldn't engage in many activities. Even though the activities may involve engaging in virtue, other than recitations that one necessarily must do continuously, one shouldn't engage in many activities. Mainly one should meditate on calm abiding.

"One should thoroughly abandon excessive thoughts about objects of desire and so forth." This is aspiring for things like name, fame, food, clothing, and dwellings out of attachment. For example, a being of the desire realm is attached to earthly pleasures, [167] while a being in the higher realms is attached to meditative stabilization. Since such desire can arise, one should thoroughly abandon such discursive thoughts.

Especially, one also needs to possess the oral instructions of a holy lama who is skilled in the manner of actualizing calm abiding. There are many people who say "I practiced for calm abiding, and got to the fourth or fifth mental settling. But I wasn't able to achieve actual calm abiding." Well then, what is the reason that they didn't achieve it? Although one definitely must assemble the collection of causes as branches of calm abiding, they didn't assemble them. Somebody who does assemble the collection of causes will not take more than six months to achieve actual calm abiding.

A place that fulfills all the characteristics is called "a platform for easy calm abiding" [translated above as "a seat good to concentrate"]. For example, if the seat where one stays is slightly higher in the back and lower in the front, one's body will become straight, and it will be easy to breathe in and out. A seat such as this is called "a platform for easy calm abiding." "Body with the seven aspects of Vairochana's [posture]": no matter what virtuous activity one engages in continuously, it is said that if one practices with one's body in the sevenfold posture of Vairochana, then it is the nature of things that realizations will arise easily. So, sit in the sevenfold posture of Vairochana.

[168] "*Dispel stale air over nine rounds.*" Dispelling stale air is for the purpose of clearly visualizing the channels and purifying them, so dispel stale air in nine rounds. As for the "nine rounds": Three times, inhale through the right nostril and exhale through the left. Then three times, inhale through the left and exhale through the right. Finally, three times inhale through both nostrils, and exhale through both—nine rounds. When exhaling through both, imagine [the winds] entering into the central channel.

Take a good look at your mind, examining whether afflictions are manifest, or whether a virtuous mind is manifest. If afflictions are manifest in your mind, it is said that you should separate clear and murky awareness, and count the breath coming and going. The reason is that you cannot immediately transform a mind under the power of afflictions into virtue. So for the purpose of transforming it into the nature of a neutral mind, you observe the coming and going of the breath, thinking "the breath went out; it came back in". Put your observation on that. By

putting your observation on that, it is like you will gradually forget the non-virtuous thought that was in your mind. If you are able to transform the mind into a neutral state by observing only the coming and going of the breath, [169] thereafter you can observe a virtuous object.

*"With a pure virtuous mind"*: to generate only calm abiding, one doesn't need the support of bodhicitta. Non-Buddhists also have fully-characterized calm abiding. In this context, since the explanation is in relation to Mahamudra, "With a pure virtuous mind" is saying that one's practice must be supported by bodhicitta. "Pure" means purified of the intention for one's own purpose. Think that you are taking upon yourself the purpose of others, and that in order to place all other limitless sentient beings in the state of a Buddha, you are meditating on Mahamudra, and meditating on calm abiding. If you do that, everything you meditate on will be supported by bodhicitta, so it is said to be especially superior.

As I explained before in regards to refuge and bodhicitta: refuge distinguished one's practice from wrong paths of Tirthikas, and bodhicitta distinguishes it from lower paths of Hearers and Solitary Realizers. So you definitely need to meditate on those two. In that context, meditate on guru yoga, and make fervent requests to the lama. Saying "meditate on guru yoga" [170] as it says in this text is saying to do a separate practice of guru yoga, like Lama Chöpa.

When practicing guru yoga, initially you need to perform the six preparatory practices. The first is cleaning the place, then setting up representations of the holy body, speech and mind, then setting up and beautifully arranging offerings without deceit, and so on. The fourth preparatory practice—visualizing the merit field, performing the seven-limb prayer along with a mandala offering, making requests and so forth—is included in the Lama Chöpa itself. For that reason, it says that the six preparatory practices must go first. Meditate on guru yoga in that way, and make requests to the lama. Since the occasion is meditating on calm abiding, make the request "please bless me to generate easily the realization of calm abiding." [Imagine] that nectar descends, and purify [yourself]. Imagine that obstacles to calm abiding like laxity, excitement and so forth are pacified, and you have been blessed to achieve actual calm abiding. After that, it is also all right if you meditate on the lama. When giving a commentary on the Hearing Lineage, there is a tradition of doing so by "explaining by way of three explanations" [NC—a brief explanation, an extensive explanation, and a closing summary along with dedication]. We don't count what I said yesterday, [171] and what I said today has become the first explanation, so we still have two more explanations to go.

### The Second [Extensive] Explanation of Mantra System Mahamudra

As for mantra system Mahamudra: the simultaneously-born great bliss which arises from causing the winds to enter, abide and dissolve in the central channel and which realizes emptiness is called "mantra system Mahamudra." This is a realization of the completion stage, and to generate a realization of the completion stage, one must first meditate on the generation stage. The main [practice] of the generation stage is taking the three bodies into the path. To

meditate on that, first perform the first three [of the six] preparatory practices: cleaning the place, arranging representations of the holy body, speech and mind, and setting up and beautifully arranging offerings without deceit. After that, go for refuge and generate bodhicitta, definitely combining it with tantra [footnote]. In order to purify discordant conditions, negativities and obscurations, perform the meditation-recitation of Vajrasattva. So that the blessing may enter you, meditate on guru yoga, and so forth. All of these must be done first. If you are in the middle of meditating on another sadhana, it is sufficient to meditate on taking the three bodies into the path in the context of that. Otherwise, if you are doing, for instance, Lama Chöpa, then first go for refuge and generate bodhicitta. After that, it is all right to meditate on taking the three bodies into the path in the context of the verse "From within great bliss..." [172] Alternatively, you can recite Lama Chöpa and withdraw the merit field, and request "Precious Lama, please dissolve into my crown, and grant me blessings to generate realizations of the generation stage." After that, the lama dissolves into you, causing the environment and its being to condense, and you meditate on taking death into the path as the Dharmakaya. After that, you should meditate on taking the Sambhogakaya into the path, and then taking the Nirmanakaya into the path.

If you are meditating based on the Six-Session Guru Yoga, then meditate on taking death into the path as Dharmakaya during the verse "again gladly turns one taste with me". The lama becomes of equal taste with you, and that causes the whole environment and its beings to dissolve into you. Imagine that you also gradually dissolve into emptiness, and meditate on taking death into the path as Nirmanakaya. From the space of emptiness, meditate on taking the bardo into the path as the Sambhogakaya. It is sufficient to meditate on the subtle holy body, the Sambhogakaya, as in the aspect of light, and it is okay to meditate on it in the aspect of a mantra. In any case, meditate on a holy body that is established merely from wind and mind. During the verse "I, with pride of Vajrasattva...", meditate on taking rebirth into the path as Nirmanakaya. That is how to meditate on taking the three bodies into the path.

Mainly, you need to meditate on the clear light, Mahamudra. [173] For that, first meditate on your body with a hollow interior. Next, visualize the three channels along with the four channel-wheels. After that is "purifying the channels": a drop moves up and down inside the channels, drawing all the winds [NC—like a needle pulling thread] and purifying the channels. Meditate on taking the three bodies into the path. If you first meditate by placing your observation on the heart, there is a danger [of creating a disturbance], so initially meditate taking either the secret place or the center of the channel-wheel at the navel as the objective support. On that basis, you generate the wisdom of great bliss of the four empties, which arises from having caused the winds to enter, abide and dissolve in the central channel.

During that time, if you practice the nine rounds of mixing, [you should do] isolation of body, and after isolation of body is the vajra-recitation of isolation of speech. I already explained about the vajra-recitation, which is one part of the isolation of speech. During that, when you exhale out, you imagine that the breath goes out in the tone of HUM, and when you inhale in, you imagine it comes back in the tone of OM. When it abides, the tone is HA. For example, if

you puff air onto chinaware, you make the sound "HANG"; imagine it abides like that. At that time, do not imagine that the breath goes out. [174] If you do, since you need to condense the winds inside in order to generate realizations of the completion stage, it will harm your condensing it in that way, so don't imagine the wind going out.

Well then, what should you do? Inhale, briefly hold, and then release the breath. By meditating on the vajra-recitation, the channel-knots in the central channel will start to loosen. Once they have loosened, you should meditate by placing your observation on the heart. When you place your observation on the heart and gradually condense [the winds], the winds will enter, abide, and dissolve in the central channel from both above and below. They will also enter, abide, and dissolve at the central channel [*dhuti*] at the heart. However, it has not yet become the final stage of the example clear light. The final stage of the example clear light is [the winds] entering, abiding, and dissolving into the indestructible drop at the heart just as at the stages of death. If the stages of dissolution occur like at the time of death, the example clear light of the isolation of mind will appear. You don't just leave that clear light purposelessly, but generate it in the nature of a mind realizing emptiness by means of a meaning-generality. Generating it in that way is called the example clear light which is the final stage of the isolation of mind. When you arise from absorption on such a clear light, [175], you arise in the illusory holy body. That illusory holy body is, moreover, is not just a single deity; it arises in the aspect of the complete supporting and supported mandala. That illusory holy body arises on the basis of [a] the wind, which is the mount for that clear light, as the substantial cause, and [b] the [clear light] mind itself acting as the cooperative condition. It is not a flesh and blood body of matter, but an unobstructed illusory holy body established from mere wind and mind. If we take a flower as an example, the seed acts as the substantial cause, and water and fertilizer act as cooperative conditions. Likewise here, the wind which is the mount of the clear light acts as the substantial cause, and that [clear light] mind acts as the cooperative condition. On that basis, it is not a flesh and blood body of matter, but rather arises as an unobstructed, rainbow-like holy body established from mere wind and mind. This is the illusory body of the third stage. If that [practitioner] keeps entering into absorption on the clear light again and again, that simultaneously-born bliss will generate in the nature of a direct realization of emptiness. That is called the "meaning clear light of the fourth stage." From that, one arises as the pure illusory holy body. That [practitioner] will then accumulate whatever collections he needs to accumulate to abandon the obscurations to knowledge. Having completed the collections, he again enters into absorption on the clear light. [176] When he actualizes the direct antidote to the obscurations to knowledge, it is called "the clear light at the end of learning". At the second moment of that, he achieves the path of release, and thereby achieves the stage of the victor Vajradhara, possessing the seven kisses. That is the second explanation.

### The Third Explanation [Closing Summary] of Mantra System Mahamudra

First go for refuge, generate bodhicitta, confess negativities, and meditate on guru yoga as preliminaries. After that, imagine the stages of dissolution—earth dissolving into water and so forth—and think that thereby the clear light of death appears. Place your pride in that as the Dharmakaya. Next, arise as the Sambhogakaya, which is established from mere wind and mind and is like a substitute for the bardo. Meditate on taking the bardo into the path as Sambhogakaya, thinking "this is the actual Sambhogakaya". Again, imagine reentering into your old aggregates, and as you do so think "birth is arising as the Nirmanakaya". "Mantra system Mahamudra" requires the simultaneously-born bliss that realizes emptiness. To get to that, first one must meditate on the isolation of body as a method for causing the winds to enter into the central channel. One meditates on the isolation of speech in order to release the channel-knots at the heart. One meditates on the isolation of mind in order to cause the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve into the indestructible drop at the heart. [177] After the example clear light which is the final stage of isolation of mind appears, then upon arising from absorption one actualizes the illusory body. That practitioner of the impure illusory body enters into absorption on the clear light again and again, and then the meaning clear light which is the direct antidote to afflictive obscurations appears. Upon arising from the meaning clear light, one actualizes the pure illusory holy body. The holy body of unification which is a unity of holy body and mind that the practitioner of the pure illusory body [achieves] by again entering into absorption on the clear light is called "learner's unification". That practitioner of unification must accumulate the collections in order to abandon the obscurations to knowledge, so he accumulates them. When he attains the power to abandon the obscurations to knowledge and then actualizes the direct antidote to them, that [stage] is called "meaning clear light at the end of learning." At the next moment when he attains the path of release, that is called "attaining the state of Vajradhara." That completes the third explanation.

Those who give commentaries need to "sustain the object [during] the commentary". Whether it is extensive or condensed, if one keeps in mind an entire commentary and then maintains awareness of that, then when one explains the Dharma in order three times [as explained on pg. 170/77], one maintains the object of observation three times and so that fulfills the role of three sessions. If in one's room one then performs one session maintaining the object of observation, it becomes the yoga of four sessions. [178] As the lama is explaining the commentary, he should try to be able to meditate in accordance with what he explains. If he meditates in that way, it fulfills the role of three sessions. Out of the "preliminary, actual session and post-session", as a preliminary, one goes for refuge, generates bodhicitta, and confesses negativities.

### The Explanation of the Actual Practice of Mahamudra

Actual Mahamudra fits in

Two divisions: sutra, mantra.

The "mantra system of Mahamudra" involves piercing the vital points of the vajra body, and then entering into absorption on emptiness with the innermost, simultaneously-born clear light [mind]. Both the example clear light which realizes emptiness by means of a meaning-generality, and the meaning clear light which directly realizes emptiness are called "mantra system Mahamudra". I already explained how, in order to manifest that clear light, one must first meditate on isolation of speech, isolation of body, and so forth.

[As for] the "sutra system of Mahamudra": the Protector Nagarjuna faultlessly explained the intended meaning of the Prajnaparamita sutras. The profound emptiness which is settled upon by following after Nagarjuna and according with his explanations is called "sutra system Mahamudra." With regards to the reason for calling emptiness "Mahamudra": [179] because emptiness exists on all phenomena as though profound emptiness was sealed upon them, it is a seal [Mudra]. On the basis of that emptiness the paths of the three vehicles [footnote] increase endlessly, and one must practice by taking that as an object of observation. On account of such great import, we call it the "great seal" [Mahamudra]. Furthermore, there are two approaches to that: first settling upon the view, and from within the view, seeking out meditation, or first actualizing calm abiding, and then within meditation seeking out the view. Here, I am explaining from the point of view of first actualizing calm abiding and then actualizing special insight.

The manner of meditating on calm abiding has two sections: 1) preparatory practices, and 2) the actual session. The preparatory practices are relying on the collection [of causes] for calm abiding that I explained above. A place where you actualize calm abiding should fulfill the requisite characteristics. The place where one practices should at a minimum accommodate the four bodily activities: if you stand up, you shouldn't have to bow your head. If you lie down, you should be able to fold and extend your legs without obstruction. If you move about, you should be able to take three steps in every direction. If you sit, it shouldn't interfere with your assuming the cross-legged position. You also need to have few wants and contentment, must abandon the bustle of many activities, need pure ethical discipline, and must thoroughly abandon excessive thoughts about objects of desire and so forth. Among those, [180] the main one you need is pure ethical discipline. Sit with your body in the sevenfold vajra-posture of Vairochana. Dispel stale air in nine rounds. Separate clear and murky minds, and if [you notice that] a non-virtuous thought has arisen, count your breath as a way of moving away from the non-virtuous mind. If on that basis your mind becomes of a neutral nature, then train in bodhicitta. Endowed with bodhicitta, earnestly [recite the verses of] going for refuge and generating bodhicitta [NC—this latter part may refer to actually reciting the verse].

Meditate on guru yoga, and imagine that the lama sits on your crown. At this juncture, you should recite the requesting prayer to the Mahamudra lineage lamas. If you are in the process of reciting Lama Chöpa, then the Mahamudra requesting prayer is recited just before "source of good qualities..." [footnote]. If your practice is the Six-Session Guru Yoga, then it is recited at the end of the mandala [offering]. When reciting the Mahamudra requesting prayer, imagine that the lamas are abide in a vertical column, and that above the highest one sits

Vajradhara. The victor Vajradhara is in the normal aspect of Vajradhara, and then from Manjushri [181] up until your supremely kind root lama, you should imagine that all the lamas are in nature that particular lama, but in the aspect of Manjushri. Request to the lamas sequentially, starting with the top one. As you request sequentially, Vajradhara dissolves into Manjushri, and then Manjushri dissolves into Je Rinpoche who is in the aspect of Manjushri. Je Rinpoche dissolves into Tokden Jampal Gyatso. They successively dissolve into each other as in the manner of meditation [explained in the instructions], and finally dissolve into you kind root lama. Since your root lama is in the nature of combining all the lamas, make fervent requests to him. Finally, imagine that he also dissolves into you.

Having meditated on guru yoga in this way, then make fervent requests to the lama: "Please bless me to generate, in general, all the realizations of the grounds and paths," and because here calm abiding is what you are intending to actualize, "especially bless me to generate in my continuum the particular realization of calm abiding." [Imagine that] nectar descends and purifies you. Thinking, "I have now purified all the obstacles to actualizing calm abiding, and have been blessed to generate a special realization of calm abiding," make requests one hundred times. When the lama dissolves into you, [182] then you should have faith in and respect for the lama by recollecting his qualities. Recollecting his qualities, you have faith, and recollecting his kindness, respect. It should be to the point that through fervent faith and respect, tears fall from your eyes, and the hairs of your body stand on end. Imagine that finally the lama, out of great affection, is on the verge of dissolving into you.

By your thinking and requesting in this way, the lama dissolves into you. By his dissolving into you, it is said that you should imagine abiding in a state of "vanishing appearance" [NC—a state without hope or fear, a relaxed state]—that is, abide in a state of no other conceptions save being filled with bliss.

Without trace of fabrication

Of hopes, fears, so on, enter free

Of slightest flux, absorption in

State of vanishing appearance.

Through the cause of the objective support, your lama, dissolving into you, without any other discursive thoughts place your mind in equanimity, without the slightest fluctuation, in the state of vanishing appearance described above. [Don't allow] discursive thoughts of hope and worry to arise for even an instant—hopes of "in the future, I hope I will gain such renown, and so forth", and worries thinking "may such [harmful] conditions and tragedies not befall me".

[183] It's not stopping attention like

fainting or sleep: place the spy of

undistracted recollection.

As for the object of observation in this context: observe your clear and knowing mind, free of any trace of discursive thought. Your [concentration] must combine the two branches of intensity of clarity and single-pointed abiding; it is not simply a lack of any mental engagement at all, like thoughtless, heedless fainting and sleep. If you are to practice by observing the mind, you need to practice by relying again and again on an undistracted recollection [analyzing] that mind which is your objective support. When actualizing meditative stabilization, recollection is the most important factor. Since you need to actualize it by means of a recollection which does not forget the objective support and which continuously sustains it, the text says "*place the spy of recollection.*"

When placing the mind in absorption on meditative stabilization, the two greatest hindrances obstructing stabilization are laxity born of mental sinking, and excitement which scatters to other objects under the power of desire. For that reason, the text explains [below—pg. 188/84] "before laxity and excitement actually arise, you *prime* a mind which is a sentry—'introspection that checks whether laxity and excitement are arising'". So you need to make a kind of preparation. [184] Generally speaking, any virtuous mind needs to have both a factor of mental stability, and a factor of individual analysis. There is a manner of speaking: "from the factor of stability, it approximates calm abiding, and from the factor of individual analysis, it approximates special insight." Having in mind these similitudes of calm abiding and special insight, [the Buddha] said [in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought*] "generally speaking, all good qualities of the three vehicles are the result of calm abiding and special insight." [footnote—lam rim explanation].

### The Nature of Calm Abiding, and How to Actualize It

As for fully-qualified calm abiding, if you don't assemble the collection of causes, you will be unable to actualize it. Generally speaking, since the meditative stabilization of calm abiding arises in both Buddhist and non-Buddhists, it is an object of practice common to both of them. Thus, in terms of its nature, we cannot posit it as a path [footnote]. What do we need to do in order to actualize a fully-qualified calm abiding? We need to actualize it on the basis of the method of the nine mental settlings. The great texts speak of [a] initially relying on the eight applications which are antidotes abandoning the five faults, based on the seeing the benefits of calm abiding, and of [b] the manner of actualizing it by means of the six powers and four mental engagements [footnote]. If our practice accords with the explanations in the great texts, then we will get a fully-qualified calm abiding. If we are practicing in that way, occasionally a thought not wishing to actualize meditative stabilization will arise. [185] That thought arises through the power of laziness, so [to counter] it we need to generate faith which sees the good qualities of meditative stabilization. Since without achieving calm abiding we will be unable to generate clairvoyance, an uncontrived thought of renunciation, bodhicitta and so forth, then in order to generate realizations of the higher paths, we definitely need to attain calm abiding. So with the

thought "if I don't achieve calm abiding, there is no method [to achieve the path]", generate faith which sees the benefits of calm abiding. That faith induces an aspiration which strives to produce calm abiding. On that basis, one generates enthusiasm. On the basis of generating enthusiasm, one achieves the pliancy in which the body and mind can be utilized for virtue however one wishes. These four [faith, aspiration, enthusiasm and pliancy] are the antidotes to laziness.

Calm abiding needs first to observe a particular objective support, and then not forget it. If one forgets the objective support, it is the fault of forgetting the instructions, so as an antidote to that, one generates stable recollection and introspection. If while absorbed single-pointedly on the object of observation laxity or excitement arise, that is a fault. If when laxity and excitement arise one does not make recourse to applying an antidote, it is the fault of not applying the antidote. Even though one is already free of laxity and excitement, if one still makes recourse to an antidote [186] it will harm the factor of stability, so one must abide without applying an antidote. The antidotes of the first [fault], laziness, are the four—*faith* and so forth. The antidote of forgetting the instructions is *recollection*. *Introspection* [is] the sentry who checks whether or not laxity and excitement are arising. When laxity and excitement arise, one *applies the antidote* to pacify them. When one is free of laxity and excitement, one *does not apply the antidote*. These eight are called "the eight applications which are antidotes for abandoning." [Note that the latter two are technically called "intention" and "equanimity"]

For the purpose of abandoning the five faults, one relies on the eight applications which are antidotes, and on that basis [achieves] "the nine means of settling the mind." First one places the mind on an object of observation and abides there. [2] Next, one abides for a little longer duration. [3] Next, when the mind is distracted, one is immediately able to draw it back. [4] Then, by not losing the objective support, one is not distracted. [5] Next one pacifies gross laxity and excitement. [6] Then one pacifies subtle laxity and excitement. [7] Then laxity and excitement do not arise at all. [8] Next, at the beginning of the session, by relying ever so slightly on recollection and introspection, one is able to complete the session successfully without distraction. [9] Then without any need for effort, spontaneous accomplishment arises. These are called "the nine means of settling the mind."

[187] In terms of the object of observation for calm abiding, some non-Buddhists even actualize calm abiding observing sticks, stones and so forth, so there is no certainty in terms of the objective support. Generally speaking, if a person practices by observing something that is compatible with his disposition and inclination, and with which he has familiarity, it will be easier to actualize calm abiding. A story goes that in old times there was a cattle herdsman who, when practicing for meditative stabilization, practiced using various other objects but could not actualize it. Later when he practiced by observing a bullhorn, he was able to achieve it. Based on that, [we can see that] if one practices calm abiding by taking as an objective support something for which one has strong familiarity, it will be easier to actualize it. If Buddhists observe horns and so forth and practice calm abiding, beyond merely actualizing calm abiding there is no great purpose. If one observes the holy body of the Buddha and actualizes it, then since the objective

support is the holy body of the Buddha, if one actualizes a good calm abiding, afterwards there will be a significant difference when one meditates on a deity. Since one is observing the holy body of the Buddha, one will accumulate vast merit, so most [Buddhist] practitioners of calm abiding practice observing the holy body of the Buddha as the objective support. In this context, previous lamas of this [lineage of] Mahamudra instruction have said "when meditating on Mahamudra, practice by observing the mind." [188] If a person practices observing the mind by observing the interrupted intervals of the five sense consciousness, which sometimes arise and sometimes don't, he will not actualize calm abiding. Instead, one practices by observing a mental consciousness. Specifically, it is the innermost mind which has continued uninterruptedly from the last life. This is *not* the subtle innermost mind [from the completion stage of tantra], but a kind of coarse innermost mind [NC explains—it is subtle compared to our ordinary thinking mind, subtle according the sutra system, but coarse compared to the innermost mind in tantra]. Observe this and actualize [calm abiding].

Thus, by making fervent requests to the lama, the lama dissolves into you. From his dissolving, all discursive thoughts and grasping at appearances cease, and the mind abiding in the space of vanishing appearance [manifests]. Furthermore, "thoughts of hope and fear, what you've done before, don't forget": by not calling to mind discursive thoughts of things you have already done, "don't forget" [NC—don't forget the state of equanimity beyond hope and fear]. By not engaging in hope and worry thinking "what if this happened in the future?", do not anticipate the future. Even [regarding] the present, do not fall under the power of desire and attachment; the mind is clear and knowing. It is said that one should enter absorption taking as an object of observation the clear, knowing mind when it does not apprehend clearly any object at all.

Prime alertness for movements of mind.

Focus tightly, look nakedly

at nature of the knowing and clear.

The mind is as though without anything to obstruct it; whatever object you observe, [189] the mind does not even stay on it a little, and you are unable to find an objective support. If you are able to recognize such an objective support as this clear and knowing mind, you have discovered an objective support. Alternatively, if you meditate by observing something like the holy body of a deity, it will be like the mind has something to obstruct it, and you have thereby found an objective support. If you practice by observing the holy body of a deity, and especially if you practice by observing the holy body of the teacher Shakyamuni, at first all the features of mouth, hands and so forth may not clearly appear. But it is said that if you initially can have your mind abide on a yellow shaft, then you should actualize a factor of stability on that basis. If you get your mind to abide on the clear and knowing mind, then you shouldn't immediately make it more clear and so forth. Rather, from within that state, you should use recollection to be able to hold [the mind there], and with recollection *focus tightly*, and observe while staying single-pointedly.

At that time, if other discursive thoughts which are improper mental engagement arise, then they will prevent your ability to see the nature of the mind to which any object at all is suitable to appear. This nature of the mind is like the vacuity of space, without anything obscuring it at all. So as for your inability to see that, it is on account of these discursive thoughts. [190] Since you need to recognize and put to rest whatever discursive thoughts arise, first of all you need to do something to recognize the discursive thoughts. Above the text read, "Prime alertness for movements of mind." It is saying to place observation single-pointedly on the basic space or the mere generality of the mind [without any particular object of apprehension]. You must apply stable recollection and not forget the object of observation which you have previously ascertained.

"The manner of sustaining concentration"—in short, it is only referring to the manner of sustaining it by using recollection not to forget the object of observation. It is said that if you get a stable recollection, then it's as though introspection also will naturally arise.

Whatever discursive thoughts rise:

Recognize them for what they are.

Whatever discursive thoughts should arise, you should use introspection to recognize them, and then put them to rest by applying the antidote.

Or like a duelist, cut off

Right away all thoughts that arise.

In old times, powerful people would have both archers and sword-wielders. Of these two, the sword-wielder is called a "duelist". No matter how many arrows the archer fires, the sword-wielder would spin his sword and chop away all the arrows, such that they would not strike his body. [191] [Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen] uses this as an example. In a similar way, when you are absorbed on the clear and knowing mind, you should not simultaneously stir up discursive thought, but should stop it. He says that if you pacify discursive thoughts that arise, then you should look at the nature of the clear and knowing mind, and with recollection not forget it.

Having cut, when mind rests, relax

Let go, don't lose recollection.

If you have finished putting to rest other discursive thoughts, then for the time being place the mind on that nature of clarity, and apply an intense recollection not to forget it. At this point, you loosen the exertion of arousing an antidote, so for the moment you relax. Although the mind is focused inwards and the body is relaxed, still the mind must apprehend the object with a tight mode of apprehension. Furthermore, the mind is not excessively tight; you are relaxed, and

without losing recollection, although you relaxingly let go, do not actually let go of the mode of apprehension.

Machik Labdkyi Drolma [NC says same as Machik Labdron] and the great Brahmin Saraha explain:

"Focus tightly, relax, let go:

That is where you place the mind."

Such has been said, and furthermore:

"When mind bound in tangle lets go,

Without a doubt it frees itself."

As said, let go, but do not drift.

Generally if the mode of apprehension is too tight, [192] it will harm the factor of stability, while if you relax and let go too much, it will harm the factor of clarity. So a *doha*, and Machik, say "Focus tightly, relax, let go," and "when...lets go, without a doubt it frees itself." Based on these explanations that one needs to let go, earlier Tibetans would say "when practicing for meditative stabilization, you need to relax your mind." "Doha" means "spiritual song." [footnote—see note in book]

### Teaching the need for a Spacious Mind where the Mode of Apprehension is not Lost

If your mind is too relaxed inwardly, laxity will arise. On the basis of subtle laxity arising, the factor of stability will become slightly stable. But because laxity would arise if the mind's mode of apprehension was too relaxed, holy beings of old did not say "you need a relaxed mode of apprehension." The Kadampa lamas would say that when you meditate, "Take a long view; don't squeeze yourself." All these sayings have the same meaning. Well then, what are they saying? "Tangle" is saying that you should get rid of the claustrophobic mind, and not think "I need to accomplish it right now!" Rather, you need to take a long view, thinking "if I practice slowly and steadily, I will accomplish it."

[193] This skillful means is the most important thing at all times. For example, even when you are practicing for calm abiding, you should not tighten your body and mind with fierce exertion, thinking "if I achieved calm abiding right now, how wonderful that would be!" Rather, "take a long view" means that you relax on the basis of knowing how to remember the past and thinking about what will come in the future [NC—this means keeping a broad view, seeing the gradual progression of things, not getting so caught up in the present moment]. You think, "if I relax, slowly, slowly I will be able to generate calm abiding." Moreover, whatever virtuous activity we engage in, while doing it, it is especially important to think like that. There are some

people who have the hope, "in a short time, I will swiftly generate realizations in my continuum", and then for a few days they apply strong effort to think about death and impermanence, karmic cause and effect, renunciation, bodhicitta and so forth. When merely doing that doesn't generate realizations, they say "it's not happening", and give up. If you don't do like that, and instead practice slowly, slowly by taking a long view, you will reach accomplishment.

For example, Longdöl Lama Rinpoche [footnote] said, "for eleven or twelve years, I sustained meditation. However, on top of my previous state of mind, no positive addition arose in my mind at all. Later, by making effort in conjunction with accumulation and purification, realizations arose in my continuum." [194] Likewise, Khedrub Norsang Gyatso [footnote] was somebody who attained the state of Buddhahood in this very life. He also said, "I meditated for fourteen years, achieved other's benefit, and so forth." We also should not contemplate for just a few days and then give up thinking, "now, I won't accomplish anything." Furthermore, in previous times there was one lama who stayed in Nyung Nä retreat his entire life, and completed over twenty-thousand Nyung Nä's. One of his expert disciples asked him, "if somebody performs so many Nyung Nä's, realizations must arise, so what realizations have you had?" He replied, "although you are renowned as an expert, you don't know how to apply reasoning. I don't have any hope of swiftly generating realizations right away. From now until I die, I will stay in Nyung Nä. I hope that in the future life, I will again stay in Nyung Nä, and that slowly, slowly, with the Arya Avalokiteshvara looking after me, realizations will come. Beyond that, I don't hold out hope that I will quickly have such realizations." We definitely should think over these great life stories. The meaning of the saying, "tighten your mind inwards, and stay relaxed" has something substantial to it.

[195] Whatever thought comes, when you look

At its nature, it vanishes:

Vacuity dawns. Likewise too

When still, you check, unobscured clear

Empty is vivid wakefulness.

"Seeing still and moving are mixed."

Whatever thought comes, don't block: know

Its movement. Place in its nature,

Like the example of a bird

That flies, imprisoned on a boat.

If discursive thoughts arise, then if you examine and analyze, "from what cause did this arise? What sort of nature does it have?", then sometimes it will be like the thoughts vanish by

themselves. So, it says you should do like that. Moreover, it is saying that when discursive thoughts arise, you should not immediately stop them; by examining their nature, some will stop by themselves. For example,

"Just as a crow flies from a ship

Circles each side, again alights."

By practicing in just that way...

The text explains an example for the way discursive thoughts are pacified by examining their nature. If from a ship in the middle of the ocean you send out a bird, then because there is nowhere to land in the ocean, after some time it will arrive back at the ship. Likewise by examining the nature of discursive thoughts, sometimes discursive thoughts will stop by themselves. At that time, you should place your mind in equipoise on the clear and knowing nature, as before.

[196] When you examine the nature of discursive thoughts, then discursive thoughts calm down. The mind becomes clear, unobscured by anything, like a vacuity. A "vivid wakefulness" appears, where any object is suitable to appear. When discursive thoughts calm down, such a thing appears. Likewise, when the mind abiding without fluctuation, if you look to see how is that mind, what you get is a vacuity, a clear appearance of vivid wakefulness where there is no distinction of past and future. When discursive thoughts arise, when you look at their nature, afterwards that vacuity appears, and when the mind abides without fluctuation, by looking to see how that mind is, you get a vacuity, a mind of clearly appearing vivid wakefulness, with no distinction of past and future. In that context, great meditators use the term "mixing abiding and movement." Observing that mind, apply single-pointed placement. At that time, you need a tight mode of apprehension "endowed with intensity of the factor of clarity." However, if the mode of apprehension is *too* tight, then the mind needs to focus forcefully, and there is a danger that the mind will be unable to stay on the object of observation, and will scatter to other objects. Since such a danger is there, you should relax your mind a bit. But again if you relax too much, the mind will sink and laxity will come. Laxity has many kinds, both gross and subtle. When somebody has intensity of the clarity factor but the force of the focus is just slightly relaxed, [197] it is a sign that laxity has arrived [and the intensity has waned]. As for that, you need to know from your own experience that when the tightness is too much, excitement arises and you need to relax slightly. Also when relaxation is too much, laxity arises and you need to tighten a bit, and so forth. You should know tight and relaxed modes of apprehension by analyzing your own experience.

### Explanation of How to Place the Mind

The text speaks of six ways of placing the mind. When placing your mind on an object, what are you supposed to do? If you practice by means of the six ways of placing the mind, it becomes like [following] the king of instructions. What kind of thing is that?

[1] Place it like a sun free of clouds.

[These verses are not from the root text, but rather from phyag chen rang 'grel pg. 85] A sun free of clouds is clear, and likewise when you observe the nature of the mind which is clear and knowing, it is free of the clouds of discursive thought, laxity and excitement, and clear and lucid like the sun.

[2] Like great garuda soars in the sky.

When the "great garuda", the king of birds, moves through the sky, it does not need to flap its wings like small birds do while flying. Without having to exert much effort, it can naturally fly great distances under its own power. Likewise, if the mind is too tight, excitement arises, and through excessive relaxation laxity arises. So without excessive tightness or relaxation, [198] you apply "spacious focus" as was explained above ["don't squeeze yourself on 192/87. NC calls it "a steady, natural focus that lasts, rather than over-pushing]: not beyond the bounds of recollection and introspection, and with an intensity of the factor of clarity, let it naturally sustain itself.

[3] Place it like the great ocean's depth.

Although huge waves are there on the surface of the great ocean, they cannot disturb it from its depths. Likewise when the mind is placed in equanimity, even though subtle discursive thoughts arise, they cannot incite gross conceptual thought. So you should do like that, where gross [thoughts] cannot disturb you.

[4] Like small boy looks at a temple.

When a small child looks at the paintings in a temple, he doesn't inspect all the subtle details of the painting. Rather, he will look without being distracted from the gross picture. Likewise when placing the mind on the object of observation, don't inspect whatever objects appear to the five senses. Instead, you should place your observation upon the mere clarity and knowing of the mind.

[5] Like flying bird's traces in sky.

When a bird flies in the sky, we can't point to something and say "these are the traces of flight." Likewise whatever feelings arise—pleasure, suffering, or equanimity—an ordinary person will continuously react with attachment, hatred, and dullness. Whenever he experiences pleasure, he will become attached. When experiencing suffering, he will get angry. [199] When experiencing neither pleasure nor suffering, dull ignorance will arise. However, in this context when you are training in meditative stabilization, then whatever feelings arise—pleasure, suffering, or

equanimity—do not allow yourself to be under the control of attachment and hatred. The text says you need to place your mind single-pointedly on the object of observation.

[6] Place it like a spread of cloth.

That is, like the smooth surface of a spread of cloth. After you cut up fleece and lay it out evenly, it is smooth and relaxed. Likewise with the mind placed in equanimity, it is free of the roughness of laxity and excitement and manifest afflictions of the three poisons. Since laxity and excitement are the greatest fault, it explained that you should not allow laxity, excitement and other discursive thoughts to arise.

What kind of outcome do you get from meditating in this way?

Absorption, nature unobscured

By anything, lucid and clear.

Not made of any form at all:

Vacuity like the sky and

Vivid since anything can dawn.

By meditating on the basis of the nine means of settling the mind, you reach the ninth mental settling. Observing the mind which is in the nature of equipoise, [you see] that "mind" is not established as form, [200] so it is lucid and clear. It is a vacuity, like the sky. If it meets an object, then like an image appearing in a mirror, it is a vivid wakefulness where that object can appear. When it abides without meeting an object, it is difficult to identify what it is and is not, so it is said that experiences can arise [see note in book]. When you achieve that ninth mental settling, the mind is free of the faults of laxity and excitement. You are able to stay in that equipoise for a long time. A clear experience arises such that you are able to count all the particles in a wall, from the subtlest up. However, it is said that if it not supported by the bliss of pliancy, then it is not actual calm abiding. [As for] "the bliss of pliancy": if your mind and body become serviceable for whatever virtuous activity you like, you have achieved pliancy of body and mind. On that basis, bodily bliss arises. Bodily bliss causes mental bliss to arise. When that mental bliss is free of the faults of excessive fluctuation and supports concentration, it has become a fully-characterized calm abiding.

### Explanation of the Conventional Nature of the Mind

What is the nature of this calm abiding which takes the mind as an object?

“Indeed this mind's reality

Is seen directly with insight.

But ‘it's this’ you can't hold, or say.

What dawns, don't hold, but place in ease.

This is instruction bestowed for

Holding Buddhahood in your palm."

These days so say with one mind most

Meditators of the Snow Land.

But "This method's great skillful means

For beginners to settle the mind,

And introduce mind's concealer truth."

So say I, Chokyi Gyaltzen.

As was said before, the nature of such a mind is lucid and clear. It is a vacuity, similar to the sky, and is clear, vivid wakefulness. By seeing that nature of the mind, these days many great meditators, when introduced to this nature of the mind, [say] "I have seen the final reality of the mind". They say that all the explanations that teach that are the instructions bestowed to hold onto until Buddhahood/for holding the spark of Buddhahood, and are the instructions for practicing for Buddhahood.

According to his own perception, Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen says that this is not a mind realizing emptiness, and he thereby posits that the nature of the mind includes both a conventional nature [translated as "concealer" nature above] and an ultimate nature. He calls the emptiness of the mind, which is the emptiness of inherent existence, the "ultimate nature of the mind", and calls the mind's unique mode of existence its "conventional nature." [202] What appears to the absorption [explained] above which is placed in equanimity on the mind is the conventional nature of the mind, not the ultimate nature. So he is saying that merely on the basis of that, one cannot achieve the state of a Buddha. There is no need for me to offer further explanation.

As you are sustaining the object of observation, you shouldn't think "I have achieved calm abiding." [In the context of my explanation of the generation stage] yesterday, you needed to imagine "realizations have arisen", and meditate. [But you shouldn't do so in this present context]. Without forgetting the manner of actualizing calm abiding which observes the mind as explained in this context, think "I need an unmistakable manner of actualizing like this." Thinking thus, if an opportunity to actualize actual calm abiding arises, you should actualize in that way. [NC—the point being, Rinpoche understands that most people don't have the opportunity to practice fully at present, so he is not saying "you must do so now". Rather, if you get a chance in the future, should practice in this way].

The Mahamudra commentary composed by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen is called *Clear Lamp*, and there are also notes on that by Ngulchu Dharmabhadra called *Dispelling Mistakes*. It is good if you can take a look at these two. Of the two commentaries which have already been translated into Chinese [footnote—this section of the teaching was given in a Chinese speaking country. See note in book], one is the commentary by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen, and the other is the notes composed by Ngulchu Dharmabhadra.

"Ngulchu Dharmabhadra" said that stayed [in retreat] practicing for fifty-two years. [203] Since meditators have the greatest familiarity with how to meditate, you should definitely look at those [commentaries].

Of the three—preliminaries, actual explanation, and concluding activities—the actual explanation has two: mantra system Mahamudra, and sutra system Mahamudra. I have already explained the mantra system Mahamudra. In the context of explaining sutra system Mahamudra, [the student] must first actualize calm abiding and afterwards [the teacher] must explain emptiness. We have already covered the means of actualizing calm abiding.

"Mind" is a "vacuity" which is not established as a physical form. It is a "clarity" free of obscurations. It is a "vivid wakefulness" to which any object at all is suitable to appear. One is introduced to such a mind, and taking that mind as an object of observation actualizes a calm abiding. One does so with an unmistakable mode of maintaining recollection, which makes recourse to recollection by means of possessing an irreversible factor of stability and an intense clarity. The object of observation of calm abiding is the mind called "vacuity", "clarity", and "vivid wakefulness"—that is, the conventional nature of the mind.

### Explanation of the Ultimate Nature of the Mind

From here, the text explains the introduction to the ultimate nature of the nature, the mind's final reality.

And now, the way to introduce

The final nature of the mind.

I shall set forth the spoken advice

Of my root lama who dispels

The murk confusing my mind and

Is the wisdom of all Buddhas [Sangye Yeshe—lama's name Footnote]

Showing a guise as saffron-clad.

Here is a stanza which is a promise to compose. Although [Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen] already inserted a promise to compose at the beginning of the main body of the text [stanza 2/pg.

52], he was making a promise to compose in the context of the introduction to the conventional nature of the mind. The present one is a promise to compose because he is going to introduce us to the final reality, the ultimate nature of the mind. Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen's lama was called Khedrub Sangye Yeshe. Since one must view one's lama as the Buddha, he says "the exalted wisdom of all the Buddhas, condensed into one, takes on the aspect of a saffron-robed." Because all the good qualities in Panchen's holy mind arose in dependence on his lama, he says, "Here I will set forth the oral instructions of my root lama, who dispels all the darkness of unknowing."

Here, the manner of introducing has two divisions: 1) the general explanation, and 2) a teaching which condenses the essence. There are also sayings in sutra such as: "if you subdue your mind, you are a Buddha, so don't search for the Buddha elsewhere", and "because the mind itself is the Buddha, do not search for the Buddha elsewhere!" Because these sayings can be a basis for misunderstanding, he "explains the divisions by means of introducing to [the nature of] the mind" [NC—Because these sayings contain a basis for misunderstanding, there are those who say they indicate the divisions of the means of introducing to the nature of the mind]. [205] The meaning of "because the mind itself is the Buddha, do not search for the Buddha elsewhere!", according to the sutra tradition, is that the final reality of the mind is the basis for accomplishing Buddhahood, for it is called "Buddha-lineage"/Buddhagotra [footnote—often called "Buddha-nature"]. Having in mind that when it is freed from obscurations, it becomes the nature of the Buddha, the sutra says "the mind itself is the Buddha. You should not look for the 'Buddha' somewhere else". So it is saying, "the basis for accomplishing Buddhahood is there in your continuum. There is no need to search for it somewhere else."

According to the mantra tradition, it is as I explained above. If through skillful means you recognize the "innermost simultaneously-born clear light", then on the basis of that you will achieve the state of a Buddha very quickly. If that clear light of death is lost in ordinariness, it becomes the cause of samsara, so the mind is said to be "the root of both samsara and nirvana." According to mantra, the saying "if you realize the mind, you are a Buddha" is that if you recognize the innermost simultaneously-born clear light, and are able to mix the mother and son clear lights, then you will actualize the higher and higher paths and become a Buddha. So that is the meaning of "if you realize the mind, [206] you are a Buddha" in accordance with the thought of all the sutras and tantras.

If you recognize the final reality of the mind, that is the actual meaning of "to have cut the root basis of the mind." There are many ways of interpreting that statement. Some interpret it to mean, "Do not cut afterwards [i.e. do not re-examine the past] with a mind endowed with aspects. With a mind [viewing] the future, do not anticipate things before [they occur]. Do not sharpen the blade of the present mind." That is, one should abide without allowing any conceptual thought to arise at all. There are also those who say, "vacuity, clarity, suitability for any object at all to appear, vivid wakefulness: before that, place the mind. If you do like that, you will see the naked nature of the mind, and that is introduction to the mind." Others say, "You are

introduced to the mind. Having been introduced to the mind, the realization spoken of in "if you subdue the mind, you are a Buddha" will arise. If you are introduced to the mind, then through that you do not need to do any other work of adopting virtue and discarding negativity." Although there are some who talk like that, they are mistaken. Also it is mistaken to say "based on seeing the final reality of the mind, one need not have regard for the results of karma."

Why is it mistaken? If a person has the realization of emptiness, then emptiness and dependent arising will become mutually supportive. [207] Furthermore, taking "empty" as a reason should increase one's faith in dependent arising, and taking "dependently arisen" as a reason should sharpen one's ascertainment of emptiness. If you realize emptiness, it should *increase* your regard for the results of karma.

For example, Jetsun Milarepa achieved Buddhahood in this very life. He said, "from the ultimate point of view, there is no Buddha, and also no sentient being." He was not saying that in general there is no Buddha, but that from the standpoint of true establishment there is no Buddha and so forth. He explained that the Buddha himself said "from the conventional point of view, all of these exist." On account of his saying "from the ultimate standpoint, it does not exist", there were some people who denigrated him, saying "Milarepa is a nihilist." When they said, "he is a nihilist", Jetsun replied "If you want to know whether or not I am a nihilist, look at my behavior." His meaning was "I am not a nihilist."

Well then, what is the point? It is said that some people may be householders, but their level of regard for the results of karma, and their manner of guarding ethical discipline, is superior to those gone forth. In short, if by realizing the view one need not have regard for the results of karma, then Jetsun Milarepa would not need to have regard for the results of karma. As for Milarepa, the chief of all the accomplished ones of the Tibetan snow land, [208] although he realized the view, he held the results of karma in high regard. So those ways of speaking I talked about before are mistaken.

So, as for our own system of how to practice Mahamudra, and our own system of the manner of introduction to the final reality of the mind: when you first realize emptiness, it is profoundly meaningful, and it is difficult to realize. With regards to that, from the perspective of appearances to common trainees, at first the Blessed One stayed for forty-nine days without teaching the Dharma. At that time he said,

Profound, peaceful, free of elaboration, clear light, uncompounded:

A nectar-like phenomenon, such a thing I have discovered!

Whomever I teach to, they will be unable to understand.

So I will not communicate. I will abide in the forest.

By saying "although I have discovered a profound phenomenon, no matter to whom I teach it, they will be unable to understand. So for the time being, I won't teach this thing to others, and will stay here," he indicated that it is difficult to realize. If you don't realize it, you cannot be liberated from samsara, so without realizing it there is no method. Furthermore, the Buddha said that every Dharma he taught was for the purpose of liberating trainees from samsara, so he indicated that in order to free yourself from samsara, you definitely need to realize emptiness. As for the excellent teachings of the Buddha, some of them directly teach emptiness and cause trainees to enter into [realizing] emptiness. [209] There are others which do not directly teach emptiness, but which indirectly cause trainees to enter into the path of realizing selflessness. [Shantideva] said in *Entering the Bodhisattva Deeds*,

As for all of these branches,

The sage spoke for wisdom's purpose.

He is saying that the Buddha's teaching the other of the six perfections—giving, guarding ethics, practicing patience, generating enthusiasm, absorption into meditative stabilization and so forth—was only for the purpose of generating the sixth perfection, the mind realizing emptiness.

Jowo Je [Atisha] said [text?]:

Heaps of Dharma, eighty-thousand

And four, all that has been spoken:

Flows down to this reality.

He is saying that the teacher [Buddha's] explaining the 84,000 heaps of Dharma all comes down to the purpose of realizing emptiness, which is like the place where they all descend. Acharya Kamalashila explained in a similar way in his *Stages of Meditation*. The intention of all of the great Indian scholars comes down to one. As for the most profound view, it is the view of the Consequence School, which is that all phenomena are empty of being established by way of their own character. "In order to be liberated from samsara, [210] you must realize emptiness" is saying that you need to realize emptiness as it is explained here. By teaching that directly, [the Buddha] caused [trainees] to enter into [realizing] emptiness. There are some cases where he did not directly say "empty of being established by way of their own character", but rather [explained in accordance with] the various ways of accepting selflessness of the four schools of tenets [footnote]. In the end, he only explained these as methods for realizing selflessness as it is accepted by the Middle Way Consequence School. He explained two selflessnesses: the selflessness of persons, and the selflessness of phenomena. In the Middle Way Consequence system, the "selflessness of persons" has a different basis of negation [the person], but as for the object of negation, it is no different than the object of negation of the selflessness of phenomena [footnote]. There are four proponents of tenets: Middle Way, Mind-Only, Followers of Sutra, and Great Exposition School.

Among these four, some are superior to others, and the supreme one is Middle Way. Below that is Mind-Only, below that, Followers of Sutra, and finally Great Exposition School. The Middle Way School also is subdivided into the Autonomist and Consequentialist schools. All school from the Automists down accept the selflessness of persons to be no more than the person's emptiness of being a substantial self in the sense of being self-sufficient. Beyond that, they are unable to negate the person's being inherently established. [211] The Great Exposition School and the Follower of Sutra do not accept anything more subtle than that—they do not accept a selflessness of phenomena. The Mind-Only School does assert a selflessness of phenomena, but beyond the emptiness of duality which is empty of a substantial separation of form and the valid cognition apprehending form, they do not assert an emptiness of true establishment. They accept that emptiness of duality as being truly established.

The Middle Way Autonomy School accepts that while there is no true establishment, there is establishment by way of one's own character. They accept that if there was no establishment by way of one's own character, or establishment from one's own side, and if a cause did not from its own side have the power to generate a result, then results would not arise from causes. Moreover, on the basis of a particular cause, we could not say "achieved liberation" or "achieved the state of all-knowing". If things were not established by way of their own character, then the cause would not from its own side have the power to generate a result. In that case, all the sayings such as "from the side of the cause, the result arose", and "one the basis of that cause, he achieved the state of liberation", beyond mere mental presumption would become meaningless. Because it is unfeasible for there to be no cause and effect in reality, there is established by way of one's own character. In the end, as the reason [for why this is so], they posit "because causes arise from results." However, they do say that true establishment is completely non-existent.

As for the Mind-Only School, as the reason for why all compounded phenomena are truly established, [212] they posit that causes give rise to effects.

The Middle Way Consequentialists say, "there is no establishment by way of one's own character. If there *was* establishment by way of one's own character, then it would be unfeasible for causes to give rise to results. Because causes give rise to results, they must not be established by way of their own character." Thus, the Consequentialists go deeper into reasoning and, taking what the lower schools posit as the reason for establishment by way of one's own character, posit it as the reason there is *not* establishment by way of one's own character.

The various ways of accepting selflessness of the higher and lower tenets only become methods for realizing emptiness, either directly or indirectly. First, in order to reverse the imprint of adhering to a self-sufficient substantial self that comes from habituation with the view of Tirthikas, [the Buddha] initially taught the mere emptiness of a substantial self in the sense of being self-sufficient. For those whose minds have become superior through habituation to that, he gradually taught emptiness of duality, emptiness of true existence, and emptiness of

establishment by way of one's own character. So each earlier tenet becomes a method for realizing the view of the latter one, and in this way it is said "directly or indirectly, all of it comes down to emptiness." In short, all Dharma the sage explained was only spoken as a method of realizing selflessness. Why did he need to teach in that way? Without realizing selflessness, one cannot be liberated from samsara, [213] and through seeing selflessness one will be liberated from samsara. With those points in mind, he taught as he did.

### Teaching that we need to Realize Selflessness

Why do we need to realize selflessness in order to be liberated from samsara? Merely through calm abiding, we will be unable to escape from samsara. Even people who are able to stay in absorption on calm abiding for many eons are unable, through that, to abandon samsara. Furthermore, the story goes that when our teacher [Buddha] came to this world, there was a Tirthika named Udraka Ramaputra [footnote]. Ramaputra entered into absorption on calm abiding, and thought "now my mind has achieved liberation. So he stayed in absorption. While he remained in absorption for a long time, this Tirthika let his matted locks flow freely. A rat began chewing on his locks, causing him to arise from absorption. Seeing the rat chewing on his locks, he became angry. Through the force of his anger, his calm abiding degenerated. Because his calm abiding degenerated, he generated the wrong view thinking, "alas, there is no liberation after all!", and was thereby born in hell.

Merely by actualizing calm abiding, one cannot achieve liberation. However, we ought to actualize calm abiding, and using calm abiding as a basis, generate the wisdom realizing selflessness. Using that wisdom as the direct antidote to the apprehension of a self, we can then achieve liberation. For that reason, in order to attain liberation, we do in fact need calm abiding.

[214] What kind of thing is this "concentration which causes the attainment of liberation"? From the *King of Concentrations Sutra*,

If you check as selfless all things

Then meditate as you have checked:

That's cause to gain result, nirvana.

Through other causes, peace will not come.

It is saying that on the basis of the wisdom realizing selflessness, one achieve liberation; no other cause will bring about liberation. As for that selflessness, according to the teaching of Hashang [Mahayana—footnote], "be it a wicked thought, or a wholesome thought—you should not allow any thoughts to arise at all. Rather, you should abide without engaging your mind with anything whatsoever. If you do like that, you will achieve liberation." This is incorrect. "If you analyze every phenomenon as selfless..." is saying that in order to achieve liberation, you need to realize selflessness. In order to realize that, you need to analyze with the wisdom of individual

examination. If at the end of analysis you see the meaning of emptiness, you need to meditate on that and achieve liberation. Apart from that, no other cause at all will give rise to liberation. So it is clearly saying that you need to meditate on the basis of having analyzed with the wisdom of individual examination. Although there are many different views, mainly if you take into practice the view which is most concordant with your individual mind, there is the greatest advantage and least danger. For example, if you have a strong inclination for the Mind-Only view, [215] for the time being you should meditate on the Mind-Only view. For the purpose of realizing this view, if you make effort, accumulate merit, purify negativities, and repeatedly make prayers to realize the unmistakable view, then one day when you meet with the right conditions, you will come to realize the Middle Way view. If instead you right away [take on] the Consequentialist view, saying "all phenomena lack establishment by way of their own character", then there is a danger you will start to think "no phenomenon exists at all. Karmic cause and effect is also-non-existent", and will fall into the extreme of annihilation. When we talk about the Consequentialist view, saying "no establishment by way of its own characteristics", then fear does not even arise in our minds. Legend has it that in earlier times, when our teacher [Buddha] lived, if he explained emptiness to somebody who was not a suitable vessel for teaching emptiness, then their mind would not tolerate it. They would vomit blood, and die on the spot.

For that reason, in the advice to bodhisattvas, it says that you should not teach emptiness to the untrained. In this context, we should explain the view in accordance with the Consequentialist assertion. [According to that school], selflessness has both the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena, and these two do not have any difference in terms of coarseness and subtlety. However, in line with the basis [of negation being different], [216] the selflessness of persons is easier to realize, so I will explain that first. "Selflessness of persons" is said to be the non-establishment by way of one's own character on the basis of a person. In order to realize the basis, a person, you need to realize the "I" which is posited on the basis of any one of the five aggregates which are the basis of the self. Taking dependent relativity which is dependence on labeling as a reason, you established selflessness, and so if you realize the person, you should realize a gross imputed existent. If something was truly established, it would have to be established as self-sustaining without relying on anything at all. If you realize the person, you need to realize its dependence on the aggregates which are the basis of the self, so it is said to be easier to realize [the selflessness of person] in line with the basis.

### Explanation of the Manner of Identifying the Object of Negation

Without recognizing the object of negation, you will be unable to establish the subtle emptiness which is the negation of that. So in order to come to certainty about the selflessness of persons, you first need to identify the self which is the object of negation. Having identified that, you must refute away that self which is the object of negation, and establish selflessness, so the self which is established from the side of the object is called the "self which is the object of

negation." When identifying the object of negation, you must identify an object of negation of an appropriate magnitude. If you do not, and instead negate too much, it is improper because you will negate all existents and fall into the extreme of annihilation. Alternatively, if your object of negation is too narrow—if you mentally fabricate an object of negation, [217] then call the negation of that "selflessness"—then beyond merely negating something you yourself have created, you will not negate the actual object of negation. So you definitely need to identify the object of negation. The apprehension of a self, the apprehending of "I", and the apprehension which thinks "I"—these have three different modes of apprehending their object [footnote—not that the three are themselves different; they are synonyms.] 1) The mind which apprehends that very "I"—which is qualified by being established from its own side—as though it existed in a sturdy, self-sufficient way, without depending on anything else. 2) The mind which apprehends an "I" which is qualified by being not truly established and not existing apart from mere imputation over there by names and concepts. 3) The mode of apprehension which apprehends by [merely] thinking "I" without qualification as either truly established or not truly established. [footnote—explained how "qualified" does not mean the mind itself, but a supporting mind. Give reference to passage in drang nges]

The [third] mode of apprehension which thinks "I" without qualification as either true or false is the mode of apprehending the "I" which exists in [mere] name [NC—ordinary people also have this third mode]. The "I" which accords with that mode of apprehension does exist. For example, it is the "I" in the context of "I eat." "I wear clothes." "I practice Dharma." "I achieve liberation." The "I", in accordance with the [first] mode of apprehension which apprehends the "I" qualified as truly established, is not established and so we must negate it. The [second] mode of apprehending within the qualification of not being truly established is only the way somebody would apprehend it after they have gained an understanding of selflessness. A person who has not gained such an understanding would not have such a mode of apprehension. [Question—would they have the third one?]

The mind which apprehends the self as truly established is called "apprehension of the self of persons", [218] and it is the root of samsara. It exists when somebody is bound by the apprehension of a self of phenomena which apprehends the aggregates to be truly established. These two [apprehension of self of persons, and apprehension of self of phenomena] are equal in being the root of samsara [footnote—say what that means]. In order to apprehend the person as true, one first needs to apprehend the aggregates as true. The reason is that in order for the person to appear as an object of mind, first the aggregates need to appear as an object of mind, and then an "I" which is imputed on the basis of those aggregates appears. Before the person even appears to the mind, as soon as the aggregates appear as an object of mind, through the force of strong prior habituation to the apprehension of true existence, one apprehends the aggregates as true. So before one apprehends the person as true, one apprehends the aggregates as true [footnote—mere assenting to appearance is "apprehension as true"; needn't think "it's true"].

What is the mode of existence of all phenomena? Whatever phenomenon there is, it exists merely by being imputed over there by names, and posited over there by the force of concepts; the phenomenon does not have even a mere atom of existence from its own side. The principles of actions and agents for all phenomena are logically sound, so in general they do exist. If they were established not as merely posited by the force of names and concepts, that would become an object of negation, so their mode of existence does not go beyond existence which is posited by the force of names and concepts. For that reason, the opposite of that—existence which is not posited by the force of names and concepts—is the object of negation.

Well then, what is "posited by the force of names and concepts"? [219] When it is coiled, a variegated rope is similar to a snake. If you look when dawn has not broken, because its color and way of being coiled is like a snake's, through the force of concepts the thought will arise "it's a snake!" On that basis, fear arises, so the manner of being posited by the force of thought is like that. When the thought arises "it's a snake!", does the snake exist upon the rope? Other than fear arising on account of thought positing a snake, there is no snake established whatsoever within the rope. It is not as though there is a snake established from the side of the rope, and then fear arises. One's own concepts impute it as a snake, and through the force of that, fear arises.

In the same way, all phenomena, beyond mere imputation by thought, have no establishment whatsoever from their own side. Positing such an example is merely positing an example of imputation by thought; it is not saying that, "just as the snake does not exist in the rope, all phenomena do not exist."

The apprehension of a self of persons apprehends the "I" of the thought "I" as an existent which is not imputed by names and concepts. It apprehends it as though it was concretely here from the side of the basis of imputation, and not posited over there by the force of names and concepts. So we must identify that mode of apprehension. In order to negate the self which is the object of negation and establish selflessness, [220] initially it is important to do the work of identifying the manner in which that object of negation appears. Furthermore, the mere explanation in the text, and the lama's merely saying it will not help. You need to think about it and be able to identify it based on your own experience. What method should you apply to identify it through your own experience? When you experience a strong feeling of joy, or when strong fear arises, and somebody says "you!", then the "I" of the thoughts "I am attractive", "I am enjoyable" arises. Something which is concrete, not imputed by names and concepts, appears as an object of mind. At that moment, you need to have an astute awareness and be able to identify it. If you identify that object of negation, then it will become easier to establish the negation which negates it, so you must identify the object of negation.

Generally to realize selflessness you do not need calm abiding, but you do need a slight mental factor of stability. If you get a factor of stability in your mind, then by analyzing with the wisdom of individual analysis, you will be able to realize selflessness. What I spoke of before—"seeking meditation within the view"—will come about. Here, [Panchen Losang Chökyi

Gyaltzen] was speaking according to the system of "seeking the view within meditation": first one actualizes calm abiding. Having actualized a stable calm abiding, then within that calm abiding, [221] one must engage in analysis.

Not moving from absorption's space,

Like minnows dart in a clear pond

With subtle mind incisively

Inspect the meditator's nature.

[What I spoke of before—seeking meditation within the view]—was from the point of view of not having actualized a stable calm abiding. [In the context of this passage], from the point of view of having actualized a stable calm abiding, set your mind in equipoise on the conventional nature of the mind. From within that absorption, and without moving from that absorption, examine the nature of a being—what sort of thing is this, a "person"? What sort of thing is this, a "self of persons"? For example, in clear water, although underneath minnows or small fish dart to and fro, on the surface the water does not oscillate. Likewise, Panchenpa is saying that when you engage in subtle analysis without moving your mind from absorption, the ability to analyze without moving from absorption comes about. In terms of searching for the "I" within that absorption, initially within that absorption, as I explained above, you incite a feeling of joy or distress. When a strong feeling of joy or distress arises, with a corner of your mind you check to see what sort of mode of apprehension it has. Like the "introspection spying" that I explained above [pg. 183/81], [222] this is a corner of the mind which is like a spy. When a strong feeling of joy or distress arises, the mind thinking "I" does not arise for more than a brief instant, so that spying mind has to be able to recognize it quickly. Once it has become mixed with our usual mode of apprehension of "I", the [object of negation] does not arise clearly, so you should examine it as quickly as possible.

As I explained before about "needing to rely on the collection of causes to achieve calm abiding", likewise to generate special insight, one needs to rely on the collection of causes for special insight. Rely on a holy being, and listen to his instructions. You yourself must also study texts that explain emptiness. For the purpose of realizing emptiness, meditate on your kind root lama himself in the aspect of the exalted supreme deity, the Noble Lord Manjushri, and make requests. The Noble Lord Manjushri is the deity of wisdom. Among his many aspects, you should meditate on his usual one, orange Manjushri, and make requests. Go for refuge and generate bodhicitta, confess negativities and so forth. If you meditate on guru yoga, you also meditate on the lama in the aspect of the Noble Lord Manjushri. As a preliminary, perform the seven-limbed prayer, one hundred prostrations and so forth. Make a request, "please allow me to be able to realize the unmistakable view". [223] By doing that, streams of nectar flow down from the Noble Lord's holy body. Imagine that they purify the all the ignorance apprehending a self, sickness, spirit harm, negativities and obscurations in your continuum. Again, yellow nectar

flows down. By filling your entire body, imagine that you are blessed to generate wisdom realizing the view.

Meditate on guru yoga. After that, contemplate the fault of not realizing selflessness—you will not be liberated from samsara—and the benefit of realizing it—you will be liberated. The four proponents of tenets each have different ways of accepting selflessness. From within the three modes of apprehending the "I" [explained on pg. 98/217], the mode of apprehension which apprehends an "I" which is neither qualified as true nor false is the mode of apprehension of the nominally existent "I". The "I" in accordance with that apprehension does exist. In accordance with the mode of apprehension which apprehends an "I" qualified as truly established, the "I" does not exist. When based on your own experience you identify that "I" in accordance with that [latter] mode of apprehension, it will appear as though something existing sturdily from its own side, not something posited over there by the force of names and concepts. When you identify the "I" that exists sturdily from its own side, not posited by the force of names and concepts, and then analyze whether or not that mode of establishment exists, [you see] that that mode of establishment is completely non-existent. Initially, [224] it is difficult for the view [of selflessness] to appear to your mind. For that reason, the Blessed One said, "to whomever I may teach this profound emptiness, they will be unable to understand. So for the time being, I will not teach." Nevertheless, you should not become depressed thinking, "I can't understand these things." Make requests to the deity and the lama. Think it over yourself. If you do like that, then because "compounded things" do not stay the same, one day [understanding] will arise. So it has been said.

Although you may not have generated the actual mind realizing the view at this point, you can think "'selflessness' seems to be like that", and make progress towards that mind. If you think, "all phenomena are not established by way of their own character. They are merely posited by the force of names and concepts," then although familiarity may not arise in your mind, you must make a determination to move your mind in that direction. "Within meditation, searching for the view": without moving or arising from that absorption, with that subtle mind you analyze. If the end result of analysis is to induce pliancy, you have achieved special insight. In order to search for the view within the space of calm abiding meditation, first "*with subtle mind incisively/inspect the meditator's nature.*" You must enter absorption on the basic mind [without any particular mode of apprehension], and then with a subtle mind examine what precisely is the determined object of the apprehension which apprehends an inherently existent being or "I". [225] When you haven't identified that object of negation, then you analyze whether the object of negation exists on any part of the body. If, though examining, you fail to locate it on any part of the body, you may have the thought "a self, or 'I', which exists in name and which is the basis for karmic results, is completely non-existent." In that case you have fallen into the extreme of annihilation, so first "incisively inspect the meditator's nature." That is, examine what is the object of negation, and what is the mode of apprehension of the mind apprehending it. If you

thereby ascertain the mode of apprehension of that apprehender, then you should analyze whether or not such an "I" exists among the bases of designation.

Furthermore,

Arya Nagarj'na the savior said...

Because he provides refuge for all those who are without refuge, he is called "savior". From his *Precious Garland*:

"A being is not earth, nor water [footnote—from Ratnavali]

Not fire, not wind, not space, and not

Consciousness...

If there was such a being who was established from his own side, then if you searched for him on each of the six elements, you would have to locate such a being. Since a "being" is designated on the basis of the aggregation of the six elements, a being's body is an aggregation of the six elements [footnote]. But when you analyze the being within the six elements, the earth element is not the being. Nor is the water, nor is the fire, nor is the wind, nor is the space, nor is the consciousness element the being. [226] Since you search in each part but do not locate him, you have established that all parts of the six elements are not "I". If you wonder, "well then, each individual part is not the being, but isn't the collection of the parts "I"? [Nagarjuna continues],

...nor is all of them...

He is saying that even the collection is not "I". [footnote—explain why not][He then adds]

Apart from these what being is there?"

The aggregates and six elements which are the bases of designation are not each individually the person, and the aggregation of the six elements is also not the person. Therefore, upon the bases of designation you do not find an "I" who is established by way of its own character. Well in that case, other than that is there an "I", established from its own side, to be found? In this case also there is no such thing to be found at all.

Having analyzed in that way, you conclude that an "I" which is established by way of its own character does not exist anywhere. It does not exist on the aggregates which are the bases of designation, and it also does not exist on anything else apart from the aggregates. Keeping this conclusion in mind, use your mind to analyze repeatedly whether or not that object of negation exists.

Well then, generally does the "being" not exist? While a being who is established by way of his own character does not exist, there is a being who is merely posited by conventions. Again, [Nagarjuna says]:

"Since a being's a collection of

Six elements, not authentic.

A "being" is posited as a "being" or person merely by designation over there on the basis of the aggregation of the six elements. So he is not "authentic", [227] or established from his own side. "Authentic" has the same meaning as "established from its own side" or "inherently established", so such a thing is non-existent.

That text [*Precious Garland*] delineates that the person is not inherently established, and goes on to delineate the lack of inherent existence of the aggregates. Taking "not authentic" as an example, just as the being is not inherently established:

Just so each element is too...

Even each of the six elements is established on the basis of the aggregation of its many parts, so it is not inherently established. Taking the earth element of a being's body as an example, that element is also established out of the aggregation of its many parts. Since it is established by aggregation, like the aggregates there is no inherently existent earth element to be found. [Nagarjuna concludes,]

collected, so not authentic."

[Panchenpa:] If you search and as he said...

If you search in the way it was explained in *Precious Garland*, there is no [person] existing on the collection, nor is there any existing on each individual constituent. So there is no authentically established [person] at all.

### Explanation of the Manner of Realizing Emptiness

Absorption, absorber and such:

If you divide up the three—the action of entering absorption, the actor who enters into absorption, [228] and emptiness and so on, the objects of absorption—then even if you search for them, there is nothing to be found.

Just a mere atom you don't find,

Having identified the object of negation, if you analyze on each part and discover that nothing is found, you have realized emptiness.

Then sustain space-like equipoise

One-pointed, without distraction.

At that point, since you have realized emptiness, enter into absorption on that. Just as we posit the mere negation of obstructive contact as space, we enter into the mere negation of the object of negation, so it is called "space-like".

These verses delineate how the "I" lacks inherent existence, and how the aggregates of that "I" lack inherent existence.

Or from the space of equipoise:

The mind engages without break

A nonstop stream of clear knowing

All things appear and spread, unobscured

Vacuity, not made as form.

Determined object, holds as appears

Non-reliance...

Earlier [we discussed how] within the space of single-pointed equipoise on calm abiding, you analyze with a subtle awareness. Checking what kind of thing is this "mind", you identify that "mind" is not established from its own side, and is thereby a clear vacuity. It has no obscuration at all, and various objects appear and scatter. It does not cease—each [moment] sequentially follows the next, [229] so it is without cessation. It is clear and knowing. Such is the mind, which you recognize. Having identified the mind, if you ask "how does this mind apprehend the object, inherent existence?" It appears as non-reliance—a self-powered thing which does not rely on anything. The apprehension of true existence, which apprehends the object as truly being established in the way that it appears, apprehends it [like that]. If that apprehension of true existence apprehends it in that way, what must you do to negate its determined object?

...said Shantidev:

"What's called 'continuum', 'collection':

Is false like malas, armies and such." [footnote—text?]

With such scripture and reasoning...

What we call "time" and "mind" are designated on the conjoining of an earlier and later continuity. Beyond that, they are not established from their own side. With a "collection" as well, on the basis of many parts, if they aggregate we designate it a "collection". Beyond that, there is no collection established from its own side. As an example of that, Shantideva posits a rosary [mala] and an army. With a "rosary", we do not call each individual bead a rosary. We can only say "rosary" for a collection of a series of many beads. So the mere designation over there of

"rosary" on the abiding of a series of many beads on a string is a rosary. Beyond that, if we search among the bases of designation, [230] there is nothing to be found. Likewise if we say "an army is coming!"—if one soldier is coming, we don't say "an army is coming!"; we say "a soldier is coming." As for an "army", if many soldiers congregate we designate an "army". Just as each individual soldier is not an army, likewise the continuity or the continuum or mind is a mere designation on a collection, without establishment from its own side.

Absorb one pointed in the space

Of non-established as appears.

Granted that the continuity or continuum of mind exists as a collection of many earlier and later [moments], well then on what do we designate "continuity of mind"? Do we designate it on the first moment, or on the second moment? If you analyze, you do not find anything, because that continuity, other than mere designation over there on a collection, is non-existent.

If we look at the way it appears to our mind, when the aggregates and so forth appear they appear as not depending on anything, as though they were established from their own side. If they existed in accordance with the way they appear, there would need to be something findable on each individual part, but no such findable thing exists. If you realize the non-establishment in accordance with the manner of appearance, you have realized emptiness. As I explained above, analyze by means of identifying the object of negation. If you analyze in this way but do not find it, [231] you realize emptiness, so then "enter single-pointed absorption" on that very [non-findability], within the space of the union of calm abiding and special insight.

In short from the holy mouth of

Sangye Yeshe, my spiritual friend

Who knows all things just as they are:

The one called "Sangye Yeshe" is in accordance with actuality. He is like the exalted wisdom (*yeshe*) of all the Buddhas (*sangye*) condensed into one. So Panchenpa is giving a meaning to his name.

"When you know fully whatever appears, is what is grasped by concept-thought:

Ultimate Dharma sphere appears, without rely'ng on anything else.

To situate awareness in, to the space of that appearance

And enter single-pointedly, into absorption E MA HO!"

At present, no matter what appears to you, it is merely posited over there by conceptual thought. There is not even a mere atom existing from the object's own side. If you thoroughly understand—that is, see—that it is merely posited over there by conceptual thought, then without depending on another reason, you will be able to cause the emptiness which is empty of inherent

existence, or the ultimate final reality, to appear as an object to your mind. If you enter into awareness situated within the *space* of that emptiness, he says "To enter single-pointedly, into absorption E MA HO!". If you enter absorption in the space of such an emptiness, then since the object of your realization is the emptiness of all phenomena, [232] he says "E MA HO! It is a great wonder!"

Thus he said, likewise Dampa said:

"Into the space of emptiness, twirl the spear of awareness

To the view there is no block, no difficulty, Dengriwa."

And such. The intention's the same.

Because he stayed at Dengri, when he gave a kind of advice to himself Padampa Sangye would say, "Dengriwa, Dengriwa" [one from Dengri]. When you analyze in that way, the appearance of establishment without depending on anything at all shows itself. You then analyze whether or not things are established in the way the mind apprehends them, when it apprehends them to be established as they appear. At the end of analysis, you think "they are not established in that way", and such a vacuity appears. "Into the space of emptiness, twirl the spear of awareness." If you "twirl/launch" or throw a spear, just as it falls onto its target, place your mind on this. If you do like that, then "to the view there is no block, no difficulty, Dengriwa": he is talking about the manner of meditating on emptiness, saying "I have realized the actual view."

In our system, regarding "Mahamudra": having settled upon the final reality of the mind, meditation on that is called "Mahamudra meditation." Many earlier practitioners, upon discovering the conventional nature of the mind—utter vacuity, clarity, and vivid wakefulness—would say, "this is instruction bestowing Buddhahood to hold in your palm". However, in Panchen Rinpoche's holy opinion, [233], "this is the conventional introduction to the mind"—it is a mere introduction, and is not the actual Mahamudra which is the final reality of the mind. The actual Mahamudra is the conclusive view of the final reality of the mind when you have settled upon the final reality of the mind.

### In Conclusion, Dedicating the Virtue to Complete Enlightenment

To end: whatever wholesomeness comes

From meditating on the Great Seal

With three times' virtue's ocean, too:

Dedicate it to full Bodhi.

"To end": of the three parts of the initial outline—the preliminaries, actual explanation, and conclusion or afterword—what are the concluding activities? He makes a dedication, saying "Whatever wholesomeness, or virtues, have arisen from meditating on Mahamudra—and not

only that virtue alone, but the ocean-like collection of virtues accumulated by myself and all other sentient beings over the three times—I combine into one. May it become a cause for the great unsurpassed enlightenment!"

If you meditate on how "all phenomena are merely posited over there by thought; there is not even mere slight establishment from the side of the object",

So meditating, whatever

Appears as object to six types:

Closely inspect how it appears.

The naked mode will clearly dawn.

[234] The view's main point: discern what appears.

By meditating in that way, then whatever appears as an object of the six classes of consciousness, you should closely examine its mode of appearance. That is, check "what kind of mode of appearance is there?" As for the mode of appearance, whatever the phenomenon may be, when it appears as an object to the mind, it appears as though the object was established from its own side. Actually it is merely posited over there by thought, without even a mere slight establishment from its own side. So if you closely examine or analyze such a mode of appearance, then it will clearly appear to your mind that the mode of existence is mere imputation over there by mind, without even mere slight establishment from its own side. No matter what appears to the mind, that appearance is merely imputed over there by mind, and does not exist in the way it appears to, from its own side. So he says, "The view's main point: discern what appears."

The essence of all that is stated succinctly:

In short, whatever things appear

Your mind and such: don't grasp as that.

Instead ascertain its mode of

Being, and always sustain that.

In short, whenever any object appears—your mind and so forth—although it appears as though established from its own side, and not merely imputed over there, the appearing object is not established as it appears. If you hold to it as established as it appears, [235] it becomes the apprehension of true existence, so do not apprehend it in that way. Given that it does not exist as it appears, if you examine how exactly it does exist, you ascertain that apart from imputation over there, the object lacks even mere slight existence as it appears from its own side. Having generated ascertainment of such a mode of existence, always sustain it.

In short, as for the mode of appearance, whatever phenomenon it may be, it appears as though established here from its own side, and not as merely posited over there. Do not hold to it as it appears, but hold to it as it actually exists. What mode of existence does it have? It does not exist as it appears—that is, the object exists without even the slightest establishment from its own side.

So knowing, join as one nature

All things of samsara and peace.

If you understand the emptiness of one phenomenon, then by applying that same reasoning elsewhere you will come to understand the emptiness of all phenomena. Having gained certainty of the final reality of the person, aggregates, and, among the aggregates, the mind, if you then move on to [the nature] of all phenomena included in samsara and nirvana, their unmistakable mode of existence will appear. Whatever phenomenon it is, it is the same in being free of inherent establishment. "Samsara and nirvana"—all phenomena included in samsara are empty of inherent establishment, [236] and all phenomena of nirvana are also empty of inherent establishment. Since they are all the same, connect all phenomena as of one nature.

And in that vein, said Aryadev:

"Whoever's viewer of one thing:

Is said to be a viewer of all.

The viewer who views the emptiness of inherent existence of one thing, like the aggregates, when moving on to other phenomena will realize their emptiness of inherent establishment. So he says "viewer of one thing".

Whatever's emptiness of one

That is the emptiness of all."

If you understand emptiness on one phenomenon, that mode of emptiness is said to be the same mode of emptiness that is on all phenomena. With that in mind he says "the *mode* of emptiness is the same." He is not saying that the very emptiness of a pot is the emptiness of a pillar.

Like that, in proper equipoise

On reality, there are no extremes

of fabrications of samsara,

peace: existence, non-, and such...

Having analyzed in that way, then from the perspective of the equipoise which is single-pointedly absorbed on the final reality—that is, for the ascertainment factor which ascertains the final reality—there is no conventional phenomenon at all. Except for a vacuity, there is no

existent or non-existent, no proliferation of samsara and nirvana. [237] Although the exalted wisdom realizing all aspects sees all phenomena, from the perspective of its factor of seeing the final reality, which is absorbed single-pointedly on the final reality, there is said to be no conventional phenomenon at all. [footnote]

From the perspective of the equipoise which realizes the lack of inherent existence of the self, there is not even a nominally existent "I". If from that perspective there is no "I", does it realize the "I" as non-existent? Although the "I" does not exist from the perspective of that equipoise, it does not *realize* the "I" as non-existent. When one arises from the equipoise and examines things, the "I" appears as something established from its own side, and not merely posited over there. Since there is no "I" that is established in accordance with such an appearance, well then is the "I" completely non-existent? Although there is no inherently established "I", we must posit a nominally existent "I". How should we posit such a nominally existent "I"? It is not suitable to say "mere name" means, "nothing exists except for names." Rather, because nothing exists except what is imputed over there by names, we say "mere name". Apart from such mere imputed existence which is merely imputed over there by thought, nothing exists. On that basis, the action, agent and object of a cause generating a result, the action, agent and object of fire burning kindling, and so forth—all actions, agents and objects are feasible on the basis of mere imputation over there. [238] Furthermore, if you directly realize the feasibility of the dependent relativity of all actions and agents without any room to brandish disagreement, they will appear as though in a dream, a mirage, a moon in the water, and an illusion. In a dream, although a horse appears, in actuality there is no establishment as a horse. Likewise, although inherent establishment appears, there is no inherent establishment. Similarly, a water-mirage appears as water, and moon in the water appears as a moon and so forth, but none of them exists in that way. Although not established in that way, undeniably they naturally appear. In the same way, all phenomena included in samsara and nirvana are the same in being empty, not inherently established. Nevertheless, nobody can disagree that samsara and nirvana, actions and agents, like dreams and illusions, merely appear and arise as mere imputations [footnote—after you realize emptiness, things appear as mere conventionalities].

Yet when you arise and check

Mere name, just an imputed thing

Dependent relativity

Actions, agents indubitably

Dawn themselves like dreams, a mirage,

Moon in water, and illusion.

Appearance shrouds not emptiness;

Emptiness stops not appearance.

Then manifests the excellent path

One meaning: empty, dependent birth.

If you unmistakably realize emptiness, then if an appearance of a conventional subject arises, it does not obscure emptiness but rather becomes a support for emptiness. If an appearance of emptiness arises, [239] that emptiness does not negate the principles of actions and agents existing conventionally. At that time, the path where emptiness and dependent arising are of one meaning directly manifests.

As long as you haven't realized emptiness, you will not know how to distinguish the conventional "I" from the inherently established "I". So when you posit conventional "I" as existing, the inherently established "I" must exist. And when you negate the inherently established "I", it is like you are negating the conventional "I". Emptiness and appearance do not become mutually supportive, but negate each other in turns. If you realize emptiness just as it is, then by the reason of appearance existing, you establish it is empty. By the reason of it being empty, you establish appearance as existing. Because they do not negate each other, but instead mutually support each other, emptiness and dependent arising are called "of one meaning."

That's speaker, learned renunciant

Is called "Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen."

By this virtue, may all beings soon

Become Victors by this path which

Lacks a second door to peace.

Because he possesses vast learning, he is called "learned". Because he has applied himself to actualizing the meaning of what he has learned, he calls himself "the renunciant Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen." On the basis of that virtue, may all beings practice this path, which is free of two doors of peace, [240] and swiftly become victors. The state of nirvana, peace, does not have two doors of traversing to get there. There is only one door. What is that one? It is the mind realizing emptiness. "On the basis of the path realizing emptiness, which is free of two doors of peace, may [all beings] swiftly attain victory over the four Maras" [footnote]. Thus he makes a prayer.

This manner of introduction to Mahamudra was spoken by the Bhiksu Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen.

Question: If you fall into the lower realms, when do you fall?

Answer: Above [I explained that] after the clear light, when the near-attainment is established, the bardo is established. After the bardo, one is born into the lower realms.

Question: Do we call the mind of clear light possessing four distinguishing features [as on pg. 140/63] "unification"?

Answer: It is only a mere imagined one; it is not the actual. To achieve the actual unification, after the clear light directly appears, one arises directly as the illusory body. The "unification" which unifies those two only arises in the context of the completion stage. The one we are talking about here is a generation stage mind which is a mental contemplation of belief.

May virtue increase.