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A Commentary on
“The Essential Points of Creation and Completion
that will Benefit the Beginner who has Entered the Path,”
composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great

- First Seminar -

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Introduction

Let us recite *The Dorje Chang Lineage Prayer* and do a short meditation together before beginning the teachings about the essential points of the creation and completion stages of Vajrayana and Mahamudra practices according to the profound treatise *Lam-shugs-kyi-gang-dzag-läs-dang-po-la-phän-pa'i-skyed-rdzog-kyi-gnäd-bsdiis-bshugs-so - The Essential Points of Creation and Completion* that was composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great.

There are many direct methods of practice presented in Vajrayana for disciples to attain complete buddhahood in a single lifetime. If a Vajrayana practitioner doesn't attain perfect enlightenment in his or her present life, then it will be possible in the next seven to fourteen lifetimes. It takes much longer for a disciple of Sutrayana to attain the ultimate goal. It's said that disciples of Sutrayana need to exert themselves very much for three uncountable *kalpas*, 'aeons,' to attain liberation. One kalpa consists of 59 units of zeros in its number of years, which points to a very long time.

A story is recounted about the Buddha's previous life, before he attained enlightenment. He was on a ship carrying 500 merchants and their goods across the stormy sea. He saw that the captain of the ship wanted to kill the merchants and throw them overboard so that he could call all their goods on the ship his own. Out of deep compassion, Lord Buddha in a previous life thought, "If I don't do anything to stop this man from killing me and the 500 merchants, he will necessarily experience unbearable suffering in the hell realms in his next life, so it would be better if he died than committing such a horrendous act." He killed the captain in order to spare him from amassing so much negative karma. The Buddha in a former life saw the consequences that such a horrendous act would bring the captain and therefore accumulated the positive karma of seven small kalpas when he saw himself forced to do what he did. I told this so that it's easier for you to understand how many kalpas it takes to attain awakening in Sutrayana. In comparison, the path of Vajrayana is shorter and much faster.

The methods to attain buddhahood aren't outlined that clearly in Sutrayana. Vajrayana is incomparable because it teaches the practices of *rtsa*, *rlung*, and *thig-le* precisely, *rtsa* being the inner channels of one's body, *rlung* being the energy currents flowing through these channels, and *thig-le* being the essences. In *The Essential Points of Creation and Completion*, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye summarized the essential tantric teachings and methods of practice very clearly.

Homage & Reason for Having Composed the Treatise

*"I bow to Pema Nyinje Wangpo
inseparable from the Lake-born Vajra, who manifests
the infallible absorption of bliss-emptiness, steady and everlasting,
emanating and resolving in a hundred ways."*

Having offered sincere homage in the above verse to his beloved Root Guru, Pema Nyingje Wango, the Twelfth Tai Situpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye explained the reason he composed the treatise. It is:

*"In the face of these disturbing times,
an ordinary stupid person like myself becomes exhausted
trying to explain the deep and vast meaning!
Nevertheless, my vajra friend has implored me,
and maybe it would help a few fools like me.
So I rely only on the blessings of the glorious Guru
and speak freely without reservation."*

The General Teachings

"You now have the precious opportunity of human life, so difficult to find; not just as an ordinary person, but one who has encountered the Dharma and been accepted by a teacher, the personal appearance of the Buddha, you can seek the most profound quintessence of Dharma and choose the finest from among the Gurus."

Jamgon Kongtrul stated in the above lines that one has such a wonderful and precious human life. Why is it precious? Because one has met with the Dharma.

One needs to be aware of the fact that one's isn't an ordinary human being but can use one's precious life in a meaningful way. How? By practicing the Dharma. For example, let's assume one owns a very luxurious car and uses it every day when one goes to work or visits friends instead of locking it up in the garage. In the same way, one makes best use of one's invaluable life to practice the Dharma. Jamgon Kongtrul tells us that our lives are furthermore invaluable because we have met our teacher, who is just as rare as Lord Buddha and not separate from him. Being the Living Buddha for us, we can serve our Lama and receive all the sacred teachings from him.

Following:

"While you have this chance, and all conditions conducive to Dharma have accrued, even if you do not achieve other's welfare, at least practice for your own sake."

One has the best possibilities and conditions due to having a Lama and due to directly receiving the teachings from him. So, one can lead a meaningful life by practicing the Dharma and thus benefit oneself and others. Not doing anything beneficial for oneself and others and just hanging around, one day death will knock on one's door and then it will be too late. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul wrote that only the Dharma will be of help at that time. One will leave all one's luxurious possessions and even one's body behind when one dies. One cannot take anything along. The verse is:

"Otherwise, at the time of death, and that time is uncertain, there is nothing whatsoever that can help other than the Dharma. Even the wealth of a universal monarch just gets left behind on the deathbed."

After one has died and separated from one's body, one's mind continues. One will take along in the *bardo* (the 'intermediate state between death and a new life') the habitual patterns that one created and that are stored in one's mind. All *karma*, 'actions,' that one has accumulated in one's life is stored in one's all-ground consciousness and will be with one from one life to the next. For example, if one killed many animals, like pigs or chickens, the images of one's actions will clearly appear to one in the bardo after death. I came to know about this as a child when my grandfather was dying. He must have killed many ox during his life, because on his deathbed he was really screaming and yelling, "All the ox are coming to slaughter and eat me. Help me! Help me! Please protect me!" I don't know about people in the West, but people in the East who killed animals and die really shout that pigs or chickens are attacking them when they are on their deathbed. People who have a brain tumor only see their past and don't remember what they experienced recently; what they did in the earlier part of their lives appears to them quite strongly. One's actions in life become such solid images when one dies. So, only one's positive karma and the Dharma will help when one dies.

I wasn't home when my aunt died, but I dreamt about her every night for about 3 years and wondered why. Later I learned that she may have been longing for me to pray for her because I was a monk. In Buddhism, we perform Dharma practices for the deceased for 49 days. I hadn't written down her name for prayers, but then I included her name in my prayers and never dreamed of her again. I thought that what the Buddhist teachings say is really true, that a being in

the bardo really expects to be helped and is okay when their expectations are fulfilled. It's incredible. I won more trust in the Dharma after I experienced this. So, I think it's very important to say prayers, to make dedication prayers, and to do as much physical, verbal, and mental good as possible for the benefit of beings in the bardo. One's actions always follow one. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul wrote:

"Positive and negative actions adhere to the consciousness, and not knowing what to do, even regret won't help. From this very moment on, without delay, you must strive to practice virtue with body, speech, and mind."

If one was positive and had a good heart, then one hears beautiful music and Buddha Amitabha will welcome one to his Pure Land after one has died. Some people really experience this. There was a very kind old Lama in my hometown. Once I was very sick for 3 months, so my parents sent me to the Lama who blessed me every morning - he was my hospital. It was very interesting with him. When people are very sick, in the Buddhist tradition they receive blessings from the vase that the Lama puts on their head or from drinking blessed water. The kind old Lama did this with me all the time. It was very good water; I really liked drinking it. I think this Lama had done about 1000 *Nyungnes*, 'fasting retreats.' I heard about one elderly lady running through town after having returned from him, wailing, "I think our Lama is dying. I saw him floating in the air." He didn't die but was only meditating. What I want to say is that I think one will be welcomed to Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land of Bliss after death if one is a good practitioner and has good karma. Some people really hear beautiful music when they see an experienced Lama die. I've only heard about this from stories, but it's also recorded in the bardo texts that one will be greeted and will hear wonderful music when one has good karma and dies. This is how it's expressed in the teachings.

Normally, the actions one carried out in this life really come up when one dies. One's mind becomes so clear when it is separated from one's body and one can see everything. That's why I think it's very important to practice as best as one can now, to practice physically, mentally, and verbally as best as possible and thus to make preparations so that someone comes to welcome one to the pure realms after one's death. That's the easy way.

There are a lot of very detailed teachings in Vajrayana on what happens when one dies. People speak of experiences similar to those in the teachings. I almost died when I was 10 or 11 years old, and my parents thought that I was dying. In Buddhist countries, people have many butter-lamps lit for someone who is dying or has died. Later, my parents told me that I had requested that they have butter-lamps lit for me. I do not recall having asked them, but I remember having seen a very strong light that grew bigger and bigger and having felt very irritated. Even years later, until I was about 16, I got really scared when this light appeared to me again because I didn't know anything about it. When I learned the teachings on bardo that speak about this light, I realized it was the same experience that I went through as a youngster and trusted the Dharma even more. This is also a way to learn Dharma. One can learn Dharma by being born in a Buddhist country and hearing stories like this. And so, that is why Jamgon Kongtrul tells us: "From this very moment on, without delay, you must strive to practice virtue with body, speech, and mind." He therefore instructed how to practice the Dharma and wrote:

*“The only foundation stone of practice is renunciation.
The only gateway of practice is faith.
The only approach to practice is compassion.
The life-tree of practice is single-minded application.”*

Renunciation is the foundation of practice. Renunciation means giving up one's negative thoughts, one's negative emotions, one's ego-clinging, one's hopes and expectations, and so on. When one has really renounced worldly concerns, then whatever one practices is Dharma.

I heard that Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche had practiced with his teacher for many years. He had received many Dharma instructions and had practiced very much. On their last day together, his teacher told him, “I have a very important teaching for you now.” Khenpo thought, “Oh, it must be a very powerful instruction. What is my Lama going to say to me? It's probably something special that I have never heard before.” His teacher told him, “You should not expect anything from others. You should not expect that they will give you good food, or money, or nice words. But if someone gives you something that you don't expect, you have to really receive it. That's the right teaching.” Khenpo thought, “His words are so powerful. But it doesn't make sense to me because it's so simple.” Later Khenpo Rinpoche told his students, “Slowly, when one really thinks about it and looks at life, it was a great teaching.”

Sometimes one feels so upset; sometimes one feels so down. When one looks deeply, though, expectations are responsible for such thoughts. There is nothing to worry about when one doesn't expect anything - one is happy, practically. In the same way, when one really renounces one's hopes, fears, and so on, then happiness is right there. It's the foundation of one's practice. Practice means giving something up, otherwise it's really difficult while one still clings to things. When one's mind doesn't match the practice, one experiences an inner dispute. One thinks that one is practicing so much meditation, but one will have a big problem as long as one has expectations. One gets everything when one doesn't expect anything and one gets nothing when one keeps a look-out. I know what I'm talking about.

Faith is the gateway of one's practice. Especially in Vajrayana and Mahamudra, every meditation comes easily and just flows if one has heart-felt confidence and devotion, simply translated as ‘faith’ here. It opens one's heart. In Buddhism, it's not suggested to have blind faith, rather faith is a feeling of full trust and confidence in the teachers, in the teachings, in a sacred image, in the Buddha, in the Dharma. One doesn't blindly believe what the Buddha said, rather one has great trust that one will be helped. It's very difficult to have this kind of faith and confidence in modern times, but it's very important in Vajrayana. Otherwise it will be difficult to have experiences while engaging in the meditation practices of the path. Faith is not an intellectual matter. One can have a feeling of faith on the level of one's emotions, but that's a coarse level. Faith in this context is deeper than an emotion. It's like a magnet for experiences one has while practicing.

It's necessary to examine the teachings that one receives and not to just believe them. If one has a good connection to a teacher, then it's easy to have deep faith in the teachings that he imparts. But, if one doesn't have a connection, one has to really examine how the teachings are and see

how one's practice works. Otherwise one can have many misunderstandings and then it doesn't work. Faith arises subtly and slowly.

Once our Rinpoche, His Eminence Gyaltsab Rinpoche, asked us to come to his monastery to receive Vajrayana teachings on the text composed by the Third Jamgon Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, entitled *Zab-mo-nang-dön - The Profound Inner Meaning*, in which he explained the channels and so on. Rinpoche furthermore asked a group of about ten of us to receive extra teachings on the last words of His Holiness the XVIth Gyalwa Karmapa. Vajrayana teachings of the Buddha's words are treated very strictly, whereas it's allowed to attend teachings on the commentaries more carefree. Some monks are very young, kid around during that time, and one doesn't care much. Once Rinpoche presented a teaching for an entire month and we had to attend everyday, otherwise it is said it's not good. The story I want to tell is that there is a very precious nectar in a vase of Guru Padmasambhava that is kept at Tashi Ling, which is near Rinpoche's monastery. Thousands of pilgrims came to Tashi Ling to receive the blessing on a specific day. We wanted to go too. Some people in our group were scared to ask Rinpoche for his permission to leave, so I and a few other disciples went to him and asked. He was so happy when we asked and told us, "You go today and I will continue teaching when you return." We hadn't made any arrangements and thought we would need to walk the long way for hours. We packed our things and to our surprise there was a taxi at the gate of the monastery that drove us free of charge. Usually, there are no taxis in that remote location. We hadn't made any reservations for the night and the site was overcrowded when we arrived, but somebody offered us to stay in their house. We were really happy. But we had nothing to eat because we hadn't brought anything along. We met friends from our monastery who told us, "We brought so much food along" and they shared their food with us. There was even much food left after we had finished. I realized that all the goodness we experienced was Rinpoche's blessing because he was very happy for us. I came to realize the teacher's blessing on that occasion. It's more obvious when one makes no plans.

If a disciple has an open heart and devotion, then a Lama sometimes doesn't even have to give teachings or say anything because everything melts into one automatically. I think it's very important but not easy to have because one's mind is very complicating sometimes. For instance, Jetsün Milarepa, who had immense devotion in his Guru, also tells us that one day Marpa Lotsawa told him, "Now is the time for you to be on your own and practice meditation. I have given you the teachings, so you have enough to work with." Milarepa was a little bit sad and thought, "Okay. I have devotion. Even though he is physically not present, Marpa is with me all the time," and everything worked out for him. One can see that many Lamas and great teachers have great devotion. For example, tears automatically come to Thrangu Rinpoche's eyes when he speaks about His Holiness the XVIth Gyalwa Karmapa. I experienced this when he gave teachings in his monastery and spoke about the XVIth Karmapa. That is very special and I think it's very important. Therefore, devotion is a gateway to our practice.

The next teaching in the above verse by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is: "The only approach to practice is compassion." Let me tell the story of Asanga.

Asanga was a bodhisattva who longed to see the future Buddha so strongly that he did not stop meditating Buddha Maitreya in retreat for a total of 12 years. He did not attain any results,

though, and thought that he would never be able to accomplish his wish. Asanga gave up, left his cave, and came across a wounded dog lying on the road. It was so wounded that its entire body was being eaten up by many maggots. Asanga felt immense compassion for the dog and wanted to help, but he realized that if he pulled the maggots out with his fingers, then he would squish them and they would die and if he left them in the big wound, then the dog would die. He cut flesh off from his own thigh to put the maggots on. He drew them out of the dog's wound with his tongue. He couldn't bear to look at what he was doing, so he closed his eyes, lifted them out with his tongue, and placed them on the piece of flesh. When his tongue accidentally touched the ground, he opened his eyes and saw Maitreya standing before him. Asanga said to him, "I've been practicing 12 years and I never saw you. Why now?" Maitreya replied, "It's not that I was ever separated from you. We were always together, but you weren't able to see me because you didn't have enough compassion." He then imparted all the teachings of Buddha Maitreya to Asanga. This story shows that one's compassion can stay small after meditating for 12 years, but it's a lot when it arises in a short moment. Jamgon Kongtrul wrote: "The only approach to practice is compassion." So, it's very important.

Then Jamgon Kongtrul taught: "The life-tree of practice is single-minded application." This means practicing meditation, like doing a retreat. Meditating and doing retreat are very important. One might know many things, but one has a different experience when one practices. For example, one's mind is very nervous and becomes so refreshed and joyous when one sits down and does Dorje Sempa practice, for example, because it affects one's mind so deeply. It's unbelievable how this happens. So doing a retreat is very important, as stated in this line.

"Constant practice is conscientious mindfulness."

In this next line, Jamgon Kongtrul tells us that awareness, mindfulness, and conscientiousness are very important. He will explain this in more detail later on in the text, but here these qualities refer to the time one is involved in daily activities and is around many people. Single-minded concentration is central when one is alone. Many skillful means to practice mindfulness and attentiveness are taught in Vajrayana - how to move one's hands, how to beat the drums, how to visualize in one's mind, and so forth. One normally thinks that beating the drums is just a ritual, but actually it's a different method and deep practice to develop mindfulness. For example, the shrine attendant has to be mindful of all particulars on how to bless the water and set up the shrine, otherwise everything becomes more mixed up. He also has to know what to think when he takes care of the shrine. One cannot think if one isn't mindful. If one has practiced well, then - through the strong habit of practicing mindfulness - one's meditation comes naturally when one dies. One doesn't even have to think it when it has become a habit.

"The removal of obstacles to practice is to rely on the Three Jewels."

Whenever obstacles and hindrances arise in one's practice, one needs to rely on the Three Jewels, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha ('the noble community of practitioners'). They are our great protectors. When one is sick, one first turns towards the Buddhadharma and then one calls on a doctor. They and all their services are the blessing of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha together. One thinks of the Three Jewels whenever one has problems.

“The enhancement of practice is devotion to the Guru.”

This means to say that one has to upgrade one's devotion for one's Lama so that one's practice is enhanced and improved.

“Unmistakable practice is the Guru's instruction.”

One has to get really correct instructions from one's Lama so that one practices correctly. Otherwise it doesn't work. For example, if one wants to climb a tree and has received correct instructions from a specialist who knows the skilful way, one can get up and down again. Another example is the use of computers. It's very easy for someone who knows how to work with a computer and who can teach others. Someone who doesn't know how to work with a computer can work as hard as they want but will achieve no results. That's what receiving instructions means.

“The one essential point of practice is that the Three Roots combined and all of the peaceful and wrathful mandalas arise as the Guru's display— this one thing is sufficient.”

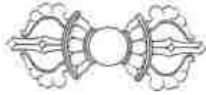
The most gifted individuals are those who have developed in previous lives, have already reached the full capacity of devotion, and are born as great, superior beings. For them, even without following the stages of practice, it is still possible to perceive the truth of reality.”

In these lines, whether one does a wrathful or peaceful mandala practice, Jamgon Kongtrul teaches that everything is included in one's trust and sincere devotion for one's Lama. ‘Guru's display’ is the skilful way of transforming one's mind and experiencing that everything comes from one's Lama. If one has unwavering devotion for one's Lama that one has accumulated in previous lives, one needn't do much to realize the nature of one's mind. Let me tell the story of Khädrub Rinchen Päl, better known as Tulku Orgyenpa. He was the heart disciple of His Holiness the Second Gyalwa Karmapa, Drubchen Karma Pakshi. After the Karmapa passed into Parinirvana, Orgyenpa recognized his reincarnation as the Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. This was the first recognition of reincarnation and laid the foundation for this tradition in Tibet. I am mentioning this because it is recorded that Tulku Orgyenpa met His Holiness the Second Gyalwa Karmapa for a short time only. In that short meeting, he received the entire teachings from the Karmapa and attained all experiences. This story tells us that one needn't work much if one has unwavering devotion in one's Lama.

It is also recorded in sacred texts that King Indrabodhi had invited Lord Buddha, his monks and disciples to his palace. The Buddha presented general teachings and told the king that he should reserve a little time each day to practice the Dharma and meditate and shouldn't think too much about his business, about ruling his country, and so forth. King Indrabodhi responded and said to the Buddha, “I don't want this kind of Dharma. It's not much for me.” The Buddha recognized that the king had greater abilities and gave him the special teachings called *Guhyasamaya – The Tantra of Meditation*. In that moment, King Indrabodhi became completely enlightened. Jamgon Kongtrul said in the text we are studying that it happens to some people like that and then one doesn't need to do much. But one needs to do many things if it doesn't work like that. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul gave many more teachings on how to practice.

Question: “Is the meaning of the Three Roots and Three Jewels the same?”

Lama: No, the Three Roots are the Lama, Yidams, and Protectors. Let us go through the text before going into a question session. One needs time and patience, because we want to get through the text. We were very strict about this in the monastery. We listened to a text until we got it, because the connection might be loosened if it is interrupted, and then one doesn’t get the full teaching. If one only receives half of the teaching, one only receives half and never finishes. I have a real problem with that, sometimes, and one never gets the chance again. I don’t know why.



Detailed Instructions in Eight Points

1) Gaining Certainty of the Buddhadharma

Jamgon Kongtrul presented detailed instructions on the creation and completion practices in the Vajrayana and Mahamudra traditions. It’s very important to have gained unfaltering certainty in the Buddhadharma before one practices these traditions.

“For all others, it is as the noble Nagarjuna said: Listening to Dharma engenders contemplation, and contemplation gives rise to the meditation experience – this is the sequence. So if you abandon distraction and continuously apply effort, first the intelligence that comes from listening will result in comprehension of the general characteristics of all phenomena of cyclic existence and transcendence.”

‘For all others’ refers to students who aren’t that skilled and who have meagre intelligence. ‘Sequence’ refers to the four Vajrayana Tantras that are practiced one after the other. The four main Tantras, which are divided into subsections that teach ever deeper deity meditation practices, are Kriya, Charya, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga, the Sanskrit terms that were translated into Tibetan as *spyöd-rgyüd*, *bya-rgyüd*, *rnäl-’byor-rgyüd*, and *bla-med-rnäl-’byor-rgyüd* respectively. Less focused on inner purification practices of one’s mind, Kriyatantra emphasises outer ritual practices of cleansing one’s body. At this basic level of deity meditation (the term ‘deity’ referring to enlightened forms, *lha* in Tibetan), practitioners do not visualize themselves as a meditation deity, rather they see themselves as subordinates of a ruling king. Less focused on outer purification practices, disciples of Charyatantra abide in deeper meditative states. They approach the meditation deity as friends and not as subjects of a king. The practices consist of many levels that we will not go into here. Outer cleanliness is not really a matter of concern for practitioners of Yogatantra, who place their attention on inner meditation practices and see themselves as equal to the meditation deity. Practitioners of Anuttarayogatantra visualize themselves as actually being the meditation deity. Seeing oneself inseparable from the meditation deity is the profoundest level of practice.

Anuttarayogatantra consists of Father Tantras, Mother Tantras, and Non-dual Tantras, *pha-rgyüd*, *ma-yi-rgyüd*, and *zung-jug-gnyis-med-kyi-rgyüd* in Tibetan. The creation stage of practice, *bskyed-rim*, is emphasized in the Father Tantras; the inner channels (*rtsa* in Tibetan) are essential

in these practices. The completion stage of practice, *rdzogs-rim*, is emphasized in the Mother Tantras; the energy currents (*rlung* in Tibetan) flowing through the channels are essential in these practices. Summarized, the Father Tantras are practices to develop skilful means (*thabs*), and the Mother Tantras are practices to develop wisdom-awareness (*shes-rab*). Non-dual Tantras of Unity are practiced to cultivate skilful means and wisdom-awareness beyond duality, *gnyis-su-med-pa*. Non-duality is skilful means and wisdom-awareness inseparable, *dbyer-med*. For example, the *Guhyasamayatantras* are Father Tantras, the *Chakrasamvaratantras* are Mother Tantras, and the *Kalachakratantra* is a Non-dual Tantra. In the Mahamudra tradition, *Hevajratantra* is a Father Tantra that emphasizes the creation stage and the inner channels. The Third Jamgon Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, explained in great details the three Tantras and *rtsa*, *rlung*, and *thig-le* ('the essences') in the treatise that he composed, entitled *Zab-mo-nang-dön - The Profound Inner Meaning*, which is a text that isn't made available to the general public. The *Hevajratantra* is also not published. These sacred practice texts are given to disciples who have received the empowerments and instructions to practice them.

Three phases of practice are essential for gaining a general understanding of both conditioned existence and liberation, i.e., samsara and nirvana. The three phases are receiving the sacred oral teachings by listening to them, by contemplating them, and by meditating them – *thös*, *bsam*, and *sgom* in Tibetan.

It is said in Secret Mantrayana that one will remain in samsara as long as one apperceives appearances impurely, which is due to one's afflictive obscurations. As soon as one apperceives appearances purely, which one does after having purified and dispelled one's obscurations, one will have transcended samsara and will have attained nirvana. For example, if one really transforms one's ordinary way of perceiving and thinking, one will only see the world as a pure realm. Seeing normal men and women walking around depends upon one's obscured way of seeing them. One will see all living beings as deities when one has purified one's normal way of seeing them. One will see all male living beings as Noble Chenrezig and all female living beings as Noble Arya Tara, for example. One will also have transformed every sound that one hears into a mantra. Furthermore, one will have transformed every thought into pristine, primordial wisdom, *ye-shes*.

According to Mantrayana, to transform one's ordinary way of perceiving and thinking one first has to gain understanding or intelligence (in other contexts *shes-rab* is translated as 'wisdom-awareness') by hearing the sacred teachings. Following, one needs to gain understanding by contemplating the sacred teachings that one has received. One's ordinary, obscured way of apperceiving will gradually diminish, step-by-step. Having decreased one's usual way of apperceiving by increasing one's ability to see purely, one will feel more and more inspired and happier when one is in places one usually wouldn't like. In short, by contemplating the teachings well one will be able to see one's environment as a pure realm and all men and women as dakas and dakinis (*dpa'-bo* and *mkha'-gro-ma* in Tibetan, i.e., 'male and female wisdom deities'). Yet, while practicing the stage of contemplation one still has concepts, e.g., concepts of a pure realm, of male and female deities, and so forth. By meditating the teachings that one has contemplated well, one will ascertain what is called "it is really like that." This means to say that – having transcended dualistic concepts - one will experience no more conflicts between one's inner mind and things one would otherwise perceive and think are outside and separate from oneself.

In short, based upon having correctly developed one's understanding through having heard the teachings well, one contemplates them. Based upon having fully developed understanding through having thoroughly contemplated the teachings, one meditates them. By practicing in this sequence, one's trust and certainty in the Buddhadharma will increase more and more.

Thinking the practice is difficult results from having doubts. For example, if one engages intensively in high Vajrayana practices for many years and recites many mantras but has no confidence in the teachings and practice, then one's endeavours will not touch or move one's heart. Lacking confidence, having doubts, thinking the practice one does is hard, etc. are immense impediments. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye wrote:

"You may claim that your accumulation, purification, and practice are most excellent, bemoaning the hardships of a practice that is merely conjectural. This kind of experience will not lead to conviction. Without conviction, you are stranded in doubt, and doubt is the only supreme obstacle."

No matter how much or whatever one tries, one's practice will be chaotic and jumbled and then many difficulties will arise due to having no confidence in the teachings and the practice one does, such as one won't be kind to others, or one will think everything is so hard, or one will never be content. Jamgon Kongtrul tells us:

"When conviction arises through listening, contemplating, and meditating, even if someone says 'this meditation will send you to hell,' rather than being frightened, you will be supremely confident."

This means to say that if one has deep confidence in the practice, one wouldn't even listen to the Buddha in person if he said one will go to hell if one practices Vajrayana. One would know that the Buddha is only testing one's mind or someone else is only making fun.

The next lines in the treatise are:

"The essential point of all the modes of Dharma taught by the Buddha can be epitomized as a method to subdue one's mind."

2) Giving Rise to Renunciation

"The entryway into the initial mind practice is surely renunciation, without which there is no way. If authentic renunciation arises, compulsive activities will be few; if activities are few, the significance of non-action will be near. When non-action is realized, it is the true nature. There is no other buddha outside of that."

In the foregoing section of the treatise, Jamgon Kongtrul explained how to develop renunciation, which I spoke about earlier. Renunciation means becoming less and less involved with worldly ways. One approaches nirvana more and more when becoming less and less involved with samsara. Having fully renounced samsaric ways and being solely engaged in enlightened activities mean that one has achieved perfect buddhahood and doesn't experience a separation between samsara and nirvana anymore. By practicing correctly, one's engagement with samsaric ways decreases more and more and one's activities that enable one to come nearer and nearer to

nirvana increase more and more. For example, activities that enhance realization of perfect buddhahood are abandoning one's expectations, overcoming one's doubts, dispelling egotistic clinging and mental afflictions, developing loving kindness and compassion for others, and engaging in ever more beneficial activities. If one doesn't practice in this way and one's loving kindness and compassion diminish, if one is more aggressive about smallest things, has many expectations, hopes, doubts, and fears mean that one isn't working on one's Dharma activities and one's involvement with samsara is increasing. So, one has to look at one's mind and see if one is more involved with samsaric activities or with Dharma activities.

3) Understanding What Dharma Means

To understand what Dharma means it is necessary to understand the three categories, which are the view, conduct, meditation (*lta*, *sbyöd*, *sgom*) and the fourth category, which is fruition (*'bräs-bu*). Jamgon Kongtrul wrote:

"There are many categories of view, meditation, and action, but when applied to one's own mind, the view is absolute conviction in the true nature."

Winning absolute conviction in the true nature (*gnäs-lugs*) is a practical matter, as expressed in the line "applied to one's own mind" (*rang-gi-sem*). One's confidence in nirvana will increase and one will have less doubts when one reduces one's engagement with samsara and increases one's Dharma activities. In short, the view is having certainty in the Dharma, free of all doubts. Wondering whether one's practice really makes one feel happy and whether it will bring lasting freedom means one doesn't have the correct view.

Meditation means resting in the certainty of the view that one has gained, i.e., resting in ascertainment that samsara and nirvana are inseparable. Actually, then one won't experience much of a difference between one's usual confused mind and one's inner peaceful mind. One knows that one's conceptual mind is merely one's apperception and that the things one usually perceives outside one's mind don't really exist. When one has gained certainty of the view, then one has gained undistorted trust and confidence in the Dharma and rests one's mind in that confidence. This is what meditation means. For example, if one has a deep understanding of emptiness and encounters something that would usually make one feel very irritated because of thinking it's bad, instead one thinks, "Oh, that's just my perception and conception. It doesn't really exist but is only a projection of my own mind." Being very happy about having understood, one just rests in one's confidence that whatever one hears and sees is empty, without thinking. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul wrote:

"Meditation is assimilating that meaning in one's being; and action is recognizing anything that happens as that view and meditation."

Action refers to one's activities. Best actions, i.e., best conduct, means not ever losing or stepping outside the view and meditation while engaging in any daily activities, which are going to work, eating, drinking tea, and so forth. For example, in daily life one only sees pure realms and everything one hears is pure mantra. One understands that even one's bad thoughts and feelings are emptiness. Practicing like that is practicing the correct path. Because one has that view,

understanding, and meditation, one tries to integrate them in one's conduct. In Vajrayana, when one has bad feelings and everything seems to go wrong, one sees that it isn't much. It is said to be emptiness-bliss inseparable - one can also say that it is peacefulness. Realizing this fully is fruition. In the text:

"It follows that the fruition will be the actualization of things as they are."

Jamgon Kongtrul continued:

"The root of delusion is one's own mind grasping external appearances as being truly existent."

For example, nobody likes being scorned at. One is upset and one's mind becomes disturbed when this happens, which is due to ego-fixation. It's already very helpful realizing that one's negative thoughts and bad feelings arise from clinging to oneself. One attains full transformation if one practices again and again. In this treatise, Jamgon Kongtrul explained how to transform bad feelings into good feelings so that one realizes the teachings, which is the purpose of practice.

There are different ways of practicing, for example, Dorje Sempa, Guru Rinpoche, and many others. The inner practice is seeing oneself as the deity; the outer practice is visualizing the deity above one's head. And there is visualizing the deity in union with his consort. The inner practice belongs to Anuttarayogatantra.

Question: "Seen from the view of a Western psychologist, one's entire way of seeing things is turned upside-down, which is the goal. Doesn't one need strong mental stability when speaking about this with others? Is that why Lamas are very reserved about presenting specific teachings openly because people aren't stable enough?"

Lama: Yes, teachings are kept secret because they can be misunderstood. When speaking about the pure vision, it's a transformation. One can speak about an outer, inner, and secret world in order to transform one's outlook, which doesn't mean one transforms the world physically. When one's inner world has been transformed, one sees the physical world much better. Then one can relate and communicate much better with what is referred to as the relative world. For example, usually one answers harshly when someone says something bad. When one's inner world has been transformed, one remains relaxed when someone says something bad and reacts peacefully, in which case that person may become peaceful too. One doesn't lose oneself when one sees situations clearly. In fact, psychologically one is very strong because one isn't involved too much emotionally but feels relaxed.

Same student: "Isn't it very important for us when dealing with people who are interested in Buddhism to know if they are stable enough to hear about these things?"

Lama: No. I am speaking about the deep view of Vajrayana for your benefit, but there are many ways. One needs to see what people need in the moment. If somebody prefers whiskey, one gives him whiskey. If somebody doesn't like whiskey, one gives him tea or fruit juice. It depends. One has to find out and give him what is right for him. Some people can function much better if they get whiskey because they are used to it – it gives them more energy and power. So, it's a personal matter, but we shouldn't mix things together and give everyone whiskey.

4) The Creation & Completion Stages of Practice

The fourth point concerns creation and completion stages of practice. Jamgon Kongtrul wrote:
“Whatever creation or completion stage meditations are employed, all are intended as methods to reverse this attachment to the reality of deluded appearance.”

All creation and completion stage practices of meditation, *bskeyed-rim* and *rdzog-rim*, are Vajrayana practices to transform one’s mundane way of thinking, i.e., one’s usual way of perceiving, one’s usual way of thinking.

“If stubborn habits of attachment and aversion are not reversed, then meditation is as meaningless as a gopher hibernating in a hole.”

This means to say that as long as one doesn’t reverse one’s mundane ways, one’s meditation would resemble a sleeping gopher.

“Creation stage is the vast imaginary nature of contrivance and completion stage is the profound perfectly existent nature of genuine condition.”

‘Creation’ refers to a lotus, moon-disc, and the other objects that one visualizes while practicing meditation. The completion stage is the more natural state, like resting one’s mind in the nature of one’s mind, in emptiness, at which time one doesn’t create anything.

“These are the names and definitions that have been taught. They are also described as with and without elaboration, respectively.”

The terms ‘creation,’ ‘free of mental elaborations,’ and ‘completion,’ are synonyms, and there are many names and definitions for the creation and completion stages.

“Since they are both exclusively the infallible intention of the Victorious Ones who recognize the different capacities of individuals, there is no question of division into good and bad. The point is to do practice appropriate to one’s own intellect.”

In these lines, Jamgon Kongtrul suggests that one meditates the long, middle-length, or very elaborate creation and completion stages of meditation and there are so many. One should practice according to one’s abilities. The essence of all practices is the same and the one is not better than the other; they are different methods.

“In the mantra approach, with its many methods and few austerities, a person of sharp faculties and high intelligence may gather the two accumulations during all activities and never do even a trace of anything meaningless. This is not, however, the sphere of activity for a fool with mistaken views.”

In Vajrayana, there are very many different direct methods, so one doesn’t need a long time to become enlightened, like followers of Sutrayana need. Even if a practice is very elaborate, it doesn’t mean that it is meaningless. They all serve the purpose of accumulating merit and wisdom. It depends upon a person’s propensities and interests. For example, if one introduces people who are interested to the many details of a culture, they will want to go to the country. If they don’t appreciate cultures and are more interested in technology, one should bring them computers to inspire them. Therefore, some Vajrayana practices are very complex and present

many details, for instance, how to make offerings on the shrine. It's easier to be more mindful if there are many details. Some practitioners become distracted if there are too many details, so it's better for them if there are less.

5) Confidence & Devotion

"With little attachment to the reality of whatever arises, deeply rooted devotion and belief in the path of methods, and tenacity in pursuing the significance of the goal, ordinary and supreme mastery will come quicker than a summoned guest!"

Vajrayana teachings are very detailed and profound, so one can find a teaching in everything. One can use any symbol as a practice, nevertheless one has to transcend it. If one understands the meaning of a symbol, then one knows how to go beyond it by engaging in the methods. Having become accustomed to a symbol, one feels comfortable, secure, and confident with it and can then use it to transcend it. So every symbol has a deeper meaning and presents different instructions.

6) The Sacred Outlook

Jamgon Kongtrul addressed the sacred outlook in the lines above. It is: "(...) ordinary and supreme mastery will come quicker than a summoned guest!"

If one is able to transform the way one's mind works - to change one's usual motivation, to reverse one's usual way of thinking, and is very careful and skilled -, then meditation experiences aren't far away and will come very fast. For example, in situations that would otherwise cause one to be very aggressive, instead one thinks of Noble Chenrezig and turns it into a habit, then his meditative experience and blessing will not be far away. If one turns this into a habit, one won't have to think of it because it happens automatically. When one's meditation on Noble Chenrezig and his blessing come together, one's aggression will have been transformed into compassion. It's very easy and that's how one works. It's very practical. Maybe one has learned and practiced a lot, but maybe one hasn't integrated the practice in one's life. If one experiences that one's practice has good effects on one's daily life, then one will want to practice more.

7) The Two Truths

"All phenomena are subsumed under the two truths: the relative truth is true with respect to delusion, and the ultimate truth is true with respect to true nature. The definition of 'truth' is that it is without deception. If you know that the two truths are inseparable, like the moon in water, then the extinction of deluded appearance is close at hand."

It's very important to understand the two truths here. When one is confused and deluded, whatever one sees and experiences is there and is true. When one has overcome and transformed one's confusion, whatever one sees and experiences is there and is true. For example, the images one saw in one's dream last night were there and were true while one dreamed them. One might have dreamt that one circumambulated Mt. Kailash and it is true because one experienced it in one's dream. One realized that it was just a dream when one woke up. One can say that the

absolute truth is like waking up, while the images one saw in one's dream are like the relative truth. One can approach the two truths in this manner, which is only a practical help to gain an intellectual understanding of the two truths. A practitioner experiences the two truths differently, though. Seen practically, there's no big difference between dreaming and being awake, just like there's no big difference between being confused and not being confused or being angry and not being angry. It's a matter of overcoming one's mundane way of thinking and one's concepts.

There's no difference between the two truths, i.e., there's no gap between them. Sometimes one thinks that there is a gap between the relative truth and the ultimate truth. When one's mind is steady in meditation, there isn't really much of a gap. If one has many dualistic concepts about good and bad, then one has created a huge gap between what one thinks is good and what one thinks is bad. If one is steady in the moment, then there's no gap and one doesn't divide. One can see the difference. The two truths become like a camper, in which one drives around and is home at the same time. One doesn't need a house and one doesn't need a car when one has a camper. Like that, one doesn't separate the relative truth from the ultimate truth, and then one doesn't flee samsara and seek nirvana, i.e., liberation from confusion, because one doesn't have concepts about confusion and non-confusion. One leaves things just as they are. So, that's the meaning of the two truths.

Seen practically, one shouldn't create black and white – they are incompatible. It's all right to understand what white is and what black is on the relative level, but it's also important to understand that the two truths are inseparable. They support each other like a good brother and sister, especially while one is meditating. The more one understands the ultimate truth, the more one understands the relative truth. The more one understands the relative truth of reality, the more one understands the ultimate truth of reality. It would be better to say that one experiences them better. That's the practical point of view of the two truths. The experiential level is different.

8) The Qualities of the Paths

“There is no doubt that both the provisional and definitive paths lead to buddhahood, but there are shorter and longer paths. For instance, the destination may be a single place, such as Lhasa, but you could either go on foot or by flying through the air. Even on the short path, a person with meagre intelligence will not discover the distinctive wisdom, but will be left among the ordinary. Disdaining the lower and unable to grasp the higher, talking of emptiness, such a person will neglect cause and effect, mouthing on about the view while in a state of self-deception. It would be better to concentrate on the gradual path.”

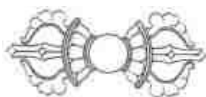
Sometimes one finds that a text instructs one to progress slowly, step-by-step, and that other texts instruct one directly. There are many different gradual approaches taught in Vajrayana, like the Kriya, Charya, Yoga, and Anuttarayogatantras. Looking at Jetsün Milarepa might make it easier to understand the significance of the gradual path.

Milarepa went to a great Dzogchen master who told him, “I have such powerful instructions. You needn't do anything. You just relax and meditate. If you meditate in the morning, you will be enlightened that same evening.” Having received the instructions from the Dzogchen master,

Milarepa meditated and meditated, but nothing happened and he had no experiences. He thought, “I accomplished many experiences and could destroy everything after only having meditated black magic for seven days, but now I am sitting here and nothing is happening.” He complained to the teacher, who responded, “Maybe my teachings are so high and they cannot help you because you are such a negative person. They don’t fit together. Go to Marpa.” Milarepa searched for Marpa, found him, but Marpa had him go through many hardships for many years before giving any instructions. Milarepa was so upset and unhappy. Marpa’s wife, Dagmema, tried to enable him to get teachings from her husband, without any results. But Milarepa finally received teachings from Marpa Lotsawa and realized everything the very moment he did.

This shows that it won’t work thinking one can only sit back, not do anything, and neglect the lower teachings because one received the high ones. For instance, one might think, “The gradual teachings make life hard for me. It’s so hard doing 100,000 prostrations and repeating 100,000 Dorje Sempa mantras. I can’t do it. I can just rest because I have the higher teachings.” Not every Buddhist disciple has to do prostrations and recite Dorje Sempa’s mantras. Buddhists don’t have concepts like that. There are many methods in Vajrayana to practice the path. For example, if somebody needs whiskey, one gives it to him. If it doesn’t work for others, one gives them tea or juice. It doesn’t matter which method one chooses – one has to go step-by-step. If one chooses to do prostrations, okay. Progressing along the path isn’t a stereotype matter, like driving down one Autobahn. One can take another Autobahn to reach the same destination. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul wrote in the above verse: “(...) the destination may be a single place, such as Lhasa, but you could either go on foot or by flying through the air.” They are different ways to reach the same destination. If one has money, one can fly. If one doesn’t have the money to fly, one can walk. In any case, one shouldn’t think that walking is wrong.

In this verse, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye said that one has to practice step-by-step and to have confidence and trust. Sometimes the teachings are so high that they don’t match the abilities of a disciple, who then feels uncomfortable. For example, one can’t practice all details of the Puja of Arya Tara or Noble Chenrezig from the start. At the beginning, one might have problems doing the mudras, reciting the text, and visualizing the deity and the symbols. One first practices the mudras and that is enough. Then one learns how to recite the liturgy and that’s enough. Later one learns to visualize and that’s enough. Then one learns to practice all details together. Having become proficient in visualizing one image of Tara, for example, one continues by visualizing the other Taras. It’s impossible to practice everything automatically and all at once. One can be happy if one knows the mudras and needn’t worry. It’s practiced like that in the monasteries. One does what one can, gets into it slowly, and then it’s very good. This is what going step-by-step means.



Rejection, Transformation & Recognition

In the treatise *Lam-shugs-kyi-gang-dzag-läs-dang-po-la-phän-pa'i-skyed-rdzog-kyi-gnäd-bsdüs-bshugs-so* - *The Essential Points of Creation and Completion*, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye elucidated the essence of entering the path of Sutrayana and Mantrayana. He wrote:

“In entering the path, there is both the sutra approach and the mantra approach, and there are a vast number of methods for following them. The omniscient one taught that to do no unvirtuous deeds whatsoever, to practice virtue, and to control one’s own mind summarizes sutra practice.”

As mentioned, Vajrayana teaches a great variety of methods that disciples can practice. In Sutrayana, the practice consists of abandoning the ten unvirtuous activities, of taking up the ten virtuous activities, and of practicing to control one’s mind. To tame one’s mental, verbal, and physical activities, it’s central in Sutrayana to take the refuge and lay practitioners vows. Sutrayana has very detailed Sadhana practices. For instance, the Medicine Buddha Puja we practice is short and accords with Vajrayana, whereas the Sutrayana Medicine Buddha ritual text is very long; followers have to engage in lots of recitations and make many offerings. Sutrayana mainly teaches to precisely train the mind according to *The Seven Points of Mind Training* that was composed by Dipamkara Atisha and the many texts composed by Shantideva. All practices in Sutrayana aim at training disciples to abandon negative activities of body, speech, and mind, training to take up positive activities of body, speech, and mind, working with one’s negative thoughts, emotions, and feelings, and transforming them into beneficial qualities.

Creation and completion practices are the essence of Mantrayana and must be practiced together. As said in the text:

“And meditation on the two stages of creation and completion summarizes mantra practice.”

Furthermore:

“Since the mind is the root of all phenomena, it is crucial to control it right from the start. Doing recitation and visualization practices without mental control could go on for lifetimes without resulting in enlightenment. What is called ‘mental control’ means controlling afflictive emotions.”

The main point of any practice in both Sutrayana and Vajrayana is working with and transforming one’s own mind, one’s afflicted mind. Therefore we have the saying that a scholar should have good behaviour, be very gentle and kind, humorous, and honest. The more someone studies, learns, and practices, the kinder that person will be. A diligent practitioner becomes less and less self-centered, is less and less aggressive, and has fewer mind poisons. These are qualities that arise from practicing. It doesn’t matter if one engages in the preliminary practices or deity meditation practices, one should be affected by the essential point of the practice, which is transforming one’s mind poisons. So, transforming one’s afflictive emotions is the purpose of practice in both vehicles.

Jamgon Kongtrul wrote of three different ways to work on one’s mind and wrote:

“Methods of controlling afflictive emotions can be subsumed into three: rejection, transformation, and recognition. Rejecting these emotions is the ordinary approach of the Sutras. Desire is renounced through contemplation on repulsiveness, hatred through contemplation on love, and stupidity through meditation in interdependent relationship.”

The first point, ‘rejection,’ means abandoning afflictive emotions, which is the more general Sutrayana approach. Practitioners see the afflictive emotions like city people see crap. They really reject it, think it’s so impure and ugly, do not want to have anything to do with it, and do not want to keep it in their house for a moment.

Question: “How is greed overcome?”

Translator: “By contemplating the impure substances in one’s body, for example.”

Lama: Sutrayana practitioners have strong repulsion for afflictions and treat them like crap. We all have a negative mind. Followers of Sutrayana have difficulties working with negativities directly, so they work at replacing their attached mind with non-attachment, for instance. They use very impure forms in their meditation. For example, when strongly attached to the body, they practice by looking at everything as a skeleton. *The Abhidharma* teaches three ways to meditate on the body as a skeleton. One first focuses one’s attention on one’s forehead, recognizes that it’s a bone, and thus feels no attachment for that bone. Then one slowly goes through one’s body and imagines one’s entire skeleton. One extends this visualization outside oneself and sees everything in the form of a skeleton. Afterwards, one works from the outside-in, and dissolves one’s vision by imagining one’s own skeleton again. In the Vajrayana practice of Chöd, everyone’s body is cut up and offered to the deities. One’s mind becomes less and less attached through these practices and then one can relax.

If one has much anger, one replaces that kind of mind by meditating on compassion. I explained the practice of meditation on compassion in great detail and you can read my article in the websites of Karma Lekshey Ling Institute in Nepal, Karma Sherab Ling in Münster, and Karma Chang Chub Choepel Ling in Heidelberg, so I will not speak about it now.

One is very inquisitive, but one can’t know things clearly because one’s mind is dull and not sharp, so meditating interdependence sharpens one’s mind. The teachings on the twelve links of interdependent origination are very long, but one can meditate them in a short time by realizing that everything exists in dependence. One knows many things because one’s mind becomes very active when one practices in this way. Those are the methods of transforming one’s afflictive mind according to the Sutrayana tradition of Buddhism.

Transforming one’s afflictive mind in Vajrayana is compared to a farmer who uses turd as manure for his fields to grow enlightenment crops. The example for transforming afflictions to a useful way that Jamgon Kongtrul gives in the text is:

“The uncommon approach of mantra is to transform afflictive emotions. When desire arises, you meditate on Amitabha or a deity such as Heruka in union. The desirous thought is transformed into the deity. The other deluded emotions are treated in the same way.”

Jamgon Kongtrul tells us that one transforms one’s negative emotion of attachment by meditating Buddha Amitabha. One meditates Buddha Akshobya when one’s mind becomes very aggressive, for example. The nature of attachment becomes Amitabha. Meditating Amitabha, who belongs to the same family as attachment and desire, is a means to directly use attachment on the path. What does ‘the same family’ mean? For example, a lump of gold is gold, even while

one doesn't see it when encrusted in ore. Both gold and its encrustation belong to the same family. One doesn't win pure gold from something else but only when one slowly cleanses it of its encrustation. Like that, one thinks of Buddha Amitabha when one realizes that one has attachment. In Sutrayana, one meditates on a skeleton when attachment arises in one's mind. In Vajrayana, one replaces it with Amitabha. It's a different way of working with one's mind. Then one is very happy when one feels attachment because one sees it as an opportunity to meditate Amitabha. One is also very happy when anger or aggression arises in one's mind because it is an opportunity to meditate and see the image of Akshobya. One notices that one's anger slowly transforms into Akshobya and gradually one attains his qualities. That is what we call "practice" or "training." It is the Vajrayana way of working and is very important.

Let me tell you a story. After having fled from Tibet, His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama made his first pilgrimage to Rajgir, India, the site where Lord Buddha turned the Wheel of Dharma a second time and gave the Prajnaparamita teachings. We see stones and rocks everywhere when we visit Rajgir, but His Holiness saw *Prajnaparamitasutras*. He couldn't go because he didn't want to step on the texts. So he looked at the sacred site from a distance. It is recorded in *The Prajnaparamitasutra* that Rajgir looked like a pure realm when Lord Buddha presented the teachings there. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had the same experience. The place is the same, but it means having the sacred outlook.

Having really worked on it, being fully trained, and having transformed one's attachment, then it naturally becomes the quality of Buddha Amitabha. One needn't eliminate attachment but uses it to practice Amitabha meditation.

The five Buddha families relate to one's five mind poisons. And there's a difference if one has transformed one's mind poison into a Buddha family. If one has realized Amitabha, one can realize the others, too, because they belong together. One can choose working on the strongest mind poison that one has and transform it first. If one notices that one has much aggression, for example, one can use that time meaningfully and meditate Buddha Akshobya. Eventually one doesn't have to think of practicing as one normally does when one is aggressive because meditating Akshobya will naturally happen on its own. One no longer becomes more aggressive by thinking about what or who made one angry and thus doesn't cause more suffering for oneself and others, rather one's mind is focused on Akshobya. One can also use different colors, elements, or qualities of a Buddha family, because they have different colors, elements, and qualities. They are just different methods to transform one's mind poisons. The nature of anger and aggression is mirror-like wisdom. When one isn't angry as one usually is, then good qualities can shine in one's mind as clearly as in a mirror. And that is why a Vajrayana practitioner can be happy, even if there may be a reason to be angry and aggressive, for instance. Or even if there are things to crave, a Vajrayana practitioner doesn't complain but makes good use of the opportunity to meditate Amitabha. I think that's quite good, right? Vajrayana meditation is good.

Student: "In the Sutrayana tradition, we always have to be very nice and kind."

Lama: Yes.

Question: "Aggression and greed are like the fast-flowing current of a river and meditation is like building a channel. I have a problem if the mind poison is bigger than the channel. What should I do then?"

Lama: Just try. If you can think of a buddha, then it's okay. It's normal that one's antidote is not that strong in the beginning. One's emotion is very strong and the antidote is very small. It will slowly, slowly change. One's emotions will decrease and one's meditation will increase. It doesn't matter that it takes much time. The more you reflect and meditate, an effect is going on inside. It may not be vivid because it takes time, but something is going on. We have long training in being aggressive during our lives, and now we have to turn the training around through the practice of meditation. Then, just like aggression arises naturally, meditation will arise naturally. Think of babies, who don't have many emotions; they don't have much aggression or jealousy. One can see how they become aggressive and jealous over time. Transforming emotions is just as timely. Meditation is quite new, and one has to try like a baby. People think that being strong and aggressive is being human, so one learns from them. Meditation is also like that – one has to learn. This was only an example. If you grow up around people who aren't aggressive or jealous, I don't think that you will be an angry or jealous person because you would have no idea about being upset or about being jealous.

Same student: "I have taken on a form and my mind might already be filled with greed, aggression, and jealousy when I was born."

Lama: We say that there are two different kinds of mind poisons. One kind is more innate and the other is more imputed. I'm speaking about the imputed ones, which are the ones we train.

Recognition is paramount to Mahamudra. As stated by Jamgon Kongtrul in the text:

"The exceptional approach is to recognize the true nature of afflictive emotions. When desirous thoughts arise vividly, looking directly at their essence, they subside in themselves. This is the dawning of Mahamudra, bliss and emptiness inseparable. It is also called pristine wisdom of discernment. There has never been anything to reject, nor to accept, nor to transform; everything is contained within mind. Know that there is no other intention of a buddha than simply the uncontrived mind itself."

When a mind poison arises – whether fear, aggression, attachment, jealousy –, one looks at it directly. One directly looks at one's aggression, for example, rather than thinking about it. While looking at one's anger, it slowly disappears. At that time, one has no more anger and primordial wisdom arises and increases. Jetsün Milarepa therefore taught: "Look at your mind. When you look at your mind, you don't see anything." In the same way, when you look at your anger, you don't see anything. When you don't see anything, you just relax. That is meditation. One looks directly at anger, fear, jealousy, etc. that arises and it disappears on its own. If one focuses one's attention on one's anger, for instance, and thinks, "Oh, the last time it was the same problem. This time there's also a problem," then one's anger becomes more powerful. If one doesn't think about it but looks at it directly, then it disappears. That is the nature of anger. One turns it, and that is one's new habit.

Jamgon Kongtrul explained three steps one needs to take: rejection, transformation, and recognition. The great scholar Gyalwa Yangön explained how they can be used in one meditation. In the text:

"There is a method for practicing all three of these approaches in one sitting, according to Gyalwa Yangön. With thoughts of desire, for example, as soon as they arise think: 'From now on until enlightenment I will do away with these ordinary thoughts of desire.' In this way establish an attitude of rejection. Then imagine that whatever ordinary disturbing thoughts of desire in the minds of all

beings throughout space, causing unbearable experiences of suffering, as well as the thoughts of desire causing obstacles to the minds of spiritual guides who are practicing Dharma, are all gathered into your own desire, and the minds of all beings become free of desire. Then, thinking that by using these very thoughts of desire, you will practice the two stages in order to place all beings in the state of Vajradhara, meditate that you instantly become a heruka such as Chakrasamvara, masculine and feminine in union, with all the adornments. When you identify your awareness with the masculine and visualize the form of the feminine too intimately, there is still the danger that the toxic effect of desire will resurface, resulting initially in loss of vital energy and ultimately in coming under the power of desire. In general, it is inappropriate to pursue mundane thoughts and afflictive emotions while meditating on a deity. Imagine that your Root Guru, magnificent and powerful, is in your heart on a lotus and moon seat. Pray sincerely again and again for the blessing that the thoughts of desire that occur in your mind arise as the pristine wisdom of discernment. Then look directly at your own mind as the inseparability of the deity, the Guru, and the emotion. The meditation should be maintained from the time the emotion arises just until it is resolved. Afterward, do a prayer to perfectly dedicate the merit, such as 'By this virtue may the thoughts of desire of all deluded sentient beings and obstacles to the stages and paths of Dharma practitioners be eliminated, and the bliss-emptiness of Mahamudra be actualized.' Apply this kind of meditation to hatred and stupidity as well. For pacifying hatred, it is especially effective to meditate on a deity."

Is it clear? It's like that. The text is rather complicating, so I will explain it a little bit easier, but it might be even more complicating.

One can apply the three methods of practice when any emotion arises. If one has fear, for example, one has to switch one's attention on Buddha Akshobya. For example, when one is aggressive, one recognizes that one is aggressive. One makes the strong commitment to always really reject it. One makes this commitment every time aggression arises. One realizes that it is very strong, that it really hurts others, and causes so many obstacles. One imagines everyone else's aggression and thinks that one is taking it upon oneself, which is like the practice of giving and taking. One makes strong wishes that every living being be free of aggression. At the same time, one thinks about Akshobya intensively. The text states that one thinks of the deity in union. In any case, one tells oneself that one will meditate the aspect of the deity whenever aggression arises in one's mind. One can meditate a female or male deity or think that one's Root Guru is seated on a lotus and moon disc in one's heart. One thinks that one's aggression is transformed into mirror-like wisdom and makes sincere supplication prayers. One imagines that the meditation deity, in our example Akshobya, our Root Lama, and our aggression are united. They are inseparable, which means that, because one doesn't differentiate, one's aggression is one's Lama and Akshobya is one's Lama. There is no difference and one rests in that. One prays that all living beings be free of aggression and attain Mahamudra.

Question: "Does one look directly at one's mind as the inseparability of the deity, the Guru, and the emotion? Is that the recognition part?"

Lama: Yes.

Another student: "A thought just occurred to me. You spoke about three aspects, rejecting an emotion, transformation, and directly looking at it. In association with Sadhana practice, is developing bodhicitta the aspect of rejection, creating the visualization of a deity the transformation, and directly looking the dissolution phase?"

Lama: These things are a little bit more practical, so one uses emotions directly. It doesn't matter if you compare, but normally we say that this is how to meditate directly. It will be explained later on in the text that cultivating bodhicitta, making offerings, dedicating the merit, etc. are more common to Sutrayana and visualizing the deity has more to do with transformation. You will find these in Vajrayana Sadhana practices, too. But reciting the lineage, refuge, bodhicitta, and dedication prayers are mostly based on the Sutras. The general Vajrayana points will be explained very clearly later in the text. Sadhana practices are more Vajrayana; there are only a few in Sutrayana.

So, that is how one practices the three stages of rejection, transformation, and recognition in one. In the first instant when aggression arises, one looks at it, reflects that it's not good, and makes the strong commitment to reject it. In the second instant, one thinks one's aggression is Buddha Akshobya and imagines oneself as Akshobya. If one becomes more aggressive, one imagines one's Root Lama seated on a lotus and moon disc in one's heart center. One sees them as inseparable and looks directly. By seeing they are inseparable, one is looking at one's aggressive mind when practicing in this way. While looking, they disappear, which means that the nature of aggression is the ultimate Lama. The more one sees aggression disappear, the more one recognizes that the nature of aggression is the ultimate meditation deity. One finds the three together. One engages in Guru Yoga and deity meditation practices to realize the essence – everything is there. Recognition is the essential point. Is it okay? Understood? No?

Student: "I understand that we practice to eliminate aggression. Imagining it's the same as the Lama, do I also have to eliminate him and he becomes smaller and smaller?"

Lama: There is nothing to eliminate in the nature of aggression. One only eliminates anger. The more one looks, one sees the nature because it shines forth. Understood? Yes? So, that's the way meditation works.

Elimination in the Sutrayana tradition is knowing that anger is very bad and being strongly committed to reject it, otherwise it won't work. The commitment is very important. In Vajrayana, one looks and thinks of Buddha Akshobya when one feels that one is angry. If that doesn't work, one imagines one's aggression, one's Lama, and Akshobya are inseparable and looks directly. When one just looks, anger disappears and thus the ultimate Lama becomes more and more vivid. And that is identical with the ultimate aspect of the meditation deity. Of course, they are different on the relative level.

Question: "Can we therefore practice Akshobya without aggression?"

Lama: Of course. I spoke about one way to overcome aggression. It's one aspect of Akshobya, but he has a good connection to aggression. In general, he is the specialist for aggression, like one pole of a magnet.

Next question: "It's not clear for me how an emotion can be resolved by looking at it. Is it the same as understanding that it has no inherent nature?"

Lama: Yes, it's the same. It's more direct. Even a second is enough time to see. You just look at your anger when it arises and you will see that it's not there – it disappeared, and then you can experience emptiness. It's difficult working on this from an intellectual level because one has to study all the logical discourses to understand that nothing has inherent existence. By looking directly, one gets a glimpse of emptiness. Shantideva explained that enlightenment is like a flash of lightning – everything is clear - and that's like a little enlightenment. We can experience a

lightning flash, but a buddha is always sunshine, without any clouds. We are more clouded all the time. That's how one can imagine enlightenment.

Continuing with the instructions from here:

“Similarly, there are various ritual sequences in the new and old traditions, but insofar as they all purify the thoughts of afflictive emotions, there is no difference. Briefly, the way in which the rituals purify is as follows: Meditation on the absorption of suchness purifies the previous death experience. All-arising absorption purifies the mental body of the intermediate existence. Absorption of the cause, meditation on the lotus, sun and moon seat, purifies the physical base, the parents' sperm and ovum, white and red.”

Whether practicing the methods of the old or newer tradition, the purpose of the meditations they teach is to transform one's afflictive mind through the purification of one's negative thoughts and emotions. Jamgon Kongtrul explained the liturgical purification practice of first meditating on emptiness by resting one's mind on suchness, which becomes the seed for creating a meditation deity. Meditation on suchness is the practice to transform one's experience of death. In Mahamudra, it is said that the mother clear light and the son clear light come together when one dies. Therefore, it's important to rest one's mind on suchness when one dies, the reason one trains now.

Mother clear light is the true nature of one's mind that is always present but is obscured. Nevertheless, one can experience the mother clear light for short moments during meditation. It will be possible to experience the son clear light uniting with the mother clear light if one dies meditating. Then one can attain enlightenment in what is called “the bardo of dharmata” (*bar-do* meaning the ‘intermediate state’).

The bardo teachings speak of white luminosity, red luminosity, and black luminosity. If one hasn't become accustomed to meditating and doesn't meditate at death, one loses consciousness for a moment when one blacks out. This takes place when the substance of the red seed of one's mother (which is situated below the navel) and the substance of the white seed of one's father (which is situated in the upper part of one's body) are not held anymore due to the dissolution of one's energy-winds and come together and meet at one's heart center. When they meet and come together, one blacks out and this is the moment of death.

Suchness, synonymous with the term ‘emptiness,’ is addressed briefly and practically here. Emptiness was elaborated in great detail by Acharya Nagarjuna in the treatises that he wrote on the Middle-Way View. Vajrayana includes the view of the Middle-Way, which is the reason one has to dedicate much time and energy studying the texts. Without having understood the Middle-Way View correctly, it's very difficult knowing what Vajrayana really means when one meditates. If one can meditate and hold one's mind on suchness when one dies, one can recognize the mother clear light when it comes together with the son clear light, become enlightened, and not experience the black-out. If one becomes enlightened by recognizing the mother clear light, one needn't continue through the bardos because one is free. This means that if one didn't become enlightened during life, it's possible to become enlightened when one dies.

Question: “Does that mean that we need to recognize the red and white lights when we die?”

Lama: Yes, there is also the black light.

Same student: “So the red light is from the mother’s light?”

Lama: No, it’s referred to as the mother light because one’s experience it like a son meeting his mother, which is the reason it’s called son light. It’s an expression.

Same student: “So the mother light is not the red light?”

Lama: All three lights are mother clear light. During meditation, one recognizes the three lights that appear to one and rests one’s mind in them. Then it’s like seeing one’s mother again after many years when one dies – then one is very happy. A good practitioner can rest in non-conceptual meditation of clear light for two minutes while alive. One can meditate in the same way when one dies if one has practiced in life. Lamas can die meditating in the recognition of the clear light because they were able to do so in life. His Holiness the XVIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, had many birds and at Rumtek it is said that they could meditate while dying and after they died. Not being used to meditation, one cannot recognize the red and white clear light because they appear in very short moments. One only has the feeling that they were shortest flashes of white, red, and black light.

One may not practice *Phowa* (‘transference of consciousness’) for someone on their deathbed before the red and white seeds have united in the heart center of that person, otherwise it would be killing them. Even though the outer elements have stopped functioning, the person is not dead yet. The outer dissolution is evident when a person stops breathing, cannot lift the body anymore, and so forth. Western medicals say a person is dead when he or she has stopped breathing, but Buddhists say they have still not separated from their body. Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche wrote a very precise and detailed book on this, entitled *Mind Beyond Death* (published by Snow Lion in 2007). *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche is only a general discussion. So, if one hasn’t attained enlightenment during one’s life, then one can during the bardos of dying and death.

Student: “The red and white seeds unite at death. Then the white light first appears, then the red light appears, and then the black light appears. These lights appear for a very short instant for someone who isn’t trained. Therefore they don’t recognize it and perceive the black light? Is that right?”

Lama: All three appear for a very short instant, the black light too. Saying the white comes first is another teaching. The *Kalachakratantra* states that the lights appear in that order and then one blacks out. People who have no meditative experience just see that they black out and don’t know anything.

Same student: “So the black light is not the black-out?”

Lama: Fainting and blacking out is the normal way of experiencing death, in which case one doesn’t recognize anything. Blacking out in this context means that all one’s thoughts and emotions have dissolved and have been transformed due to meditating on emptiness, and one becomes so clear.

Same student: “One is free.”

Lama: Yes. There are many meanings. One can think that black is a bad color and other colors are special. Every color has a different meaning.

Now Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche addresses the time one comes into the bardo and spoke about meditating a protection circle around a nice palace so that no hindrances can enter. In the

Mahakala Sadhana, a double protection circle around the palace is visualized. One imagines that the palace is decorated elaborately, each colourful ornament symbolizing a quality of pure enlightenment.

It's said in the bardo teachings that before one has come to know that one has died, one's mind returns to one's corpse and sees everything. One speaks to those persons one was associated with in life, sits at the dining table with them, asks them for food, but they don't respond because they don't see and hear one. Being very upset, one thinks, "This isn't normal. What is going on? Why are they ignoring me?" The bardo teachings say that one dangles one's feet in water, walks through sand, and sees that one leaves no footprints behind. It slowly dawns on one that one has died. Having slowly realized that one is dead, the past vanishes more and more and one turns one's attention towards what will happen. Seeing what will happen in the future frightens one. Therefore Buddhists perform many practices for the deceased, which can be helpful and can change their situation. I spoke about my experience with my deceased aunt. She stopped appearing in my dreams after I prayed for her. It's like that, so I think it's good to do something for the deceased.

Question: "Even years later?"

Lama: I think so. Maybe they have already gone through the bardos and have been reborn, but they can still long to be helped and can benefit. It doesn't benefit as much as when one prays for them during the bardo, though. If one is confident like Jetsün Milarepa, then one doesn't need to worry. Milarepa said: "I am confident and can transform experiences into perfect awakening." We should become like little Milarepas and then needn't worry about the time we will spend in the bardo.

In meditation practices, one imagines the protection circle, the mandalas, the many palaces with doors, and so forth. These practices are easy methods to transform one's state of bardo. If one doesn't become enlightened in this life or during the bardo after death, one has a next chance in a next life. If one has become accustomed to the powerful Vajrayana creation and completion stages of meditation practice, one might get it the next time one meditates.

Continuing with the text, Jamgon Kongtrul explained the five factors of enlightenment and wrote:

"Meditation on the seed syllable purifies the entering consciousness. The transformation into implements and again the meditation on the seed syllables purifies the fetal stage of round, oval, oblong, and so on. The fully complete form purifies the habitual patterns of the body, speech, and mind. This manner of the five enlightening factors purifying womb birth can be applied in a similar way to the others."

'Absorption of the cause' in the foregoing verse is practicing the five factors of enlightenment now. The first factor of enlightenment is visualizing the seat of the sun to transform the mother's red substance, the second factor is visualizing the moon disc to transform the father's white substance. Some practices only have visualizing the moon, others only the sun, but it's important to think that, although not mentioned, all qualities are present. As said, the visualization practices vary; some are more concentrated on visualization of the three rituals, others are more concentrated on the four vajra visualizations, but the meanings are there. We say that meditating

the male deity has more to do with the moon disc, and meditating the female deity has more to do with the sun disc.

After having visualized the sun disc and moon disc, one visualizes the third factor of enlightenment, which is the seed syllable of a meditation deity. It is the syllable HUNG for Dorje Sempa. While in the bardo of becoming, meditating the seed syllable transforms one's consciousness when entering the womb of one's mother. So, the first three factors are the cause for transforming one's consciousness. The consciousness referred to here is the eighth all-ground consciousness, which is the storehouse of all one's habitual patterns. One doesn't enter the palace of samsara, rather one enters the enlightenment palace when one's all-ground consciousness has been purified of all blemishes and has been transformed into pristine, primordial wisdom. So, there are two palaces, that of samsara and that of nirvana. The palace of samsara is not an easy place.

Question: "Is one enlightened when one's ground consciousness has been transformed into primordial wisdom?"

Lama: Yes. Then one goes directly into the palace of enlightenment or the pure realm of a deity. There are many ways to say this. Wherever one goes, one sees everything the same and doesn't see samsara. For instance, we see everything blue if we wear glasses tinted blue, or we see everything in a yellow hue when we wear sunglasses. When one wears enlightenment glasses, one sees everything enlightened. But now we are wearing samsara glasses and see everything as samsara. It's like that.

In the meditation practice of Dorje Sempa, for example, one transforms his seed syllable HUNG into a white vajra and visualizes a small white HUNG in the center of the vajra. One visualizes light emanating from the seed syllable in the center of the vajra that brings offerings to the pure realms, from where the negative karma of all living beings is purified, light is sent to them, and many other good things are done. After 10 days in the womb, one develops into a round, oval, oblong, and other form of an embryo. Tibetan texts describe development of the embryo in these shapes from week to week. I think this process is described in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Lhaje Gampopa. By visualizing in the described way, one's development as an embryo into a fetus will be transformed.

Then one visualizes that the HUNG in the center of the vajra transforms into Dorje Sempa. This visualization of the clear image of Dorje Sempa transforms one's way of being born. One suffers very much while one is being born because one has the feeling that one is being squeezed tighter and tighter in a metal chamber. Having transformed one's way of being born, one has no more pain but feels that one is floating in the air when one is being born, because one is experiencing an enlightenment birth. The sacred texts say that Lord Buddha was not born from his mother's womb but that he entered the world by leaving her right side. Christianity also says that Jesus Christ was born to a virgin and had no father. Students told me about this when we visited a museum together. It's quite interesting, somehow.

Question: "Is sending out the light the fourth factor of enlightenment and appearance as a deity the fifth factor?"

Lama: Transforming the seed syllable into the vajra and sending out the light are the fourth factor. Again, visualizing the sun disc is one. Visualizing the moon disc is two. Visualizing the

seed syllable is three. Visualizing the seed syllable in the center of the vajra and sending out light is four. The fifth factor of enlightenment is visualizing the perfect form of Dorje Sempa. More will come in the text.

Same student: “How does one understand Sadhanas that don’t have visualization of the vajra?”

Lama: They don’t need it. I am using the example of Dorje Sempa.

Same student: “So the five factors of enlightenment are not in all Sadhanas?”

Lama: Some have the lotus flower, some have a chakra; there are five different ways. It depends upon the deity one is meditating. I am speaking about the Buddha family of Akshobya, so we have the vajra. There are so many differences. In the Medicine Buddha Sadhana, we have the blessing of the three places from Medicine Buddha - one’s forehead from the Medicine Buddha with the white syllable OM, one’s throat with the red syllable AH, and one’s heart with the blue syllable HUNG, which transform one’s body, speech, and mind. This is not found in the practice of Dorje Sempa, for instance.

We will skip the next section of the text, in which Jamgon Kongtrul explains another practice and continue with the lines:

“The entrance of the wisdom beings purifies skilled activities and trainings. Sealing with the empowerments purifies the inheritance of one’s birthright.”

If one has Medicine Buddha teachings and practices the Sadhana, one makes different mudras and receives the blessings of the five Buddhas, which means one becomes empowered by the five Buddha families. As stated in the text, this “purifies the inheritance of one’s birthright.” Being empowered means that one belongs to the enlightenment generation.

“Homage, confession, offerings, and praise purify the enjoyment of sense objects.”

In Sadhana practice, one makes homage, makes many confessions, makes many offerings, and recites many praises. These practices purify the objects one perceives with one’s sensory faculties and, having been transformed, one perceives them as qualities of the pure realms. Saying the meal prayer as an example, usually one has a limited sense of taste when one eats a meal. But a buddha perceives hundreds of delicious tastes when he has the same meal. By reciting praises, one transforms one’s sensory perceptions. One transforms one’s eye faculty, one’s tongue faculty, and so forth. One can hear everything and everywhere. It is said that a bodhisattva on the ninth bhumi understands all languages that are spoken without having to learn them. They even understand what birds are singing. Christianity also has stories of saints who understood the language of birds. I think this happens.

“Recitation of mantra purifies irrelevant speech.”

Having engaged in the above practices, one repeats the mantra of the deity one is meditating. Mantra recitation is explained in great detail in Vajrayana because there are different ways to visualize while repeating the mantra. This practice purifies one’s normal speech.

After having engaged in the practices described above, one dissolves everything into emptiness. As stated in the text:

“The dissolution phase purifies the death experience of that life,”

This means to say that one doesn't take on a samsaric birth again. Having dissolved everything into emptiness, one reappears as the deity, and

“the reappearance in the deity's form purifies the intermediate existence. Without going further, this is it.”

It is clear in the Chenrezig text that during post-meditation whoever one sees is Noble Chenrezig, every sound one hears is his mantra, and everything one thinks is his compassion. We have that contemplation during post-meditation.

“The initial going for refuge and generation of the intention of enlightenment, and the concluding dedication and aspiration are indispensable in the Great Vehicle approach. Consecration of offerings, feast gatherings, and so on are additional ways through which you can effortlessly complete the two accumulations.”

These practices are Mahayana practices that are natural for a Vajrayana practitioner. Blessing the shrine, filling the bowls with new offerings, making tormas, and all these Vajrayana practices are methods to accumulate merit and wisdom. So, when one practices a Sadhana, one creates one's secret inner world and slowly transforms one's reality.

The instructions on the creation stage of practice aren't finished and we haven't started discussing the completion stage. This has only been a guideline. How to meditate, which hindrances arise, what one needs to do then, what one has to think, how one meditates when one's mind becomes dull, how one meditates when one's mind becomes agitated and distracted are explained very clearly further on in this text.

Question: “What is transformed in post-meditation?”

Lama: We are discussing transformation of the next bardo after death so that one doesn't have to cross the bardos after one dies. If one can't transform the bardo in this life, then one transforms it in another life.

Same student: “This life is bardo too?”

Lama: Yes. There are six kinds of bardo according to the tradition of Guru Rinpoche, and this life is the bardo of life; other traditions speak of four bardos. Bardo usually refers to the intermediate state after death. Bardo is very interesting, but some people get scared when they hear about it.

Dedication

Through this goodness may omniscience be attained
and thereby may every enemy (mental defilement) be overcome.
May beings be liberated from the ocean of samsara
that is troubled by waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

By this virtue may I quickly attain the state of Guru Buddha and then

lead every being without exception to that very state!
May precious and supreme bodhicitta that has not been generated now be so,
and may precious bodhicitta that has already been never decline, but continuously increase!

Long-life Prayer for Lama Kelzang Wangdi

May the life of the Glorious Lama remain steadfast and firm.
May peace and happiness fully arise for beings as limitless in number as space is vast in extent.
Having accumulated merit and purified negativities,
may I and all living beings without exception swiftly establish the levels and grounds of
buddhahood.



When Venerable Lama Kelzang did not teach in English, the instructions were translated into English with sincere gratitude for the most excellent German rendering generously offered by Hannelore Wendroth by Gaby Hollmann from Munich, solely responsible for all mistakes. Gratitude to Lama Kelzang for having made the recording available. Verses of the Root Text by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye (in italics here), in: *Creation and Completion – Essential Points of Tantric Meditation*, introduced, translated & annotated by Sarah Harding, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1996/2002, pages 27-45. Photo of Lama Kelzang courtesy of Josef Kerklaue from Münster. Photo of flower taken & kindly offered by Lena Fong from San Francisco. Copyright Lama Kelzang Wangdi, Kamalashila Institute in Langenfeld & Karma Lekshey Ling Institute in Nepal, 2009. All rights reserved.

May truthfulness and goodliness increase!