



**Acharya Lama Kelzang Wangdi**

## **Instructions on Creation & Completion Stages of Meditation based on**

***“The Essential Points of Creation & Completion,”*  
composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye**

- Second Seminar -

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### **Introduction**

Let us recite *The Dorje Chang Lineage Prayer* before continuing 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-bsdüs-bshugs-so - The Essential Points of Creation and Completion* that was composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great.

We discussed the section of the text that explains the general creation stage of every Vajrayana Sadhana - taking refuge, giving rise to *bodhicitta* ('the mind of awakening'), creating the main visualization, making many mandala offerings, reciting mantras, making dedications, and reciting auspicious prayers. Some Sadhanas teach to remove obstacles, *gegs-thor* in Tibetan. This is not included in the Tara and Medicine Buddha Sadhanas, but it is practiced, among others, in the Milarepa and Karma Pakshi Guru Yoga Sadhanas by making a special *torma* ('ritual cake') offering so that no obstacles impede one's practice. Having removed obstacles, one creates what is

called “a vajra tent” with a protection circle made of double vajras around the tent to keep all obstacles out. As mentioned earlier, one creates two protection circles in Mahakala practice. Varying in all Sadhanas, this is just a general idea of creation stage practice.

### **The Teachings (cont.)**

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye wrote:

*“The basis of purification, which is the very Buddha nature, abides as the body, with its clear and complete vajra signs and marks. A similar form is used as the path and leads to the fruition of purification: that very divine form that existed as the basis. At the time of ultimate fruition of actual freedom, this is called ‘obtaining the state of Vajradhara.’”*

There are four key-points in creation stage practice, the basis of purification being the first. What needs to be purified is the second point, and the method that is the path of purification is the third. The result of purification is the fourth point. All visualizations of the creation stage – the various forms, implements, etc. – are methods of the path.

The basis of purification is the Buddha nature. Sometimes it is called “the nature of one’s mind.” The Dzogchen teachings say that one has to realize *rig-pa*, ‘awareness devoid of ignorance and dualistic fixation.’ Buddha nature and *rig-pa* have the same meaning.

Speaking of Buddha nature, it means that all perfect and pure qualities of a buddha are always and already present in every living being without exception. Whether sleeping or eating, one’s Buddha nature is present, but one doesn’t recognize it because it is covered and not visible, just like the sky and space when covered by clouds. One’s obscurations, which are like clouds, are one’s discursive thoughts and negative emotions, such as attachment, jealousy, pride, ignorance, greed, and so on. They aren’t permanent, but are temporary. Like space, our Buddha nature is permanent. The meditation practices of the creation stage are methods to remove the clouds. When one concentrates one-pointedly on all visualization practices and remains mindful of them, distracting thoughts do not arise. It might be difficult in the beginning, but it slowly becomes easier through practice. When one has become proficient at engaging in the creation stage practices, one meditates while one isn’t meditating, i.e., at all times, and then discursive thoughts and negative emotions have no chance. Due to one’s daily practice, one slowly comes to recognize one’s own Buddha nature, i.e., one realizes the nature of one’s mind or the reality of all phenomena, which is the result.

It is indispensable to understand these four points, otherwise it’s impossible to understand the Vajrayana path. For example, one can meditate being Arya Tara because one has the Buddha nature. One isn’t putting on a mask, but one is Tara because one’s Buddha nature is Tara. Thus one can have the pride of being the deity, called “vajra pride.” The basis to become Tara is one’s own Buddha nature. Again, it’s very important to understand the four points correctly because then one understands the deep meaning of why one visualizes and meditates in Vajrayana, which teaches very interesting means and profound methods to realize one’s true nature.

*Question:* “Would you list the four points again, please?”

*Lama:* The basis for purification is one's Buddha nature. There's nothing to purify in one's Buddha nature, rather the second point concerns what is to be purified, which are one's obscurations. The third point concerns the methods of the creation stage to dispel one's obscurations, and the fourth point is recognizing one's Buddha nature, which is fruition.

One will have attained the state of Vajradhara when one has recognized one's Buddha nature at fruition. The meaning is the same. Who is Vajradhara? Five Buddha families are usually mentioned, and Vajradhara, who is the sixth, is the essence of all five. The five Buddha families are the five wisdoms that are realized when the five main mind poisons have been purified and dispelled. When one has realized all five wisdoms, one has realized Vajradhara. It's important to understand this.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche then stated:

*"Whether one meditates on an elaborate or concise version of creation stage, there are three main points: Clarity of form purifies attachment to the appearing object, recollecting the purity frees one from clinging to corporeality, and maintaining pride vanquishes clinging to ordinary self."*

When one visualizes the main deity, such as Arya Tara, during the creation stage, it's very important to understand the three points. 'Clarity of form' refers to the clear appearance of her form, i.e., how she looks with all her symbolic implements. Her image appears as clearly as a reflection in a mirror. This visualization purifies one's usual mode of perceiving appearances. For example, whether one thinks it is good or bad, one has strong concepts about our universe. When one really thinks in a Vajrayana way, one sees the universe as the pure realm of Noble Tara. One sees every female living being as Tara and every male living being as Chenrezig – as enlightened beings. By keeping a clear visualization, one transforms one's mundane thoughts and way of thinking. So, that's the first point.

'Recollecting the purity' is *rnam-dag-drän-pa* in Tibetan and actually means 'remembering the pure meaning.' It is the second point and means while seeing the pure image of Tara, remembering what she really means. The many symbols are methods employed in Vajrayana and one needs to know what they mean. If one doesn't understand the meaning, one gets lost by fixating on the clear form. The form is just a symbol on which one focuses one's attention. If one doesn't go beyond focusing on the form, one will lose the possibility to develop enlightened qualities. The third point, 'maintaining pride,' means having vajra pride. One is really proud when one realizes that one is Tara. One visualizes oneself as Tara when practicing the Sadhana and while repeating her mantra, so vajra pride is having no doubts that one is really Tara. Seeing oneself as Tara transforms one's mundane pride that arises due to one's self-clinging and obscurations. It's very important to understand these three points fully when one engages in creation stage practices.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche then goes into more detail on how to clearly visualize being the deity and wrote:

*"As to the first, initially visualize each individual part, such as the head, hands, feet, and so on, and when somewhat used to that, meditate clearly on the entire form."*

Here he said that for a beginner of Vajrayana practice it might be easier to just focus on the head, the hands, feet, body, ornaments, and every part slowly, slowly. One can place a picture in front of oneself, just look at it, remember her qualities, and become used to the practice. Having become used to the visualization, one imagines the entire form.

In the next lines, he teaches what to do when one has problems:

*“When meditation is not stable, and thoughts come and go, focus your awareness on an implement, such as the vajra in the hand. If you are languishing, focus on the crossed legs, and if sinking, focus on something like a jewel in the deity’s crown. Then if there aren’t so many active thoughts, but the form is unclear and murky, set before you a picture or statue that is well made and appropriately painted, and without thinking, look at it for a long time. Then immediately generate your own body in that image. This will enhance the former meditation.”*

Sometimes thoughts arise while one is meditating and thus one is distracted. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is telling us to then just focus the mind on the udapala flower of Tara, as in our example, or on the vajra if one is meditating Dorje Sempa. One’s mind isn’t stable and calm when one meditates because so many thoughts come and go. Then one should focus on the implements of a deity.

There are two hindrances to meditation, disturbing thoughts and mental dullness. Disturbing thoughts distract from meditation and then it’s advisable to lower one’s gaze and focus one’s attention on the lower part of the body in the picture or statue or, when visualizing oneself as the deity, according to the general instructions one imagines that a sphere of dark light flows downwards through one’s body. If one’s mind is dull, on the other hand, one looks straight ahead or lifts one’s gaze upwards and focuses on the jewel in the crown of the deity. If one continues meditating and the visualization isn’t clear, one looks at a good picture or statue that one sees clearly, without thinking about it.

*“You may recollect the appropriate purities, but this mental exercise might just add to discursive thoughts. For the beginner it will become the cause of unclear, scattered meditation. It is better to meditate on the deity’s form as empty and light, like a rainbow, and to know that the one who is doing that is one’s own mind. Mind itself, intrinsically free of a basis, is emptiness, and the demonstration of its special qualities is the arising of forms of faces, hands, and ornaments.”*

Is it clear? If you have any questions, please ask. If it is clear, then I don’t have to explain this verse because there is still a lot of text to go through.

*Question:* “Since the statue is higher up on the shrine, I look upwards when I look at the lower section of the image.”

*Lama:* Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is not referring to a statue higher on the shrine, rather to the visualization in front, which is level with oneself. I think it’s helpful to imagine it like that.

*Next question:* “Does one always visualize the deity in front on the same level? I thought the deity one visualizes is higher up.”

*Lama:* It depends. In Vajrayana, we have four Tantras that teach different ways to visualize. In Kriyatantra, one imagines the deity is higher because it is like a king and one is like a servant. Practitioners of Charyatantra see the deity like a friend on the same level. So, every Tantra teaches

a different way to visualize. If you want to know more about the Tantras, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche wrote a very excellent book on the nine *yanas* ('vehicles'), entitled *Well Awakening*.

*"Do not meditate on pride; cut through the root of ego-clinging. When ego-clinging is destroyed, wherever one's mind focuses, its essence arises vividly. In this way, by meditation on the creation stage with effort, while actually meditating, the impact of 'real' appearances will be diminished, and without meditating, the deity arises. This is the lesser experience of luminous appearance. When all deluded appearances, regardless of meditating or not, arise as the deity and divine palace, it is intermediate luminous appearance. When you meditate on the deity and form and formless beings see you as the deity, it is the great luminous appearance, called a maturation knowledge-holder in the Ancient tradition."*

Now Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche speaks about the lesser, middle, and greater experience of practicing the creation stage. When engaged in deity meditation, one is concerned about relinquishing the root of mundane pride, which is ego-clinging. If one cuts the root that is ego-clinging, the fruits that are one's mind poisons will not arise and grow and anything one focuses one's attention on will appear very clearly. So it is said that one needs to exert much effort at the beginning of creation stage practice by meditating four times a day. One's mind will slowly become happy, relaxed, and calm, and one's environment will change and be very harmonious. One will be less anxious and less preoccupied with distractions the more and longer one trains. Then meditation arises naturally when one is used to it.

Experiencing lesser luminosity is experiencing one aspect or real quality of a deity and is synonymous with 'nature of the mind' and 'Buddha nature.' Whether meditating or not, whether a disturbing thought arises or not, while eating or washing one's hands, the intermediate experience of having meditated the creation stage is feeling that one is in a pure realm and seeing everyone as a deity, *yidam* in Sanskrit. This means seeing the ultimate truth or experiencing great happiness.

As human beings, we have a form. There are very many other beings that don't have a form. Buddhism speaks of gods living on 17 various levels in the form realm, gods living on 4 different levels in the formless realm, and gods living in the realm of desire. During mandala offering, one makes many specific offerings to these gods. So, the greater experience of meditating the creation stage is that all form and formless beings see each other as yidams. When enlightened, one sees everything enlightened and doesn't see suffering, just as one sees that everyone is happy when one is happy. The Nyingma tradition calls this "the greater experience of luminosity," but it means the same.

*"The clear form of the deity is the luminous appearance of your own mind, and the unclear, dissatisfying experience is also your mind! So also, mind is the one who desires clarity and tries again, and mind is the wisdom deity and Guru. Everything is mind's appearance, and yet mind itself is uncontrived. The beauty of this ultimate essential point of the approach of the two stages is that no matter which of the many creation stages you do, if you apply clear awareness and mindfulness that is merely undistracted, when the meditation is clear, it arises as clarity-emptiness and when obscured as obscurity-emptiness!"*

For example, when meditating Arya Tara, she appears clearly in one's mind – this is the clarity of one's own mind. If one's mind is foggy while meditating, it's also just one's own mind. Whether one sees clearly or not, whether one wishes to develop clarity and doesn't, whatever appears to the meditating mind is just one's own mind. Wisdom means knowing the essence of one's mind, one's naked mind, one's mere mind, one's pure mind. One can call it "Lama" or "deity" – it is the ultimate Lama, the ultimate deity. Without creating anything, realizing that everything is the wisdom of one's own mind, *rang-sems-ye-shes*, one just rests within that. And this is the essence and key-point of the creation and completion stages of practice.

There are many visualization practices, but the aim of all creation practices is to be undistracted, to be fully mindful and aware of any image or implement one meditates. This is the key-point of clarity. Resting in clarity-emptiness inseparable, one sees the real yidam just as clearly as one sees a rainbow that one cannot catch or hold. A yidam is not a form. If it appears crooked or foggy in one's meditation, one knows that it is a mere imputation and rests in clarity-emptiness inseparable. Being distracted by imputations means one is fixated on the form of a yidam, in which case it's just a picture. This means to say that one thinks enlightenment must be "like this or like that." Actually, although nothing solid exists, all qualities are manifestations of the enlightened mind – like a rainbow. If one really sees that luminosity-emptiness inseparable is the quality of Arya Tara and rests one's mind on that, then everything will have been transformed into a buddha. One has a problem, though, if one sees Tara in a restricted way. Due to practitioners' varying habits and abilities, the buddhas have a different form, color, and demeanour, such as peaceful or forceful.

Some practices are very detailed; other practices aren't as detailed because not everybody wants to do that much. Some practitioners are inclined to develop wisdom and for them the Buddha offered teachings on wisdom. The Buddha is so skilful and kind – he showed many methods to suit everybody's inclinations and needs. There are many different methods to reach the goal, but ultimately there is no difference.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have any misunderstandings, they need to be clarified.

*Question:* "Can one say that the different practices are aimed to correct people's different weaknesses or faults?"

*Lama:* Yes, it is like that, but the four different Tantras of Vajrayana relate to four different lifestyles. Kriyatantra is for followers who are intent upon having everything neat, orderly, and clean and offers detailed instructions on how to practice in that way. There are practices for people who don't care about cleanness. Anuttarayogatantra is for those who are more direct. After all, people have different habits. Some people like both, so there are special practices for them.

*Same student:* "So a teacher has to know what a student's personal difficulties and afflictions are in order to recommend the right practices, like prescribing the right medicine."

*Lama:* Yes, only Buddha is capable of doing this, but the Buddha is gone 2,500 years now. So the only thing a teacher can do now is present the same introductory teachings to all his students. Otherwise it's very difficult. Teachers can help, they can clarify questions and support their students – it works.

Continuing with the text, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye wrote:

*“In general, creation stage is a contrivance, but the path of contrivance leads to the authentic natural state. With the mental conviction of the lack of reality in the root or ground of deluded grasping to deluded appearance, resting in a pristine state is completion stage itself, the actual natural state. The first stage is the provisional meaning and the latter the definitive meaning.”*

Here Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is saying that the visualization practices of the creation stage are contrived and that the completion stage practice leads to realization of the ultimate truth. Resting one's mind on one's understanding and recognition that things don't exist the way they appear is practicing the completion stage. Not creating anything, one rests in the natural and authentic state of one's mind. Due to one's delusion as to the way things really are, whether awake or asleep, one apperceives appearances delusively. Resting one's mind in one's recognition that appearances one apperceives while deluded are just as illusory as a T.V. show is the practice of the completion stage. An example for the consequences of seeing appearances delusively is taking a rope for a snake in the darkness of night and thus experiencing fear. One overcomes one's fear when one turns on the light and sees that a rope is a rope and isn't a snake. Turning on the light and seeing the true nature of appearances eradicates one's delusion about the true nature of all appearances and is accomplished by practicing the completion stage. Therefore, the creation stage of practice is provisional and the completion stage is definitive.

Provisional practices are presented because up and until now one hasn't been able to recognize the true nature of reality, of one's mind, of one's own yidam, of one's Buddha nature. The creation stage practices of visualizing a deity, the implements, the palace, etc. are symbolic creations that slowly lead one to realize the ultimate truth, which one accomplishes by meditating the completion stage. One needs to understand this correctly and relax one's mind on one's recognition one-pointedly. In the general instructions, the meditation stage of resting one's mind is called “calm abiding,” and the meditation stage of holding one's mind on one's recognition of the true nature of reality is called “special insight.” The completion stage of practice discussed here is like resting one's mind on the inseparability of calm abiding and special insight. This will be explained in more detail later on in the text.

*“It is said that if you understand mind, knowing this one thing illuminates everything, but if you don't understand mind, knowing everything obscures the one thing. The great master Noble Nagarjuna said it this way: ‘Where there is appropriate understanding of emptiness, all things are appropriate, and if there is no appropriate understanding of emptiness, nothing is.’ All of the various designations, such as Mahamudra, Dzogchen, Middle Path, unembellished, ultimate, enlightened intention of the Victorious Ones, intrinsic nature, perfection of wisdom, view, meditation, and action, and so on, indicate that mind itself and the true nature of objects have no true reality whatsoever and are beyond intellect and inexpressible. This one point could well be the synopsis of all teachings.”*

In these lines, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche stated very clearly that if one really understands the nature of one's mind or the nature of phenomena or one's Buddha nature, then one knows one thing and thus knows the nature of all things. If one hasn't understood the one or the other, one has understood nothing and will not be liberated from anything.

To understand the nature of one's mind, one has to look directly at one's mind, at any kind of mind, at any moment of mind. One can realize the nature of one's mind when one looks directly at one's thoughts, emotions, and feelings. One first looks at a thought and sees that it disappears while doing so. The more one looks, the more one finds that one can't find it. And one won't find it because its essence is emptiness. One thinks that thoughts are real, but one discovers that they aren't when one looks and rests in that non-finding. While progressing along the path, one becomes ever more free of delusive thoughts and emotions. By resting in those moments of freedom, slowly one's enlightened qualities (such as compassion, kindness, clarity, calm, wisdom, etc.) appear. They are the luminous aspect of one's mind. Presently these qualities are blocked by one's discursive thoughts, i.e., one's delusive mental contrivances. If one doesn't understand the truth that one's mind is emptiness-luminosity, one can't have compassion for others that easily. If one understands, one is open enough to see when others suffer and then naturally has compassion for them. For example, once there was a father with his children in the train. Everybody was upset and many people were angry because the children were running around and being noisy. A woman stood up, went to the father, and complained, "You should take care of your children and keep them quiet." The father told her that he was on his way home from the hospital where his wife had just died and, because they were so sad, he was allowing them to be free and to jump around. When the people in the train heard this, their attitude changed and loving kindness naturally arose in them. They let the children play and everybody was content. Like that, when one sees and knows what situations people endure, then one has genuine loving kindness and wants to help them. If one doesn't understand, one has many problems. If one understands, compassion comes naturally and there's no need to complain. On the contrary, one wants to help. So, one is liberated when one understands the truth.

As Acharya Nagarjuna said: "Where there is appropriate understanding of emptiness, all things are appropriate, and if there is no appropriate understanding of emptiness, nothing is." This means to say that emptiness is the nature of one's mind. Since the nature of all phenomena is emptiness, anything can appear. If emptiness weren't the nature of every phenomenon, then nothing could arise and appear. We have the saying that meditating emptiness is like meditating space. Understanding emptiness allows for more space in one's mind and for more openness. One's mind becomes less restricted and less narrow when it opens up. Many things occur freely in space – clouds can appear, airplanes can fly, and so forth. In the same way, if one understands emptiness, anything can display. It is referred to as Mahamudra by the Kagyüpas, Dzogchen by the Nyingmapas, Middle-Way by the Gelugpas, and Path and Fruition by the Sakyapas. They are different names but are synonymous and have the same meaning.

In the above verse, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche tells us that understanding the nature of one's mind is the key to obtain liberation. Understanding the nature of one's mind means understanding the nature of phenomena. An intellectual understanding does not suffice, rather one has to really understand through experience and really recognize "how it is." Having recognized "how it is," one is free of doubts and has deep confidence. It's impossible to experience liberation without confidence.

It's easier experiencing that the nature of thoughts and feelings (i.e., inner phenomena) is emptiness through meditation practice than to really experience that the nature of outer phenomena (i.e., sounds, tastes, forms, etc.) is also emptiness. That's a little bit difficult. One just



looks at one's fear, for example, when it arises and slowly realizes that the nature of fear is actually fearlessness. Then one experiences no more fear. When one really wants to meditate and look at one's fear directly, then it isn't there. It has disappeared the moment one even wanted to look. One thinks that one's fear is solid and strong and complains a lot, but one will never find it when one looks. The more one meditates and looks, the more it will transform into fearlessness. This applies to any emotion, any thought, any feeling. When one experiences this, one's mind becomes so open. Let's take the example of anger. Anger leads to more anger. As a result one suffers a lot, causes problems for the people around, and the situation becomes more and more complicating. If one looks at one's anger the moment it arises, one won't find it and just rests. Then there's no anger. Not finding anger when one looks and just resting, one finds the nature of one's mind, which is called "luminosity." There are many names for this aspect of one's mind. When one understands, one is relaxed and people around are relaxed. By meditating like this, even though one's behaviour and experience of outer phenomena don't change, one's inner experiences change.

It's good to recall the many interesting stories of Jetsün Milarepa. He experienced many hindrances. Sometimes many demons caused him many problems while he was meditating in caves. We would run away if we experienced anything like that. You know, many demons sat in his cave. They laughed and tried to make fun of him. He told them: "All appearances arise to me because of my mental fixations and ego-clinging. I don't have concepts that you are demons and I don't think that I am afraid. I am free of all that, so you can't harm me." Then they could do nothing. That's how much confidence he had. Instead of causing him more problems, they were overwhelmed and became his disciples. This shows that it is possible to transform anything in any moment. For example, if one is afraid when one runs into a barking dog, the dog will bark more and might even bite one. If one runs away, it will really chase one. If one isn't scared and doesn't move, the dog will even be afraid of one and won't come nearer. One can see this. Sometimes one knows, sometimes one doesn't, so one is unstable.

*"In bringing about meditation on the nature of mind in this way, the power of devotion causes it to arise from within, and more is really unnecessary. However, most ordinary people know very little about the meditation subject – the nature of mind – and their meditation could prove ineffectual.*

*Deluded mind consists of the eight impure groups of consciousness. The essence of that abides as the pure foundation. In order to indicate the suchness of that, the term 'mind itself' is used. The All-Knowing Rangjung held that the eight groups are the five sense consciousnesses, the mental consciousness, afflictive mind, and the foundation consciousness. Since the 'instantaneous' mind conditions all of those, when counted together, there are also held to be nine groups. The Sutras mention many terms such as 'appropriating consciousness,' 'deluded mind,' 'cognitive obscuration,' and 'foundation consciousness.' Since it is taught that the intrinsic nature of the foundation is virtue, it is essentially self-liberated Buddha nature. It is not the foundation itself that is removed, but it abides as the foundation of what is removed."*

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is speaking about the gradual path, which one has to understand correctly in order to practice correctly, step-by-step. The detailed instructions concern the gradual path. One needn't go through the gradual path if one recognizes the pointing-out instructions that one receives from one's Lama due to having genuine and deep devotion for him. This occurs rarely, though.

Looking at the life-stories of the sages and saints, Shri Tilopa gave pointing-out instructions to his heart-disciple Naropa by hitting him on the head with his sandal and in that moment Naropa attained realization. Tilopa didn't have to explain more. Before then, Tilopa was always testing Naropa. He had him go through 12 smaller and 12 greater difficulties before giving him the pointing-out instructions. He even told Naropa to jump into a fire if he wanted to receive his teachings. Naropa wanted to receive the teachings so badly, didn't doubt, and jumped into the fire. Let me tell the story of one hardship Naropa went through. One day Tilopa told him, "Get me some food." Naropa went searching for food, met a group of farmers who were cooking soup, and begged for a bowl. They gave him some and he brought it to Tilopa. After finishing the soup, Tilopa told his anxious disciple, "Finished? Oh, it was so delicious. Get me some more." Naropa was very happy to serve his Lama and went to the place where he had met the farmers, but they had all returned to their fields. He looked inside their pot on the fireplace, scooped up a bowl full, but a farmer noticed, came running, and scolded him, "First you begged for food, couldn't get enough, and now you are stealing from us. That's very bad." The other farmers rushed over and beat Naropa up. Tilopa knew that this was happening but left Naropa lying alone for a while. A few days later he dropped by and asked him, "What happened? Are you sick?" Naropa answered, "I'm not only sick, I was almost killed." Tilopa blessed him, so Naropa was able to rise up again and follow his teacher. There are many similar stories.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche tells us that it's not necessary to go through all details of the gradual path if one has heart-felt, genuine devotion for one's Lama. One gets the pointing-out instructions if one has true devotion for him. If one realizes the truth of the teachings, that's enough. But ordinary people have a complicated mind and have many doubts. One really looks forward to meditating on the nature of the mind, but one doesn't know what it really means. When one then meditates, one isn't meditating on the nature of the mind but is engaging in stupid meditation. Therefore one has to clearly go step-by-step. Some Sakya masters complained to the Kagyü masters and said, "You are doing a stupid meditation because you haven't studied properly. How can you meditate correctly if you don't understand what you are meditating? It's a stupid way." Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche therefore went into great detail and explained the deluded mind and the non-deluded mind according to the elucidation by Rangjung Dorje, the Third Gyalwa Karmapa.

In the treatise entitled *rNam-shes-ye-she-'byed-pa – The Treatise Distinguishing Consciousness and Wisdom*, the Third Gyalwa Karmapa wrote that the eight kinds of consciousness are the deluded mind. When the second aspect of the seventh afflictive consciousness, called "instantaneous mind," is counted, then there are nine.

Delusiveness is caused by the seventh afflictive consciousness, so it's important to identify it. One aspect of the seventh consciousness is the inactive mental state responsible for the arising and cessation of the six first consciousnesses, which are the five sense consciousnesses and the sixth discursive consciousness. A second aspect of the seventh consciousness is the active afflictive mind of negative thoughts and emotions. This aspect is characterized by perceiving the mind as a self, clinging to pride, having attachment to the self, having ignorance, and giving rise to all destructive views. Therefore the seventh consciousness has different names, like innate and imputed, innate meaning inborn and imputed meaning destructive thoughts that arise due to

making wrong conclusions. Anger, for example, is a mental contrivance, i.e., an imputation that one thinks up with one's sixth consciousness and acts out in reliance on one's first five consciousnesses. All actions that one carries out subside as habits into one's eighth consciousness, the all-ground or foundation consciousness, and are stored there as habitual patterns or imprints. When many causes and conditions come together, one's habitual patterns or imprints are activated and again they convey a wrong message to one's sixth consciousness via one's seventh consciousness, and again one apprehends delusively, and again one acts, and again one's habits subside as new habitual patterns into one's foundation consciousness, which again are activated when many causes and conditions prevail. So, one's foundation consciousness is the storehouse for every habitual pattern that one accumulated and continues accumulating through one's actions and is thus the determining factor for one's actions when many outer causes and conditions come together. That's a short description of the source of samsara.

One practices meditation to recognize and to control deluded messages by replacing them with wholesome messages. Then one acts in a good way. Following, positive habitual patterns and imprints subside into one's foundation consciousness and are stored there as positive imprints. Through this process - when negative imprints have been replaced by positive imprints - one's foundation consciousness is virtuous and good. At that time, it is the foundation of wisdom. When deluded, the eighth consciousness is the basis of delusion and when purified, it is the basis of wisdom, the pure mind. When one's pure mind that is free of delusions is activated by causes and conditions, one apperceives and acts in a nirvanic way. One experiences the universe and one's world as nirvana. So, the meaning of the pure foundation consciousness is the same as the meaning of Buddha nature or nature of the mind. This will be explained in greater detail later on in the text. It's very important to understand this in one's meditation. One won't understand or know how to meditate when a great master gives pointing-out instructions if one doesn't understand this. The pointing-out instructions are direct teachings in which a Lama tells his devoted student, "It's like that, like that, like that."

*Question:* "I have a question about the statement, 'Since it is taught that the intrinsic nature of the foundation is virtue, it is essentially self-liberated Buddha nature.' Why virtue?"

*Lama:* There is virtue and non-virtue. One can say that virtue is a positive quality and that it is the imprint of all enlightened qualities that increase more and more. The Tibetan term is *dge-ba*, which is usually translated as 'good merit.' It has many meanings.

*Same student:* "Merit is created, whereas intrinsic nature isn't created."

*Lama:* Transforming one's deluded mind and having a pure mind is the base and refers to virtue. It is the basis for the development of all qualities.

*Next question:* "I noticed that the completion stage is often kept short in the Sadhanas. Why?"

*Lama:* Sadhana practices are more creation stage practices and include the completion stage. There are two kinds of completion stage practices, with and without symbols. *The Six Yogas of Naropa*, inner heat yoga, dream and illusory body are symbolic practices. Non-symbolic meditation is looking at one's mind directly and resting one's mind in luminosity, the practices we discussed.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche explained the Sutras and commentaries in the text we are studying together. Sometimes texts speak of transforming the deluded mind, sometimes they speak of

cognitive obscurations – there are many names but mean the same. Generally we say “obscurations to omniscience.”

*“So, for instance, the eight consciousness groups are like a variegated rope that is perceived as a snake, though that is not its true character: From the very first moment of this delusion, it was itself essentially empty. It is from beginningless time that co-emergent ignorance has obscured true nature. For example, the clear and limpid aspect of a mirror is the Buddha nature, and the tarnish on it is the foundation consciousness, also called cognitive obscuration or co-emergent ignorance. Like the coat of tarnish, the foundation consciousness wears the collection of habitual patterns, the obscuration of afflictive emotions. The essentially empty nature of consciousness is identified as the self, and objective reality is projected onto its luminous aspect. The instantaneous mind moves the six consciousness groups and causes the meeting of object and organ. Though nothing other than mind itself, the appearance of duality predominates. For example, when the eye perceives a form, although there is no form outside of the eye consciousness, the luminous aspect is mistaken for form and the empty aspect for the organ. The instantaneous mind function coalesces the process: eye consciousness initially arises undeluded, free of concept, but instantaneously it is suppressed and the feeling of duality arises, and with it the mental sixth consciousness. Experiencing happiness, suffering, or neutrality, the discriminations of attachment, aversion, and ignorance arise, and this is the afflictive mind. Then through rejection or acceptance, the foundation consciousness is imprinted with the accumulation of karmic action, also called formation. When the sixth mind is counted together with the instantaneous mind, perceiving externally with the five senses, it is the object; when the afflictive mind functions with the instantaneous mind, directed inward, it leaves habitual patterns in the foundation. Left there, the karma abides without effect as unavoidable potential until it ripens.”*

Is it clear? If you have any questions, please ask.

*Question:* “Is the foundation consciousness the *alayā*?”

*Lama:* Yes.

*Same student:* “So, it isn’t deluded, or is it deluded?”

*Lama:* Yes. There are two differentiations of the foundation consciousness. One is to say *alayavijñāna*, which is when it is deluded. *Alaya* is speaking of it when it is not deluded and is pure. The first designation refers to the time that the foundation consciousness stores samsaric karma and the second to the time that it stores nirvana. One might have problems and think that nirvana is boring, but it’s not like that. Even more interesting things happen.

*Next question:* “The sense consciousness would be the main consciousness that is divided into mental factors. The main sense consciousness perceives the object as an entity. The mental factors feel and differentiate what was perceived. My question is whether the tarnishes refer to the negative mental factors or to a respective sense consciousness?”

*Lama:* Normally, the sense consciousnesses are ordinary and deluded at the basis. This means to say that they are deluded because they don’t recognize the nature of the mind. But, the sense consciousnesses are non-conceptual. The five sense faculties are not mental. The sixth consciousness, the discursive mind consciousness, is mental. One’s eye faculty, for example, perceives a form in the first moment without making concepts. When one’s eye faculty and mind consciousness come together in the next moment - almost in the same moment -, then one apperceives. For example, one first sees a person but doesn’t remember that one knows him because one didn’t get the message. Getting the message means that one’s conceptual mind remembers and then one thinks, “Oh, I know him.” When one’s conceptual consciousness is activated, one starts discriminating and asking questions, “Oh, how are you?” and things like

that. So, in the process, first one's sense faculty and an object come together, then one perceives it with one's sense consciousness, and then one apperceives it. It's not easy recognizing these moments.

As said, there are eight kinds of consciousness. Some masters count the instantaneous, the immediate mind, as the ninth consciousness. The Third Gyalwa Karmapa spoke about eight in the treatise that he wrote, entitled *rNam-shes-ye-she-'byed-pa – The Treatise Distinguishing Consciousness and Wisdom*. He taught that the instantaneous mind is an aspect of the seventh, the afflictive mind being the second aspect. He wrote that the instantaneous mind is the condition for the arising and cessation of the first six, thus occurring in the same number of the momentary arising and cessation of the six. When causes and conditions prevail, the instantaneous mind functions like a messenger between one's foundation and mind consciousness.

*Question:* "Is it the same as the afflictive mind?"

*Lama:* No, the instantaneous, immediate mind functions as a messenger with one's foundation consciousness through which the imprints of one's habitual patterns flow. This is how one's mind functions when deluded.

Then Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche taught about the non-deluded, pure mind, which is the Buddha nature. If one doesn't acknowledge one's Buddha nature and doesn't recognize the delusions that conceal it, one won't be able to distinguish the consciousnesses. As long as one doesn't recognize one's delusions, one will continue perpetuating them. Nobody makes one's mind deluded or non-deluded. When one recognizes one's main delusion, one can change it. Let me speak about the example given in the above verse to illustrate what delusion is like.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche compares delusion with a mirror that is covered with dust, in which case it is dull and cannot reflect anything clearly. Buddha nature is like the shiny, clean mirror. When covered with dirt and dust, the mirror is like the alayavijnana, the all-base consciousness at the time it is obscured. The dust and dirt that tarnish the mirror are the afflictive emotions that arise due to delusiveness and that become habitual patterns stored in the all-base consciousness. The dirtier the mirror becomes, the harder it is to see that it is actually a shiny mirror. Then the messages coming from one's accumulated karma will be thicker, giving one a long run in samsara.

One creates conceptual thoughts with one's discursive sixth mind about an object one perceived by making judgements of one's feeling of like, dislike, or indifference about it. If one likes something one saw, for example, one becomes attached to it; if one doesn't like it, one rejects and can even hate it. One speaks and acts negatively when one thinks negatively about something one saw and thus accumulates negative karma that, until ripened or purified, is stored in one's ground consciousness as negative habitual patterns. Then one's ground consciousness is called "alayavijnana."

*Question:* "When one has recognized the nature of one's mind, the habitual patterns stored in one's alayavijnana still have to be purified. How does one purify them?"

*Lama:* An example is usually presented so that one understands more easily. When lightning flashes in the darkness of night, everything is clear in that moment. Darkness is like one's karma and the flash of lightning is like recognition, which is quite a lot. The more lightning, the more one recognizes and the more one's karma is purified. One doesn't need anything extra.

*Student:* “Let’s say that one experienced the clear light for a moment, goes to sleep, and one again sinks into one’s state of ignorance and habitual tendencies. This means one has to create one’s experience again and again when one wakes up.”

*Lama:* Yes, that’s true. And that’s why we practice sleeping meditation. Actually, we cannot attain enlightenment fully because we are bound by our body and our past karma. When we are separated from our body at death, then we will be able to attain complete enlightenment.

*Next question:* “You said that a disciple can attain instantaneous realization when a teacher imparts pointing-out instructions. Is it possible to describe this process, which might be inexpressible, by saying that one can enable one’s instantaneous mind to get a glimpse of one’s pure alaya?”

*Lama:* Yes. This will be discussed in more detail in this text. The main point is again and again stopping negativity the moment it arises so that it doesn’t develop, which will also be dealt with later.

*Next question:* “It is said that one has to cut the root of phenomena. Is that similar to what is being said here?”

*Lama:* Yes, it’s the same. The root is being confused about the nature of phenomena.

*“Habitual patterns of totally pure virtue cannot be accumulated as imprints on the foundation consciousness. In this case, the afflictive mind becomes the fully purified mind, and since that is the remedy, virtue is imprinted on pristine wisdom. Virtuous thoughts arise from the intrinsic radiance of foundation wisdom. This accumulation of the roots of virtue becomes the condition of freedom and cause of complete fruition and also cannot be interrupted or lost. With the foundation functioning as the cause of the outer objects, inner sensefaculties, and all the consciousnesses in between, the afflictive mind is like the clouds, the six groups like rain, the karmic actions are the rivers, and habitual patterns of the foundation are the ocean. In this example, the agent that connects all of this in some kind of continuity is the instantaneous mind.”*

‘Agent’ here is what I called “messenger.” So, one’s positive karma, one’s meditation experiences, and all one’s virtuous qualities do not subside into the alayavijnana, rather they flow into and are stored in one’s pure alaya, which is compared to the ocean. Then everything becomes the way of nirvana. Clouds that arise are then no longer afflictive and obscuring, rather are wisdom clouds. One’s sixth mental consciousness, compared to rain, is also pure. When one has pure rain, one has pure water and pure rivers that make a pure ocean. If the ocean is impure, then the clouds are impure, and then one has impure rain, and then one has impure rivers, and they create an impure ocean.

Now you understand how pure and impure things create a pure and impure alaya. The alayavijnana is the impure foundation consciousness. We will look at meditation, so the important point is coming. We also speak of the pure alaya as *kun-gzhi-ye-shes* in Tibetan, ‘all-base wisdom.’ We could also call it “the pure mind.” The impure alayavijnana is *kun-gzhi-rnam-shes*, ‘all-base consciousness.’ Meditation is the method to develop and cultivate *kun-gzhi-ye-shes*, the pure mind.

**Table: The six objects, six faculties & eight consciousnesses**

<u>Sanskrit</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>
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Six sense objects:

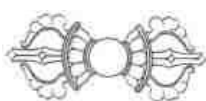
1. visual forms	<i>rupa</i>	<i>gzugs</i>
2. sounds	<i>shabda</i>	<i>sgra</i>
3. smells	<i>gandha</i>	<i>dri</i>
4. tastes	<i>rasa</i>	<i>ro</i>
5. tangible objects	<i>sparsha</i>	<i>reg-bya</i>
6. mental phenomena	<i>dharma</i>	<i>chös</i>

Six faculties:

1. eye	<i>chakshur-indriya</i>	<i>mig-gi-dbang-po</i>
2. ear	<i>shrotrendriya</i>	<i>rna-ba'i-dbang-po</i>
3. nose	<i>ghranendriya</i>	<i>sna-ba'i-dbang-po</i>
4. tongue	<i>jihvendriya</i>	<i>lce'i-dbang-po</i>
5. body	<i>kayendriya</i>	<i>lüs-kyi-dbang-po</i>
6. mind	<i>mano-indriya</i>	<i>yid-kyi-dbang-po</i>

The eight consciousnesses

1. eye consciousness	<i>chakurvijnana</i>	<i>mig-gi-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
2. ear consciousness	<i>shrotravijnana</i>	<i>rna-bai'i-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
3. nose consciousness	<i>ghranenvijnana</i>	<i>sna-ba'i-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
4. tongue consciousness	<i>jihvavijnana</i>	<i>lce'i-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
5. body consciousness	<i>kayenvijnana</i>	<i>lüs-kyi-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
6. mental consciousness	<i>manovijnana</i>	<i>yid-kyi-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
a) Non-conceptual mind		
b) conceptual mind		
7. afflictive consciousness	<i>kleshavijnana</i>	<i>nyön-mongs-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>
a) instantaneous mind		
b) afflictive mind		
8. all-ground consciousness	<i>alayavijnana</i>	<i>kun-gzhi-rnam-par-shes-pa</i>



## Meditation

The first meditation is learning to calm down one's sixth discursive mental consciousness. One's sixth mental consciousness is like a crazy monkey, is always so busy, and it needs to be calmed down. When one's mind has slowly become calm, one needs to understand the all-ground, foundation consciousness through the practice of special insight meditation. The creation stage of practice, in which one is one-pointedly mindful and aware of all visualizations, is the Vajrayana practice of calm abiding meditation. The completion stage of practice is the Vajrayana special insight meditation. Is it okay or are you confused?

*Student:* "Confused."

*Lama:* What is confusing?

*Same student:* “The divisions into eight consciousnesses and all the designations. Maybe you can make a chart with the Tibetan and Sanskrit terms.”

*Lama:* There are the six first consciousnesses. You can divide the seventh consciousness into a) and b), the afflictive and the instantaneous mind. The eighth is the all-base consciousness.

*Same student:* “And the eighth is divided into the alaya and alayavijnana?”

*Lama:* No. The eighth is called “alayavijnana” while it is deluded and “alaya” when it isn’t deluded. There are the five wisdoms and five Buddha families when the all-base is free of delusions and is pure. So there is a difference.

*Next question:* “The sixth is causing the problems and is jumping like a monkey? The problem is the seventh consciousness.”

*Lama:* The sixth mental consciousness also has two sides to it. One is a problem and the other isn’t. One side is called “conceptual” and the other is called “non-conceptual.” That aspect, which is based on the sense consciousnesses, is non-conceptual, is merely perceptual, and doesn’t cause a problem. The mental consciousness that discriminates is conceptual and causes the problems. It is always discriminating between good and bad, here and there, etc.

*Same student:* “I thought it was the seventh consciousness.”

*Lama:* The seventh comes from the emotions, which are created after discriminating. For example, one says something harsh, which isn’t spoken by the seventh consciousness. The words themselves are not the problem, but the emotion that arises and becomes connected with what one says. Having discriminated somebody with one’s sixth consciousness and then screaming at him, “You are awful, you are bad,” is a case of one’s emotions when one’s seventh consciousness pops up.

*Next question:* “So it’s part of the sixth?”

*Lama:* Also. (In response to the next question:) Feelings are associated with the seventh. It’s difficult to stop feelings. Meditation is practicing to stop thoughts before they become feelings.

*“For the practitioner, this means that just as soon as the instantaneous mind barely arises from the foundation consciousness, without any extension of duration, you should place the attention directly upon it. This is called liberation in the first moment, or vanquished at first sight, in certain doctrinal terms. When the sixth mind consciousness and afflictive mind have just arisen, and are recognized through mindfulness and liberated in their own place, it is called liberation in the second or third moment.*

*However, since that discursive thought is the dynamic energy of mind, it is impossible for thoughts of attachment and aversion not to arise. However, if you rely on mindful awareness, discursive thoughts cannot accumulate karma. It is like pouring water into a vase with a hole in the bottom. The deluded thought and the aspect of awareness that distinguishes it are equal, for the discriminating thought itself measures the thought of attachment. It is like fire alighting on fine grass husks: although the fire and the husks appeared as two things, they instantly become just fire. So it could be called simply fire.”*

In this verse, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is speaking about how meditation functions and tells us that one needs to apply the antidote of mindful awareness the moment the sixth conceptual and seventh afflictive minds arise in order to liberate them. The non-conceptual sixth mind is not a problem. The Mahamudra instructions say that one needs to cut the sixth conceptual and seventh afflictive mind off the moment they arise as though one were stopping a wild pig from destroying one’s garden. One’s mindful awareness is the stick one holds in one’s hand with which one hits the pig on the snout the moment it enters one’s garden. If one hits the pig on the snout, it will



never return. In the same way in meditation, when a thought and one's afflictive mind arise, one cuts them with mindful awareness. It's important to understand mindfulness and awareness. Shantideva dedicated the fourth and fifth chapter of *The Bodhicharyavatara* to each topic; they have the titles *Awareness & Vigilance*.

There are different translations of the Tibetan term *drän-pa*, 'mindfulness.' The term is translated as 'to pay attention, to recall, to become aware of; memory, alertness, presence of mind.' In meditation practice, *drän-pa* means being attentive of what arises in one's mind and remembering that one doesn't want to get lost in one's thoughts and afflictive emotions, but wants to relax. It doesn't mean that one needs to exert much effort, but one does need to remember the practice. The second term, translated here as 'awareness,' is *shes-bzhin* in Tibetan and means 'to watch, to be vigilant, to be knowingly conscientious,' i.e., knowing what is really going on in one's mind and watching. If one isn't vigilant, one's thoughts are like a pig that spoiled one's meditation. Whenever one is engaged in meditation, one needs to remember and know. The more one meditates, the clearer one's mind becomes, which means to say one knows situations more clearly. One can meditate as much as one wants, but without mindful awareness, one becomes more dull, narrow-minded, and sensitive. It can become very complicating. Therefore Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche tells us that it's very important to apply *drän-pa* and *shes-bzhin* in one's practice.

When the sixth conceptual consciousness and the seventh afflictive mind are activated, emotional thoughts arise. One cannot control this; nobody can. One cannot forbid or suppress them from arising either, because then they will increase. If one applies mindful awareness, though, one won't create negative karma that subsides into one's alayavijnana as negative habitual patterns. Then one's alayavijnana will be transformed into alaya, the pure foundation. For example, no water, i.e., thoughts and emotions, can be held in a vase with holes but will flow out. That is a short summary. Did you understand? The main point is applying mindfulness and awareness.

*Question:* "Does this mean that one looks directly at the sixth and seventh minds when they arise and uses them as objects of meditation as taught in calm abiding meditation?"

*Lama:* You can use them as an object for calm abiding meditation. It doesn't matter. Calm abiding and special insight practices are very important. In Mahamudra, it is said that meditation means holding one's mind in mindfulness and awareness.

*"In short, our present state of neutrality, the darkness of total lack of awareness, is the cognitive obscuration of foundation consciousness. It is also called co-emergent ignorance. When an object and the same organ meet, such as seeing a conch shell on the road, in the first instant of seeing the form, the eye consciousness is said to be without concept. But due to that contact, what is called 'feeling' occurs, and then, if it is a nice white conch, mental pleasure, and so on. At this point, with the arising of attachment or aversion, afflictive mind has arrived. From what is called 'perception' comes 'formation,' and so on: through the twelve interdependent links the wheel of existence turns. Even if you tried to block eye consciousness and mental consciousness, they wouldn't cease, but they don't have the power to accumulate karmic habitual patterns. But when finally afflictive mind has taken over, for an ordinary person without recourse to view, meditation, and action, habitual patterns imprinted on the foundation will accumulate. For that reason you should try not to fall under its power. The instantaneous mind is the one that connects this whole process, like the force of water. If you understand the significance of the eight groups in this way, and are skilled in applying it directly to practice, you can cut through the dualistic relationship of the six groups and their objects, and then the six sense objects will not have the power to disturb meditation."*

*Question:* “The definition of the twelve links of interdependent origination that I know is that formative actions are created from ignorance. One becomes conscious of the formative actions, which are impressions that subsided into the alaya. I understood that the formative actions are active. Is the wish to engage in an activity already a karmic formation?”

*Lama:* Yes.

*Other student:* “Science has proved that there is no difference between the inactive mental thought and the action.”

*Lama:* Good.

Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche elucidated quite clearly how to identify the alayavijnana. Lacking mindfulness and awareness, one’s foundation consciousness seems neutral - one isn’t clear and has no remembrance. Then it’s called “alayavijnana,” which is very hard to recognize. So, he again shows how the eight consciousnesses function.

The key-point while meditating is not giving rise to disturbing minds, which happens by means of the immediate, instantaneous mind. It makes the connection that causes disturbing thoughts to arise. It is the agent, the messenger that constantly creates the bridge. If that bridge is destroyed, there is no way to continue going. Then the five sense consciousnesses and especially the sixth mental consciousness cannot interrupt one’s meditation. Then one’s mind isn’t involved with duality and all the samsaric stuff. If one doesn’t continue building the bridge, samsara is disrupted. Then one’s meditation is easy and it makes no difference if one meditates or not. Sometimes it’s said that there is no difference for an enlightened buddha because everything is meditation.

*Student:* “I’m really confused because this is different than anything I’ve ever thought to have understood so far. I always understood that one can’t stop thoughts from arising and there’s no problem when thoughts arise, rather the problem is following the thoughts. For example, if the feeling of anger arises in my mind while meditating, then I understood that if I am aware of it and if I don’t become involved with it, then it disappears and can’t leave karmic imprints. Isn’t there the danger of becoming uptight if one doesn’t even allow anger to arise? I’m continuously alert to stop anger from arising. Did I understand it wrongly?”

*Lama:* There’s no contradiction; the meaning is more or less the same. It’s made clearer here. While meditating, destroying the bridge is also a matter of being mindful and aware and then it won’t become stronger. For instance, there is a difference between knowing and not knowing that one is angry. If one doesn’t recognize that one is angry, then one is under the control of anger and one isn’t in control of oneself. That means that one is building the bridge. The more aware one is, the stronger one’s awareness will be, and then situations become clearer, one knows how to react and what others say more clearly. So, there’s a difference. Otherwise one only understands what one thinks and then one isn’t open.

*Same student:* “This is saying that one doesn’t suppress negative emotions but needs to become aware of them as fast as possible so that one isn’t subject to the chain reaction of cause and effect.”

*Lama:* If one is aware of negative thoughts, one can immediately replace them with positive thoughts. Normally it’s easier to replace. There are many ways to meditate.

*Next question:* “It’s a matter of reducing the duration of time to zero between the arising of first moment of recognition and dissolution.”

*Lama:* Slowly, slowly. One has to try one’s best.

*“This is the beginning of turning the sense organs and their consciousnesses inward. At that time, the signs that the ten vital winds have matured are experiences of smoke, mirages, eclipses, and so on. The power of ‘real’ appearances is diminished; and without obscurity, countless deities, spheres, and so on appear wherever you focus, outwardly and inwardly, in your body and your mind, automatically arising without effort, expectation, or anxiety. As a sign of attaining warmth, you are no longer interested in useless communication and associations, and you desire only to remain in solitude without distraction. The flow of thoughts is cut off and, like the clear sky, boundless experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-thought arise in body, speech, and mind. However, these are only signs on the path, a few approximations of confidence, and have nothing whatsoever to do with attainment of higher stages. When these experiences are objectified, they are subject to arising, ceasing, and changing, and cannot be permanent, according to all adepts. True actualization of the open spaciousness of inherent wisdom without object is termed ‘the pristine wisdom of realization.’”*

Here Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche wrote about the experiences one has by meditating the creation stage. The bridge between one’s sixth conceptual mental consciousness and mental disturbances is broken when one focuses one’s mind on the visualizations, on making offerings, and so forth. One won’t be distracted, even if someone dances in front of one’s eyes, when one is really absorbed in the creation stage meditation. One isn’t distracted or interrupted in one’s meditation when one’s six sense consciousnesses are turned inward. Then any meditation one does is so easy and one can rest in it. One doesn’t need to apply effort because meditation arises naturally. This is speaking about the five paths, *lam-nga* in Tibetan, and ten bhumis, *sa-bcu*.

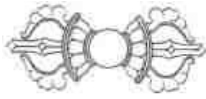
### **Table: The five paths & ten bhumis**

The five paths:

1. Path of accumulation	<i>tshogs-lam</i>
2. Path of unification or junction	<i>sbyo-lam</i>
3. Path of seeing	<i>mthong-lam</i>
4. Path of meditation	<i>sgom-lam</i>
5. Path of no more learning	<i>mi-slob-pa'i-lam</i>

The ten bhumis:

1. Very joyful	<i>rab-tu-dga'-ba</i>
2. Stainless	<i>dri-ma-med-pa</i>
3. Luminous	<i>'öd-byed-pa</i>
4. Radiant	<i>'öd-'phro-ba</i>
5. Difficult to conquer	<i>sbyang-dka'-ba</i>
6. Realized	<i>mngön-du-gyur-ba</i>
7. Far reaching	<i>ring-du-song-ba</i>
8. Immovable	<i>mi-gyo-ba</i>
9. Having good intellect	<i>legs-pa'i-blo-grös</i>
10. Cloud of Dharma	<i>chös-kyi-sprin</i>



The signs that one is on the second path are four experiences that link one more and more to recognition of the true nature of one's mind; one experiences warmth. Let me explain this. Suppose there's a fire, which is compared to perfect realization. One isn't that near the fire, but one experiences the warmth while on the second path and is approaching the fire. When one experiences meditating the creation stage, one is relaxed, feels so happy, visualizes very clearly, and isn't distracted by thoughts. This means that one is coming closer and closer to realization. But one has to go beyond those experiences. One's experience is like a rainbow - it comes and disappears because it isn't stable. Therefore one shouldn't become stuck in one's experiences because one's goal is to go beyond. By continuing to meditate, one recognizes the nature of one's mind and feels bliss, becomes more stable, clearer, unwavering, just like changeless space. This is realization of the first bhumi. One has never experienced this kind of joy before, so one is very joyful, the reason the first bhumi is called "very joyful." One continues meditating deeper and deeper, stabilizes one's meditation, and reaches the third and fourth bhumis. Sutrayana lists ten bodhisattva bhumis, and the last is the buddha bhumi, which means one is enlightened. Vajrayana speaks of more bhumis because it is taught that one cannot attain complete and perfect enlightenment in Sutrayana. Vajrayana practice entails ever more subtle transformations and therefore speaks of thirteen bhumis. That's a general understanding. If one wants to really become enlightened, one needs to practice Vajrayana. The great masters said that perfect and complete enlightenment cannot be attained in Sutrayana. Any questions?

*Student:* "Is the second path a preparation?"

*Lama:* Yes. It links to the third path of seeing, at which stage one has reached the first bhumi. The path of meditation is practiced from the second to tenth bhumi. The fifth path of no more learning is realization of the eleventh bhumi.

It's very difficult to transform one's strong habits of body, speech, and mind into the three *kayas* ('bodies of a buddha'), the Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya. I think it's very deep, therefore Vajrayana is involved quite a lot with practices of transformation. In Vajrayana, disciples receive blessings of body, speech, and mind. One's body is actually the body of the deity, one's speech is actually the mantra of that deity, and one's mind is actually the wisdom and compassion of that deity. Receiving the blessings of a deity is a way of purification, but the entire transformation is very subtle. I don't think Sutrayana has this. Sometimes it is said that one is very spiritual, but one's habits are so strong that one behaves funny, like a crazy monkey. Somebody might have very high realizations, but, although they don't mean it, they might speak very negatively on account of their past bad habits. That's why Vajrayana has much deeper meditation practices than Sutrayana. Therefore it's said one cannot become fully enlightened without practicing Vajrayana meditation. There are very many different methods in Vajrayana and many initiations are bestowed. The real empowerment is the pointing-out instruction. But we cannot take the real empowerment as the path, so we take it as a blessing. If you have any questions, please ask.

*Question:* “You said that one doesn’t perceive outer objects when one’s five sense consciousnesses are turned inward and one is deeply absorbed in the creation stage practice. This seems to be similar to directing one’s dreams while sleeping.”

*Lama:* No, on the contrary. They are different. While sleeping, one’s mind becomes very dull and isn’t clear. Turning one’s mind inward in practice means not being distracted by outer things and keeping one’s mind on the practice.

*“At that time, the desires and aversions of view, meditation, and action are exhausted, and one simply falls directly upon ordinary mind. With the absolute conviction of recognizing what has been there all along, like a contented person who has finished all work, all effort is dropped: it is the ultimate fruition.”*

In this verse, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche tells us that actual meditation means going home and relaxing after having finished all one’s chores. One feels stronger and has more energy the more one relaxes. The Dzogchen teachings call ordinary mind that is realized through meditation practice *rig-pa*. Realization of ordinary mind means resting without effort in the true nature of one’s mind. One normally exerts so much effort to understand the view, meditation, and conduct. The Mahamudra teachings compare ordinary mind to pure water. One shouldn’t stir muddy water, but one should let the dirt sink to the bottom of the glass. One’s discursive thoughts are like the dirt in the water. One leaves one’s thoughts alone by being calm and relaxed, leaving them to settle down on their own, and then the water becomes pure. The Mahamudra instructions present many examples for meditation. One example is an eagle naturally soaring through the sky that effortlessly glides to the ground when it wants to land. Another example is the ocean without waves, which are compared to thoughts. Sometimes the example is given of a child entering a temple for the first time; the child just looks at the paintings and statues without creating concepts. Resting in one’s ordinary state is like that. One doesn’t fabricate concepts but simply rests in one’s ordinary mind effortlessly. One doesn’t even meditate, which always entails effort, but abides in one’s natural state.

*“Deceiving appearances appear in variety as non-appearance. Though appearing to appear, being essentially without reality, they are empty. Of mind itself, luminous awareness without foundation, free of basis, you cannot say anything in regard to existence or non-existence. In the levels higher than Mahayoga, the sublime view is that total purity is inseparable from the truth of suffering.*

*When the absolute is actualized through meditation on the two stages, it follows that the relative, which is without foundation and basis, automatically disappears. Therefore, all phenomena of cyclic existence or transcendence, included within both appearance and mind, have no reality whatsoever but arise in any way whatsoever. When this is realized, it is proof that listening and contemplating have hit the mark.”*

Here Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is speaking about *rdzog-rim*, the ‘completion stage.’ While meditating, one relinquishes the manifold displays of delusions brought on by one’s sixth conceptual and seventh afflictive mind. They create what can be compared to a television show, even while one is asleep. As long as one doesn’t understand this process, one thinks that things one perceives are real and becomes very confused. We had no televisions in Bhutan until recently and picture shows were presented on large screens for everyone to watch. Once two people were shown fighting in a movie. A few men in the audience thought that the people fighting in the movie were real. They took out their knives and cut up the screen. Sometimes we are like the

Bhutanese and react to appearances in the same way. If one knows that a movie is a movie, one laughs. This is what Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is telling us, that phenomena we see are like a television show. When great meditators and masters look at people, they have great compassion for them because they know that people are stuck in their deluded concepts, such as anger, and therefore they suffer.

When one really experiences the nature of one's mind, the nature of reality, the ultimate truth, then words cannot express the peace one feels. It is ineffable. Just like one cannot explain to others how candy tastes, they have to experience it for themselves by putting it in their mouth. Meditation is like tasting candy. When one really experiences the ultimate taste by practicing *bskyed-rim* and *rdzog-rim*, then one can't explain it in words. When one's mind rests in the ultimate taste, then one doesn't experience a difference between confusion and liberation from confusion. Realization is ineffable. One doesn't differentiate between good and bad, between samsara and nirvana. The Mahamudra teachings say that enlightenment is experiencing non-differentiation and that it has nothing to do with hopes and fears. Thinking nirvana is good and samsara is bad is wrong. That's why Mahamudra describes realization as "one-taste," because one knows and experiences exactly how it is. And so, listening to and contemplating Vajrayana teachings are meaningful because these practices lead to the goal that is accomplished through meditation practice. If the teachings one receives and contemplates are different than one's practice, then it doesn't work.

The Dzogchen instructions of the Ancient Nyingma tradition speak of nine *yanas*, 'vehicles.' Mahayoga, Anuttarayoga, Atiyoga are the three highest Vajrayana teachings that address the outer, inner, and secret meanings. Realization of *bskyed-rim* and *rdzog-rim* is called "one-taste" in that one doesn't experience a difference between samsara and nirvana, i.e., suffering and freedom from suffering, because they are inseparable. As said in the first seminar on *Creation and Completion*, there are four Tantras, Kriya, Charya, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga. The first three Tantras teach outer and inner practices. The three highest Tantras listed above teach the secret practices. The Kagyü tradition does not use the name Maha-Ati, but speaks of the Father, Mother, and Non-dual Tantras, which are the same. The Father Tantras emphasize meditation of *bskyed-rim*, the Mother Tantras *rdzog-rim*, and the Non-dual Tantra the combination of the two. The Father Tantras teach the development of methods, the Mother Tantras the development of wisdom, and the Non-dual Tantras the combination of the two. *The Hevajratantra* is a Father Tantra, and *The Chakrasamvaratantra* is a Mother Tantra. *The Kalachakratantra* is a Non-dual Tantra. In the Kagyü lineage, disciples concentrate on *The Hevajratantra*, which is a very detailed practice of *bskyed-rim*. Disciples learn the inner meaning of *rdzog-rim* in reliance on the very detailed instructions presented by the Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, in the text he wrote, entitled *Zab-mo-nang-dön - The Profound Inner Meaning*, and they practice *The Six Yogas of Naropa*. One doesn't need much when practicing Mahamudra, seeing disciples engage in the method of the path by directly resting in the nature of their mind. So, there are two paths, the first being Vajrayana deity meditation and *The Six Yogas of Naropa*. The second is the path of liberation, which is the practice of Mahamudra. Therefore the second is the most important because it is very direct. If one gets the mark, one gets everything. This is the general view of the categories of the teachings. Any questions?

*Question:* “How would I know which is the right way for me, the way of method or the way of liberation? Do I feel it?”

*Lama:* Normally, we do both.

*Next question:* “How does one understand Mahamudra meditation?”

*Lama:* One looks at the nature of one’s mind directly. No *bskyed-rim* and no *rdzog-rim*. It can be explained differently, but this explanation accords with the text we are studying.

*Next question:* “If Mahamudra is so important, which I believe, why do we engage in other practices and don’t go the direct way?”

*Lama:* Sometimes the direct practice isn’t helpful because people don’t believe it. It’s so simple, so people need different methods to realize the goal. They are just methods to bring that point. If one gets everything but isn’t ready, then one doesn’t recognize what one is getting. Readiness is developed by practicing the different methods. One becomes more stable, prepares the foundation, and then one is more ready. When one then gets it, one gets it. Otherwise teachers have to give the decisive instructions again and again and nothing happens. For example, after having meditated 12 years to see Buddha Maitreya and not having succeeded, Asanga got fed up and left his meditation retreat. He ran into a wounded dog that was being eaten up by maggots. He felt so much compassion for the dog and wanted to free it of the maggots. He realized that if he took them out with his fingers, he would squish and kill them. He closed his eyes and lifted them out of the dog’s wounds with his tongue. When his tongue scraped the ground, he opened his eyes and Buddha Maitreya appeared to him. His meditation was a preparation. It happens like that in the last moment. So, many methods of purification are practiced. They work and make one ready.

*Next question:* “I have the feeling that there are similarities between Mahamudra and Zen. Can you comment on this?”

*Lama:* I think there are similarities. In Zen, there is the method of making *koans*, but there is also the tradition without koans. In Mahamudra, the teachings on searching for the mind are similar to koans. Mahamudra also has the tradition of an old woman pointing her finger and giving direct instructions on meditation experiences by saying, “It is like that and like that.” She doesn’t ask questions.

*“The many techniques of creation and contemplation, both with and without visualization, such as rejecting or transforming or resting in deceiving appearances, are purificatory methods, and that is where the value of all practice lies. Thoughts of past, present, and future are like ripples on water, never ending. Without pursuing them, whatever the subject of concentration is, upon that itself, like a master craftsman spinning yarn, not too tight or too loose, but just right for the material, the wise direct their watchguard of mindfulness again and again. When somewhat used to that, mindfulness will grow stronger, and the progressive experiences, such as one-pointedness, will arise. Don’t fall into the so-called residue of mind or awareness, the ordinary mental undercurrent, but rather intensify the clarity. The undercurrent can be more harmful than both sinking and scattering.*

*When you establish for certain the true nature of mind, many things arise, yet they are not other than the one. That one thing also cannot even be grasped by objective clinging. Looking at it, it is not seen, being without color or shape. This is a sign of its being without foundation, free of basis, and beyond intellect. Its essence is empty, its nature is clarity, and its dynamic play of compassion arises without inhibition. Indeed, it is the three bodies that have been spontaneously present all along.”*

Whether one is meditating on *bskyed-rim*, a deity with visualization, or whether one is meditating on *rdzog-rim* without visualization, a practitioner needs to train in not following after the traces

of thoughts concerning the three times, the past, present, and future. One's meditation is not working when one follows mundane thoughts. *bsKyed-rim* is focusing on the present visualization and then one goes beyond the three kinds of thoughts concerning the past, present, and future and accomplishes the fourth kind of thought, which means being beyond the three. In *rdzog-rim*, one rests in the clarity of one's mind and is so concentrated that one transcends the three times. One meditates like a Brahmin who is spinning thread, not too tightly, not too loosely. If one holds one's mind too tightly, one blocks one's meditation experiences and cannot see the natural quality of one's mind. If one holds one's mind too loosely, then nothing is clear. Following after thoughts of the three times is the same as not meditating. When one really abides in the present moment of one's mind, beyond the traces of any thoughts, one can see that it has no color or shape and is ineffable.

When speaking about experiencing the nature of one's mind in this context, three different *kayas* ('bodies of a buddha') are explained. For example, a rainbow appears and can be apperceived. Its essence is emptiness, which doesn't mean that it's not present but that it is intangible while shining clearly, brilliantly, and beautifully. Its empty aspect is the *Dharmakaya* ('the truth body'), its clear aspect is the *Sambhogakaya* ('the enjoyment body'). Intangible while appearing clearly, the rainbow manifests different colors. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is saying that everything is like that, even one's mind. As Jetsün Milarepa taught: "Look at your mind. When you look at your mind, you don't see anything. When you don't see anything, just relax. There is nothing to see." This is the aspect of emptiness. So, if one really wants to find one's mind, one won't find anything. But, at the same time, the mind is so clear, like a pure crystal. It's like a mirror that reflects and displays anything placed in front of it clearly. That is how one's mind is.

Instructions on the three kayas are another way of pointing out the nature of the mind. The three kayas are different aspects. One can't separate a kaya into emptiness, point at its clear aspect, nor is it only the *Nirmanakaya* ('the emanation body') that can display anything. The three kayas are inseparable. For example, one can say that water is clear, fresh, cold, but these are only expressing the different aspects of water. Instructions on the three kayas should also be seen like that. Instructions on the three kayas are Mahamudra, the direct way. The Nyingmapa tradition say one has to go beyond the three kinds of thoughts concerning the past, present, and future and attain the fourth level. It's saying the same, just a different method. One might already know this, but one has not received pointing-out instructions and therefore cannot recognize it. When a master gives instructions, one can attain deep understanding. Then one gets into it, which means one feels so confident and knows, "That's it." One might recognize it sometimes, but it doesn't work if one doesn't have confidence. That is the essence of realizing *bskyed-rim* and *rdzog-rim*.

*"You try to block thoughts and yet they aren't blocked – first one unblocked thought arises, then a second – let them arise. When they arise, send them wherever they go and stand guard. Since there is no place for them to go, they have returned, like a crow who has taken off from a ship. Rest like the movement of swells at sea."*

*Undistracted mindfulness and continuous mental abiding may be difficult, and you must proceed by small steps. Nevertheless, it is crucial to maintain the effort without becoming discouraged.*

*If abiding is stabilized but attachment to it is not released, you will not be able to surpass the three realms, and the façade of realization will be whisked away by the movement of thoughts. One cannot*



*see the moon's reflection in disturbed water. Therefore, first develop the experiences of calm abiding, and then meditate on supreme insight; this is the normal approach."*

Here Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is saying that one should not block thoughts that arise while meditating, but to let them come, one-by-one. One doesn't resist them, but lets thoughts come and go again. If one blocks them, they will increase. If one tries to stop them, they will return because they arise from one's mind and subside into one's mind again. Tsangpa Gyare, founder of the Drukpa Kagyü lineage in the 12th century, gave the example that the nature of one's mind is like the ocean and thoughts are like waves; they aren't different than or separate from the ocean and naturally subside into it again. When thoughts subside into the ocean, one rests in the nature of one's mind. Tsangpa Gyare also presented the example of ice, which he likens to solidified thoughts. When ice melts, it returns to its natural state, which is water. In the above verse, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche gave the example of a crow perched on the mast of a ship that is sailing in the middle of the ocean. The crow is like thoughts that fly away from the ship but always return to it. Thoughts are like that, too. They always come and go, just like the crow. That is their nature.

It might be difficult in the beginning to be mindful while meditating *bskyed-rim* or *rdzog-rim*, which is due to not having trained well. By practicing, one slowly becomes more stable and can then visualize and relax one-pointedly very easily. But that isn't enough. One can be very relaxed, have many experiences, feel so much bliss, be so clear, but one might cling to those experiences and think, "That's it." One needs to go beyond that, i.e., one needs to let everything flow. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche gave the example to illustrate calm abiding and special insight meditation and wrote that the disturbed surface of a pond cannot reflect the shiny moon. Calm abiding meditation is carried out to allow the surface of the pond, one's mind, to settle down. Then it can reflect the moon clearly and one can see it, which is compared to special insight meditation. As to the creation and completion stages of practice, one concentrates more on the details of a visualization to calm one's mind. The calmer one's mind is, the more easily one sees the nature of one's mind, which is accomplished while practicing the completion stage. That's the easy way. It will become clearer further on in the text.

*"Generally, everything up to the Mahamudra is termed 'mind path.' Common Dzogchen is also included in this. The class of exceptional esoteric instructions is said to be the 'awareness path,' and as such, it is not definite that one must begin with calm abiding. When the nature of naked awareness itself, without exaggeration or denial, is revealed, it is sufficient just to become accustomed to that. However, if the true nature is not unerringly revealed, then even the profound esoteric instructions will be difficult to assimilate. In that case, it is better to tread the gradual path."*

In Mahamudra, we don't differentiate between mind and *rig-pa*, 'clear awareness.' The term 'mind' is used in Dzogchen when referring to the samsaric mind of confusion and *rig-pa* is used when referring to the state of non-confusion, naked awareness. This differentiation is not made in Mahamudra.

Three levels of instructions are presented in Dzogchen. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche speaks of one, *mān-nag-sde*, 'the common esoteric instructions.' They also have *sems-sde*, 'the mind section of esoteric instructions,' *sems* meaning 'mind.' Furthermore, they have *klong-sde*, 'the space

section of teachings' that emphasize openness. It is said that when excellent students receive the direct instructions of *rig-pa*, they don't need to practice the gradual path of meditation. Dzogchen has many instructions to recognize *rig-pa*. For example, one instruction states that - not falling into discursive thoughts related to the past, present, and future - one can recognize *rig-pa* by looking at a thought and resting in one's non-conceptual mind. If one follows a thought of the past, one is busy with that thought; if one is involved with a present thought, one is busy with that thought, and if one follows a thought concerning the future, one is busy with it. Dzogchen says that one should be free of these three kinds of thoughts. Mahamudra has similar instructions. When one looks at the moment of one's mind nakedly, one shouldn't fall into a state of exaggeration or denial, e.g., saying, "Buddha isn't like this but is different." One should be free of that. That's it – nothing but that. Once one identifies and recognizes the true nature of one's mind, one needs to train and make it more stable. It might not affect one's mind, even if one has received the esoteric teachings that nowhere exist in the world. As long as one cannot recognize the true nature, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye advises us to make preparations by practicing the gradual path.

Jetsün Milarepa had destroyed the property of his relatives and relations by resorting to black magic. Although his mother was very happy that her son had taken revenge for their misdeeds towards her and her children after her husband died, Milarepa regretted his negative deeds, confessed them, and found a very high Dzogchen master who he hoped would teach him how to purify his negative karma. The Dzogchen master gave Milarepa the direct teachings and told him that if he meditated in the morning, he would be enlightened that same evening, and if he meditated in the evening, he would be enlightened the next morning. Milarepa was exhausted, but he started meditating right away. He 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 meditating for weeks and nothing is happening." He complained to the teacher, who responded, "Maybe my teachings are so high and your karma is so low that they don't go together. It would be better for you to go to Marpa." Milarepa searched for Marpa Lotsawa, found him, but Marpa didn't give him instructions.

The night before Milarepa found Marpa, a Dakini clearly appeared to Marpa in his dream and told him that a special student was on the way and would arrive the next day. Marpa wanted to keep watch, so on that morning he packed food and wine in his pouch, went outside, and ploughed his fields so that he would appear inconspicuous. Milarepa arrived and asked him where he could find Marpa, who told him to plough the fields, enjoy the food and drink when he was tired, and that he would go and look. Milarepa ploughed the fields, ate all the food and drank all the wine, but nobody came to pick him up. He went to the house of the man he thought would help him. He asked the people in the house where he could find Marpa and they told him, "He is sitting right here." In the Kagyü tradition, auspicious signs occur when a student meets a teacher. Marpa knew that because Milarepa had finished ploughing the fields and had enjoyed all the food and wine, he would be able to receive all the teachings. Marpa knew that. They were together and Milarepa received no teachings. After a while, Marpa's other students received high instructions and empowerments. Marpa's wife had compassion for Milarepa and tried to help him receive them too. Marpa discovered this and threw Milarepa out. He let many months pass before giving Milarepa teachings. Marpa knew that Milarepa would not be able to take the direct teachings

because he still had to be purified in order to be ready. But when he gave the teachings to Milarepa, he gave him everything. Milarepa was able to receive them without further explanations and became one of Marpa's most excellent students. That is why Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche stated that "it is better to tread the gradual path."

*"'Nonmeditation,' 'nondistractive,' 'abandoning mental doings,' 'maintaining whatever arises,' 'ordinary mind,' and 'free of intellect' all mean uncontrived. Whatever abiding or moving is perceived, it is unnecessary to fabricate anything. Again minding and again concentrating is certainly adding deluded thought onto itself. Focusing directly upon bare awareness, called 'maintaining whatever arises,' is the path of all adepts.*

*In the ways of applying practice to one's being, such as the middle way, pacification and severance, Mahamudra, and common Dzogchen, whatever thoughts arise, without making anything out of them, you look nakedly right at them, and they become the path of liberation. In the path of the heart-drop esoteric instruction of Dzogchen, you look inwardly right at the one who perceives whatever thoughts arise, and you encounter the essence of reality. Deluded appearance and thoughts disappear in their own ground without your paying attention to them. I have heard several learned and accomplished Gurus say that the former is focusing outward with dualistic clinging, while the latter is focusing inward and is truly nondualism. Even if that is so, the methods of liberating thoughts must include definite experiences in the three stages."*

Dzogchen teaches to recognize *rig-pa* by turning one's mind inward, free of the three thoughts relating to the three times. Mahamudra speaks of three factors: nonmeditation, nondistractive, and abandoning mental fabrications. Mahamudra meditation is looking at one's mind when one is resting in calm and ease and looking at thoughts when they arise.

'Nonmeditation' means looking at one's mind nakedly, not following after and not blocking thoughts, rather looking at one's mind from moment to moment while simultaneously resting naturally without applying effort and without making preparations. When one really recognizes the moment, one rests there. Even though the methods are different, Mahamudra and Dzogchen are the same. Dzogchen speaks of *rig-pa* and Mahamudra speaks of ordinary mind, of holding the natural and bare mind. When one looks at the moment and recognizes it, one needs to rest in that recognition. How does one look? One just looks. One doesn't follow after thoughts that arise, one doesn't block them, one doesn't prepare to look. One rests and looks any time thoughts arise.

Recognition has two qualities, one is the empty aspect of one's mind and the other is the luminous aspect of one's mind. The example given for emptiness is open space. When one really looks and experiences one's mind, one's clinging to duality is like clouds that dissolve into the vast expanse of the sky again. One's mind's emptiness is inconceivable and therefore impossible to conceive. Analyzing emptiness doesn't work. One has to look. At the same time, one's mind is also luminous clarity, like a clear crystal. Recognition of one's mind's true nature is an experience, yet it is called "knowing." When one really recognizes one's mind, one rests in that recognition; it can be for a short moment only. This is what Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye explained in this text. It doesn't matter how many instructions one receives, it will be hard bringing the two together and having deeper experiences without meditation.

One might attain recognition, but one needs to have confidence. One's confidence has to be so unshakeable that one would think the Buddha is kidding if he appeared in person and told one that what one's meditation is wrong. This is speaking of actual realization. Outer circumstances, e.g., sicknesses or scornful words, cannot shake an advanced meditator, who doesn't become involved with and isn't moved by samsaric thoughts. Jetsün Milarepa wasn't bothered if someone beat him up or threatened him with a knife. Nothing could shatter his confidence. We are complicated and can change easily, which shows that we have no realization. We are like a sheet of paper blown by the wind that falls to the ground when the wind has stopped.

Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye then instructs us that it's very important to free our conceptual mind by understanding and experiencing the three deep stages as explained by the great Dzogchen master Vimalamitra, the Indian sage who also brought the Dzogchen teachings to Tibet in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

*“Thus, according to Vimalamitra, liberation without an initial and subsequent thought is like a child looking around in wonderment in a temple: there is no mental construct of good or bad made from the initial perception. Liberation in its own ground of whatever thought arises is like the snake's knot disappearing in space: as soon as it appears, it disappears without need of a remedy. Liberation in thoughts, being neither helpful nor harmful, is like a burglar raiding an empty house: whether it occurs or not, there is neither loss nor gain.”*

When one looks at one's mind and recognizes *rig-pa*, which is the same as Mahamudra, thoughts are liberated from the very first moment that they arise until the time that they cease. That's the first instruction of Vimalamitra. One should see it like that by looking. The example given is a child looking around in a temple. It doesn't think, “This is a good painting. That is a bad painting. This is a Tibetan painting,” and so forth. A child just looks and doesn't create thoughts. One's problem is giving rise to discriminating thoughts, like, “This is good for me,” thus one has desire. Or one thinks, “That's not good for me,” thus one has aversion. Then many thoughts follow. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche is telling us to just look at our thoughts and to be like a child in a temple for the first time.

The second stage taught by Vimalamitra is that a thought is liberated the very moment it arises. It needn't be liberated by means of an antidote. The moment one looks at a thought that arises, one doesn't need to resort to a meditation to liberate that thought. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche presented the example of a snake tied in a knot that unties on its own. In the same way, one will see that thoughts arise and go on their own when one looks at them, without applying an antidote, e.g., watching one's breathing or thinking differently. One just looks and sees that a thought is freed by itself. Seen practically, the moment one looks at one's thought, it isn't there. Thoughts are strong when one doesn't look at them, but aren't when one does. One needn't do anything but look. It's like that, with any thought. One has many thoughts if one doesn't look. The third stage is that the liberation of thoughts is neither helpful nor harmful. In fact, this is saying that there is nothing that needs to be liberated. The example is that one doesn't lose or gain anything if a robber hoped to steal things out of one's empty house. In the same way, one recognizes that nothing new happens when one's thoughts are liberated. For example, space is ever-present. It's only a matter of looking and seeing. One can't say that space is new or that it is old. It's there. Freedom isn't newly created but is ever-present in every moment. The matter is

one has to be there, to be within that; put in other terms, one has to recognize. Not seeing is like keeping one's glasses on one's head but searching for them all over the place. Many people do this. It is right there – one needn't search anywhere. The Mahamudra instructions present the example of searching for a buffalo that is right there. The problem is that one didn't look properly. So, that's what's being said here.

*Question:* “There is a special method in Dzogchen in which the teacher directly introduces the disciple to the nature of the mind. Does Mahamudra also have a method like this?”

*Lama:* Yes, but sometimes it might not be that helpful. It depends upon many conditions, e.g., the teacher needs to have real experiences and the student needs to have pure confidence in the teacher. It's difficult without these conditions. Shri Naropa went through years and years of 24 hardships in all. He never gave up wishing to receive the teachings from Shri Tilopa. Naropa was chief abbot of Nalanda University, a position that only the most learned scholars could have. He was also a prince, so the hardships he went through were a sign that he was not proud and had utter devotion for his Guru Tilopa when he gave up everything in order to advance spiritually. He got it when Tilopa didn't say anything but hit him on the head with his sandal.

*‘In short, the essential meaning is this: understand the essential points of meditation; do not fall under the power of mediocrity in external manners; and inwardly, exert effort tempered just right. These should be understood as the signs of obtaining stability. Nonmeditation is the exhaustion of efforts. Although there is nothing to meditate on, there is something to get used to. For the sake of habituation, while eating, resting, going, or staying, in all activities, it is crucial not to give in to distraction.*

*When alone, you can relax and maintain true nature. When in a crowd, the power of mindfulness, awareness, and clarity need to be carefully guarded. Since mindful awareness in essence has no true existence, there is nothing to attend to, but there is something to establish. Since it is awareness-emptiness, it is somewhat difficult to establish, but once you are used to it, it will be like meeting an old acquaintance. Whatever appearances, sounds, or thoughts occur, there is not one iota that is not an aspect of awareness itself.*

*The esoteric instructions of exceptional Atiyoga speak of the distinction between mind and intrinsic awareness. Mindfulness cannot grasp the nature of clear light – this abstruse aspect, with movement and memory, that is difficult to cut through, is mind.*

*With no object of cognizance, the nature of clear light is seen – this radiant aspect that abides like a candle is the latter. It is like a sudden fright without a known object, but when it is recognized, confidence is established. It is said that awareness is empty of movement, unborn, and unliberated. These are not just the words of emptiness seen in books. They are the direct oral precepts of the lineage Gurus that are like the heart's blood. They are not revealed to those of broken commitment, sophists, and so on – the protectors of mantra keep a sharp watch!*

*Uncontrived reality does not need to be sustained continuously: the initial incident recalled is sufficient. It was taught by the previous Kagyu masters that by meditating on the essence, the karmic obscurations of many eons are purified, and furthermore, the vital wind enters the central channel automatically. There are other benefits too great to speak of. If you know your own nature, it is the knowledge of the one thing that liberates all. When your mental powers are weak, and maintaining without focusing on something is difficult, practice developing mindfulness in creation stage and other techniques that are in keeping with your condition.*

*In sustaining nonfocusing, the mixing of basic space and intrinsic awareness is enhanced by mixing the source, mind, with the center of space or the midst of the ocean to illuminate mindfulness. At that time, awareness-emptiness without center or circumference arises.*

*Three things are said to pose the danger of misunderstanding: emptiness, calm abiding, and neutrality. Emptiness means freedom from the extremes of existence and non-existence, birth and cessation, eternalism and nihilism. It is called an experience in awareness, unimaginable, inconceivable, and ineffable.*

*Calm abiding is thoroughly pacifying the churning of thoughts and resting the mind evenly, without center or circumference, abiding like the ocean without waves.*

*Neutrality is when the power of mindful awareness weakens, and you pursue the subtle mental movements. When mindful awareness arises, it is more like hindsight. It is like water flowing through grass; you see it only when it comes out the other side."*

It might happen that when one meditates the nature of the mind, Mahamudra or *rig-pa*, misunderstandings arise while meditating calm abiding or emptiness. One's mind can be dull or neutral, i.e., lack mindfulness and awareness. When one really experiences the nature of one's mind, emptiness, it is like tasting candy that one has put in one's mouth. It's difficult to think how it tastes and to put one's experience in words. One can only experience for oneself how it tastes, which means one knows. That's what the experience of emptiness is like.

You know that calm abiding meditation is the practice to calm down one's busy mind, likened to an ocean without waves. But one can fall into a state of neutrality while meditating calm abiding, then think that one is resting in *rig-pa*, which is not the case. Falling into neutrality is a trap. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche compares this with an undercurrent of water flowing through grass that one only sees when it comes out at the other side of one's lawn. In the same way, one only sees that one has fallen into neutrality when one is mindful and aware. Neutrality is not meditation. One needs to be mindful and aware, otherwise the water flowing under one's lawn will leak into the basement of one's house and flood it. And so one needs to know that meditating on the nature of one's mind isn't calm abiding meditation. The function of calm abiding meditation is to calm down the mind.

*"During meditation, if a state of neutrality occurs, single it out, that is, tighten up the mindful awareness. When dark torpor sets in, clear out the stale breath and wake up by chanting, shouting, swaying, and so on."*

If one loses one's mindfulness and awareness while meditating *bskyed-rim* and *rdzog-rim* and one becomes dull and sleepy, one concentrates on a specific aspect of a deity, like the forehead, and focuses one's mind on it. Or one can clean one's breathing in the traditional way by exhaling 3 or 9 times. Or one chants the mantra louder than usual. If one has received instructions on *The Six Yogas of Naropa*, one can practice one of the exercises.

*"When angry thoughts arise vividly, if you look at them nakedly and rest without fabrication, they will vanish in their own ground without harm or benefit. Self-arising wisdom is none other than that. That vivid arising within a state of non-fabrication takes the form of anger but is essentially pristine wisdom. In the wake of the vanishing anger, the radiance of emptiness need not be pursued. That emptiness without frame of reference is what's called 'unity,' as are Vajrasattva and the others. Apply this also to the afflictive emotions, such as desire and so on."*

So, that's how one meditates *rig-pa*, which is the same as Mahamudra. Whether one meditates Dorje Sempa alone or in union with his consort, Vajrayogini, or Chakrasamvara, it will be like meditating on anger. One rests in the nature of one's mind.

*Question:* "What does unity mean?"

*Lama:* It's an expression for the experience of the nature of the mind. There are different levels of understanding anger. 'Unity' is the experience of appearance-emptiness in the practice of *bskyed-rim*. Arya Tara one visualizes is emptiness and manifests as Tara. One needs to understand emptiness well when one practices deity meditation, otherwise one will have many misunderstandings. For example, let's assume one had a real good meal and thinks about how delicious it was all the time. Like that, one feels so clear, fresh, and peaceful meditating *bskyed-rim* and clings to those experiences just like one does to the delicious meal one had. If one only thinks about the delicious meal that one had, one cannot appreciate any other meal and isn't satisfied when one doesn't get the same food. In the same way, one can fall into this mistake when meditating *bskye-rim* if one doesn't understand emptiness. It's important to understand emptiness as taught by Acharya Nagarjuna, otherwise it's very difficult. In Tibetan, we have the saying that one can fall into the trap of feeling good. Like a beggar, one always thinks about the delicious food one once received and thinks it will always be like that. It doesn't work like that. It's there when it's there. Dzog-rim describes 'unity' as emptiness-luminosity inseparable. This doesn't mean a blue and red thread are mixed into a yarn. Rather, it's more like a waterfall flowing into a river. So, practitioners meditate luminosity and emptiness, otherwise there is the danger of clinging to luminosity.

Let's leave it at that, otherwise it will be too complicating. You can read the rest of the text, which has been translated very, very well. Thank you.

### **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!

All you sentient beings I have a good or bad connection with  
As soon as you have left this confus'd dimension,  
May you be born in the West, in Sukhavati,  
And once you're born there, complete the bhumis and the paths.

### **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.



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May truthfulness and goodness increase!