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Nectar from the Stream – III

A few selected teachings presented during the transmission of *The Rinchen Terdzö* - 'The Precious Treasure Teachings' of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye the Great, held at Palpung Sherab Ling Monastery, India, in 2006. Photo of His Eminence courtesy of KKCW-Taiwan.

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The Creation and Completion Stages

There are many detailed explanations about the sacred instructions and transmissions that you haven't learned from me as of yet. But there are two specific subjects in *The Rinchen Terdzö* of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye that I want to speak about now. They are about the creation and completion stages.

The Creation Stage – *bsKyed-rim*

The creation stage of meditation practice concerns the visualization. There are three points. The first is visualizing clearly. Whatever one is visualizing, one has to be able to visualize clearly. The second point is having and maintaining the pride of being the deity. This doesn't mean that one thinks, "Now I'm a deity. I'm proud." That's not what this means, rather, one has to be able to maintain being one with the deity. One isn't visualizing something else, rather, one is the specific deity that one is meditating. The Tibetan word for 'pride' is *nga-rgyäl*, but in this context it doesn't refer to the ordinary pride of ego that we all have. Instead, it means having true faith and true presence.

The third point is remembering the meaning of the deity's attributes while visualizing. What does this mean? One needs to know why Guru Rinpoche holds a vajra in his right hand and why he holds it the way he does. Why does he hold a skull cup filled with nectar in his left

hand and why is there a long life vase on top of it? What do they symbolize? The vase symbolizes immortality, and the vajra represents the five kings and five queens of the five Buddha families. Guru Rinpoche holds the vajra with the *mudra* (*phyag-rgya* in Tibetan, 'hand gesture') of great victory; it is called, 'the suppressing, victorious mudra.' It symbolizes victory over all negativities, all evil, all obstacles and defilements. While visualizing Guru Rinpoche, these symbols need to be kept in mind in a very natural, simple, and uncomplicated way.



What will help one visualize clearly? Instead, one should ask, why can't one visualize clearly? Because one's mind isn't stable and calm. Even if it is calm, it isn't clear; it's calm and dull, i.e., sleepy calm, not clear calm. Why? Because of one's defilements. This is the reason the discipline of morality, *tshul-khrims* (*shila* in Sanskrit, 'ethical conduct') is most important. If one is able to observe the *vinaya* (the Sanskrit term for 'discipline') of *shila*, then one is free of the causes and conditions of one's defilements. The five main defilements, which are always present, are: ignorance, attachment, aggression, jealousy, and ego pride. Ignorance is the mother of all defilements.

Can one be free of these defilements? I will give an example. It's a little bit extreme for persons who aren't monks or nuns, but lay practitioners have their own kind of *vinaya*. For example, to be a good monk or a good nun, there's nothing to really worry about, so they have all the time on Earth and can do everything that is good. There's no reason for monks and nuns to be jealous of anybody about anything. There's no reason for them to be attached to anything. There's no reason for them to be angry about anything. And there's no reason for them to be proud of anything. They are good, sincere, and mature individuals, because there are no conditions for them to succumb to defilements. Of course, if you ask me whether all of us here are free of the defilements, I will answer, of course not. But we can spend all our time and energy engaging in Dharma activities. We don't have to spend our time and energy planning this or planning that, trying to fulfill our desires and the desires of others, trying to satisfy our ego and the ego of others, trying to fulfill our jealousy and the jealousy of others. In any case, I don't have to worry about such things; they aren't relevant in my life or in the lives of monks and nuns. In this way, having *shila* ('ethical conduct or morality') is the most effective discipline for most practitioners to have a calm, quiet, and clear mind.

Concerning true presence of being a deity, how can one believe that one is the deity while visualizing and practicing? One needs to have two conditions. One condition is having

profound, genuine, and heart-felt devotion for the deity, or the Buddha, or the Bodhisattva one is meditating. The other condition is having profound, genuine, and heart-felt compassion for all sentient beings. If one has these two conditions, then one is the embodiment of devotion and compassion and thus one is the embodiment of the deity. This way, having true presence of being a deity is quite spontaneous.

Concerning the practice one is doing, after one has received the transmission, it's important to read the text very clearly when practicing. Then one can remember what the symbols mean and which aspect of enlightened qualities a deity manifests. One remembers this in a simple way, not in a complicated way.

If one has faith and devotion in the Guru, in the Buddha, or in a Bodhisattva one is meditating, then it is simple. If one doesn't have faith, then nothing is simple. Why? Because one makes an effort to believe, while one's heart that is in one's head tells one that one can't. Then one fights, is busy in one's head, and goes through a kind of divine schizophrenia inside. This becomes an immense problem. Pretending to have devotion doesn't mean one has it, and pretending to have compassion doesn't mean one has it. One's genuine, heart-felt devotion and compassion have to be natural if one wants to progress and mature spiritually. When this is the case, then everything is natural and spontaneous.

So, these three points are discussed in the visualization instructions of the creation stage of practice that was written by Rigzin Tsewang Norbu of Kathok and that Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye included in *The Rinchen Terdzö*.

The Completion Stage – *rdZogs-rim*

There are many stages to contemplate and very many aspects of practice in the completion stage. For example, there are the six yogas that are practiced in the Mahamudra Lineage. There are also six yogas practiced in the Dzogchen Tradition. They are counted differently, but they are the same. There are also the practices called "Cutting through resistance to primordial purity" and "Going directly to the ultimate." The base of all these practices is the view, meditation, and action, these three.

It doesn't matter which practice one is doing - whether it's a very high practice or a low practice - , it'll go up according to one's view. So, even if one's practice seems to be down there, it will go up if one's view is high up. And even if one's practice is supposed to be high up, it will always accord with one's view. Let's take an iron container plated with gold as an example. The gold will be on the iron. The iron won't turn into gold, but the container will remain gold-plated iron. So, the iron will remain "down there" and not turn into gold "up there." In the same way, one's practice cannot be different or higher than one's view.

What is the view in Vajrayana? It's the view of the great unity of everything – the great Oneness of all things. Vajrayana practitioners see no difference between Buddha and sentient beings and between the Pure Land and this terrible world that we live in. Actually, in this 21st century, our world is in a big mess. But ultimately, our world and the Pure Land aren't different. This is the kind of view that we should have. When it comes to meditation and action, though, they need to accord with our view. If we try to act differently than our view, then we will only be pretending. For example, I practice Tantra. I'm a monk, so I observe my *vinaya* vows very dearly, very seriously. At the same time, I know that *vinaya* isn't ultimate. Tantra is ultimate. I know that I shouldn't look down on anything. I should look so high when it comes to tantric actions, tantric activities. But I'm not at that level yet. I have to have

attained the level of Marpa Lotsawa, Jetsün Milarepa, Shri Tilopa, and Shri Naropa in order to be able to do what they did. I'm not at that level, therefore I respect it. I wish to be at that level, but I have to act according to my level, which is to hold and uphold very dearly all the vinaya precepts and vows that I have taken and to do my best.

There are 253 vows for me to keep. It's hard for me to keep all of them. I keep the main ones, but I can't always be aware and constantly say the confession prayer, *The 35 Buddha Prayer*, when I think that I might have broken a little vow. Nevertheless, I do my best to improve so that I can at least keep all 253 vows. I don't hold all vows as ultimate, because they are relative. They are only ultimate for me now, because at my level I'm still not totally free of attachment, jealousy, anger, ego, ignorance. So I have to be a good monk and behave. If I don't, I'll be breaking my vows, which is very serious. So, monks and nuns at my level have to think of keeping their vows. Of course, monks and nuns who have attained the level of Jetsün Milarepa, or Shri Tilopa, or Shri Naropa can just go ahead. But monks and nuns who haven't reached their level have to take the vows. Their actions must accord with their vows and their actions should never override their view, i.e., the view has to be highest.

Meditation concerns whatever meditation practice one is doing, and one has to do it full-heartedly. I spoke about this earlier, when I explained visualization. So I have explained the view, meditation, and action.

Now, in Dzogchen, there is also quite an emphasis on the highest form of practice. These practices are called "Cutting through resistance to primordial purity" and "Going directly to the ultimate." They are very special and profound methods of practice. One very basic exercise in these practices is bridging the gap between samsara and nirvana. Presently, one has much fear of one's very many perceptions. One is afraid of everything in samsara, afraid that people will look down on one, afraid that somebody might laugh at one, etc. Actually, I like to laugh and make jokes, but this is not the proper situation or the right place to make jokes. People will look down on us and disrespect us if we laugh and make jokes during these instructions and transmissions.

It is a fact that we have much fear, which must be overcome. There is a method of practice in Dzogchen to overcome fear. It is called *g.yon-ru-chen* (*g.yong* meaning 'contender' and *ru-chen* meaning 'large team'). In the old days, a practitioner had to engage in outer *g.yon-ru-chen* purposely. But I don't think that these days we have to do this purposely. I think that nowadays normal life resembles *g.yon-ru-chen*. We don't have to pretend to be like a wild elephant, or pretend to be like a beast of prey, or pretend to be a human, or pretend to be a crazy person. We don't have to practice that, because everybody is almost crazy. So, I don't have to emphasize the outer practice of *ru-chen* here. But the inner practice of *ru-chen* that is mentioned in the text states that the source of suffering in samsara is within each of us. Our attachment is the source of our suffering in the human realm. Our anger is the source of our suffering in the hell realms. Our ego is the source of our suffering in the realm of the gods. Our jealousy is the source of our suffering in the realm of the jealous gods. Our ignorance is the source of our suffering in the animal realm. And our miserliness is the source of our suffering in the realm of the hungry ghosts. In the meditation practice, we envision the blessings of all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Guru Rinpoche in the form of the syllables OM AH HUM. They are the radiant light of wisdom and the non-dualistic essence of the three *kayas* ('bodies') of the Buddha - the Dharmakaya, the Sambhogakaya, and the Nirmanakaya. We do this practice because we aren't enlightened. The Buddha and Guru Rinpoche are enlightened, but we aren't enlightened yet. Our essence is the same as the enlightened Buddha himself, though. Therefore, practicing in this way is compatible. The force of these lights will

burn the source of suffering in the six realms, so we transform into the Guru Rinpoche, which is the practice of inner *ru-chen*.

The last stage of the practice of “Going-over to the ultimate” is very important. Four stages are mentioned in the text. The first is practiced to recognize the nature of all phenomena “as it is.” This means that having become proficient in practice, we see pillars, lights, people, and all these things while profoundly and genuinely knowing that they are the illusion of our karma and are just a little bit more solid. All this started at our birth and will end at our death. Except for that, there’s no difference between a dream that we had the past night. So, realizing and seeing this very clearly is the first result of practicing “Going-over to the ultimate.” There are so many methods to accomplish this state, like looking into the sky or looking into the light. There is “Clear light going-over to the ultimate” and there is “Dark going-over to the ultimate.” There are so many methods, but the basic result, speaking dualistically, is very simple: It is recognizing everything “as it is.”

The second stage of “Going-over to the ultimate” is practiced so that experiences become realization, so that experiences become more and more abundant and more and more profound. Since experiences pass, one clings to any good experience one had and wants to experience it again, which will never happen. Clinging puts an end to one’s spiritual progress.

Often Dharma practice is called “Dharma training,” a Guru is referred to as “a spiritual friend,” and realization called “experience.” I don’t agree with these terms; they are wrong. Dharma practice and training are very different; a Guru and a spiritual friend are totally different, and experience and realization are totally different, too. One can train a dog to sit on one’s lap, but it’s impossible to train somebody to be a buddha. It should be called “practicing,” not “training.” And so, in this way, one experiences that one progresses to realization.

At the third stage of “Going-over to the ultimate,” one’s realization isn’t just an experience but is pure realization. Having reached this stage, one won’t fall back. As long as it’s possible to fall back, it’s possible to lose everything. For example, if one has a very good experience, is proud of it, boasts about it, and somehow shows off, then one is back to square-one. Actually, it’s not just square-one - it’s wrong; it’s zero. Transforming experiences into realization is having true realization, but it needs to be deepened. So, the fourth and final stage of “Going-over to the ultimate” is realization of “nothing is left.” At this point, the ultimate truth and the relative truth have become one. One has realized that there is no difference between the two truths, not even a philosophical or experiential difference. One has true realization of “no difference.” It isn’t possible to describe realization of “no difference” in words, because “no difference” is beyond every thing. Realization of “no difference” is ineffable.

This concludes the instructions on the text of the completion stage of practice that was composed by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye and is in *The Rinchen Terdzö*. I hope that my explanation has been beneficial for you.

The Three Kayas

I want to speak about the three principles that make it easier to understand the three *kayas*, the ‘bodies of a buddha.’ The three terms in Tibetan are *ngo-bo*, *rang-bzhin*, and *thugs-rje*.

Ngo-bo means ‘intrinsic nature.’ *Rang-bzhin* means ‘natural expression,’ something like ‘characteristic.’ And *thugs-rje* means ‘compassion’ (*karuna* in Sanskrit); it also means

‘blessing, the kindness blessing.’ Among other things, the term *ngo-bo* describes the *Dharmakaya* (‘the truth body of the Buddha’), and the term *rang-bzhin* describes the *Sambhogakaya* (‘the enjoyment body of the Buddha’). *Thugs-rje* is ‘kindness of compassion,’ which is the characteristic of the *Nirmanakaya* (‘the emanation body of the Buddha’). Although the meaning is quite deep, the connection between the three kayas is very simple and easy to comprehend, if one understands these three terms. Let us look at each one in more detail.

Ngo-bo means ‘essence, intrinsic nature.’ It is the essence of the Buddha and the essence of all living beings, without exception. Ultimately, there is no difference between the essence of the Buddha and the essence of each and every living being. When a practitioner has realized his or her true nature, *ngo-bo*, then he or she will have realized the *Dharmakaya*.

Rang-bzhin means ‘characteristic,’ i.e., the characteristic of the true nature (*ngo-bo*). The true nature has countless qualities, i.e., characteristics. When one is liberated and fully realized, then all one’s characteristics manifest naturally. The *Sambhogakaya* of the Buddha can perfectly manifest countless qualities in countless directions and countless ways at the same time. The *Sambhogakaya* manifests to sentient beings who have attained highest levels of realization. It doesn’t manifest as something above something else that is present, like a deity residing on Mt. Everest. Rather, the Buddha’s entire realm of existence that doesn’t exist somewhere, i.e., that doesn’t exist in a specific place, is transformed into his *mandala* (*dkyil-‘khor*, ‘center and surrounding’).

Let me say here that I’m very orthodox and am therefore very sad and outraged that nowadays mandalas are depicted inside and on the covers of calendars. This doesn’t seem to bother anybody, so maybe something is wrong with me. There’s an illustration of the mandala of Chakrasamvara for January, of Kalachakra for February, of Hevajra for March, of Guhyasamvara for April, etc. What does that sound and look like? When the year is over, the calendar is thrown into the garbage can. Of course, ultimately, there’s nothing wrong with this, but in my opinion, relatively, nothing can be more wrong than this. It doesn’t seem to bother anybody practically, so something must be wrong with me. I can’t help feeling very bad about this. Anyway, this was a short discussion of the *Sambhogakaya* and that everything becomes the mandala of the Buddha’s enjoyment body as he manifests for the benefit of those sentient beings that have highest levels of realization. The Buddha or deity is the center of the mandala, and the environment is the surroundings of the mandala. That is the rough description of the term *rang-bzhin*. Let us now look at the term *thugs-rje*.

Thugs is the honorific term for ‘mind.’ *rJe* refers to *nying-rje* and means ‘compassion.’ In *thugs-rje*, it means ‘kindness, kind aspiration.’ The Buddha’s manifestation to all sentient beings can never be anything but kind. It can never be anything but beneficial and can never appear in a harmful way. A *Nirmanakaya* manifests to benefit sentient beings according to their personal abilities. How did and do *Nirmanakaya* manifestations continue coming about? Because of *Bodhichitta*, because of having prayed and continuing to pray, "I wish to attain Buddhahood so that all sentient beings reach that state." As a result of this aspiration, when such a noble practitioner reaches Buddhahood, he or she will manifest spontaneously for the benefit of all sentient beings and in whichever way is appropriate and helpful. He or she will appear in a peaceful, forceful, magnetizing, or enriching way that can never harm anyone but will ever and always be beneficial. What does beneficial mean? It means helping living beings practice the path to attain liberation and enlightenment. This is the definition of “beneficial” in Vajrayana. And the Buddha’s manifestation of the *Nirmanakaya* will never cause anyone not to attain enlightenment, rather it will always cause living beings to attain enlightenment

by guiding them on the path.

The General Meaning of Initiations

I would like to give a general description of initiations. Most of you know what initiations are, but some of you may not.

The Tibetan term for 'initiation' is *dbang*. It is translated into English as 'empowerment' or 'initiation.' I really like these translations. They are perfect and very concise, because they mean that you are empowered to meditate a specific deity after having received the initiation. You are empowered to say that deity's mantra and to practice the meditation stages of *bskyed-rim* and *rdzogs-rim* ('creation and completion') of that deity practice. You are able to do this because you have received the specific initiation and therefore are empowered.

Usually, four stages of initiation are given. The first is *bum-pa*, 'the vase' initiation. The second is *gsang-ba*, which means 'secret.' The third is *shes-rab-ye-shes-kyi-dbang*, the 'primordial wisdom initiation.' *Shes-rab* means 'wisdom-awareness,' and *ye-shes* means 'primordial, pristine wisdom.' The fourth initiation is the *tshig-kyi-dbang*. *Tshig* means 'word,' so *tshig-kyi-dbang* is 'the word initiation.' Sometimes, but rarely, a fifth initiation is given, which is the *de-kho-na-nyid-kyi-dbang*. In ordinary terms, *de-kho-na-nyid* means something like 'that's it' or 'as it is-ness.' As said, usually only the first four initiations are given.

The first initiation is the vase initiation. On this occasion the deity and the retinue in the mandala of that specific deity bless your body and your surroundings, thus purifying all karma that you accumulated with your body in countless lifetimes. Having received this initiation, you are empowered to practice the visualization of the particular deity together with its mandala. Receiving the vase initiation and engaging in the practice means that in the future you will attain the Nirmanakaya.

The second initiation is the secret initiation. Depending upon the initiation that you are receiving, on this occasion the deity and the mandala of that deity, or the Guru, or the protector bless your speech, thus purifying all karma that you accumulated with your speech in countless lifetimes. Having received this initiation, you are empowered to speak and repeat the mantra of that deity. Receiving the secret initiation and repeating the mantra means that in the future you will attain the Sambhogakaya.

The third initiation is the primordial wisdom initiation. On this occasion the deity and the mandala of that deity bless your mind, thus purifying all karma that you accumulated with your mind in countless lives. Receiving the primordial wisdom initiation and engaging in the creation and completion stages of practice of the deity means that in the future you will fully realize the Dharmakaya.

It's interesting that the first initiation is given to attain the Nirmanakaya, then the initiation to attain the Sambhogakaya, and then the initiation to attain the Dharmakaya are given. But it's not possible to attain the Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya without having realized the Dharmakaya. The result of practice will be in that sequence, i.e., should one realize the Dharmakaya, then the Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya spontaneously manifest from the Dharmakaya.

The fourth initiation is the word initiation. These days, many people speak about "pointing

out.” I don't understand why people say that. I prefer saying “pointing in.” Pointing in is the introduction to the nature of the mind from the side of a master to a disciple, so it's pointing in and not pointing out. We are already pointed out, you know. My opinion is that it is pointing in. But, of course, sometimes I think too much about words, and I do this because I believe that a person should mean what he or she says. If you don't use the right words, then you can't mean what you say, because you don't know what you are saying. If you don't know what you are saying, then you can never mean what you say. A person should mean what he or she says. Therefore, the person should be very clear about words. My English vocabulary is pretty poor, but I try to be as accurate as possible. Anyway, the fourth initiation is the introduction to the mind's true nature. During this initiation, a crystal, a mirror, or anything that can reflect things is used and shown to you. By receiving this initiation, you are empowered to meditate on the nature of your mind.

The fifth initiation, which is very rarely given, is the *de-kho-na-nyid-kyi-dbang*, the ‘that is initiation.’ It is the initiation that empowers you to have a true experience of the nature of your mind. It's kind of ironic, in fact, it's quite ironic that when you first recognize the nature of your mind, it's very much an experience. An experience is nothing, but it's a beginning, so experiencing the nature of your mind is a beginning that helps you realize the nature of your mind. Again, experiencing and realizing are two different things, but experiencing the nature of the mind will lead to the realization. For example, if you go to Bodhgaya where the Buddha attained enlightenment, sit under the Bodhitree, and think about the Buddha, then you can experience his presence. This experience has everything to do with your perception, with your attitude, with what you have learned about the Buddha, and with what you have seen. All of these factors make you experience the Buddha there, which you don't feel when you sit under a pine tree at Sherab Ling. But you feel the presence of the Buddha under the Bodhitree, the Banyantree at Bodhgaya. The Buddha is everywhere, but you feel him there, because the Nirmanakaya Buddha attained enlightenment right there. Prince Siddhartha became Buddha Shakyamuni right there, and you experience that. As a result of that experience, you are inspired to learn more about Lord Buddha's teachings. Then you practice the Dharma and as a result will realize the truth of the teachings. You will realize the teachings of the Buddha through practice. So, the fifth initiation is more like the blessing of an experience that becomes realization through practice – it really happens. This is the fifth empowerment, which is also referred to as “equanimity empowerment.” So, this concludes the discussion on the general meaning of initiations.

Strange things happen to me very often. For example, people come here, receive many instructions and initiations, and afterwards they want to see me privately. They want me to give them a protection blessing, but protection is always given at the beginning of every initiation in that a tormas is offered and brought outside. Then the protection mandala is built around all of us. But maybe because people don't know this, they ask me for a protection blessing after all this has already been done and been given to them. Furthermore, many times people want me to give them pointing out instructions. I'm using this word because it's popular; although I don't agree with it, I use it. For example, everybody refers to Lhaje Gampopa's text as *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. Everybody refers to this text by using this name; I do too. But the title is not *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*; the Tibetan title doesn't speak of a jewel, rather it should be translated as *Ornament of Precious Liberation*. Anyway, if people really want to see me, then I think I must see them. So, when I agree to see them, they want me to give them a protection blessing and pointing out, which have already been given to them here so many times. It is done here everyday and in a big way. All the initiations are pointing out, in which case one has to look at the nature of the mind with the nature of the mind itself. But if it's so simple, it's very difficult. For example, your pointing

finger is too close to your middle finger and therefore their tips don't touch. Likewise, your tongue cannot taste itself. You have to put something in your mouth to experience your tongue. In the same way, your eye cannot see your eye. Of course, you can see your eye by looking in a mirror. But then, what you see is not your real eye. You just see the reflection of your eye, and it's reflects backwards. Nobody has ever seen their face in a mirror correctly, because when you look in the mirror, the right side is left and the left side is right. So you don't look the way you think. You look quite different for other people than what you thought you looked like when you looked in the mirror. So, in the same way, the nature of the mind is observed by the nature of the mind. But, instead of watching their mind, people watch their thoughts. And watching the mind means not watching anything and just letting the mind be, by simply resting in the nature of the mind - the timeless, effortless, ineffable. You stay in this nature and just be. So that's the pointing in, or pointing out, or whatever you call it.

I hope this simple description helps you. Of course, there is a much deeper and a much more elaborate meaning of the five initiations. For example, the vase initiation consists of many stages, of transforming the five poisons into five wisdoms, and so forth. There are so many stages to every initiation. This has been a general summary of what the five initiations mean. Now we stop for tea.



Circumambulating Sacred Objects and Sites

When doing '*khor-ba*' ('circumambulations') around Stupas, temples, or other sacred objects of Buddhist worship, it's very important to go clockwise, unless it's a temple or Stupa of the Bon Tradition. The Bonpo place the mantras and objects inside their temples, Stupas, and holy objects in such a way that one has to go anticlockwise around them when one does '*khor-ba*', otherwise everything will be turned around or upside down.

Buddhist sacred objects are erected in such a way that we have to go around them clockwise, otherwise everything will be backwards or turned upside down. It's like a prayer wheel. One turns it clockwise, not the other way around. If you turn a prayer wheel anticlockwise, then the prayers spin backwards, in which case you would be saying and extending the prayers wrongly. So, turning the prayer wheels clockwise is correct. In the same way, you go around the temple clockwise. Everything inside the statue of the Buddha or Stupa is placed in such a

way that it's necessary to circumambulate them clockwise, but there are also many other quite important reasons. Going anticlockwise around a Buddhist temple is bad karma, because you put everything backwards or upside down in your mind. It's like putting the Buddha upside down. Therefore, you must go clockwise; then it's good karma.

Some people might have a good reason for going about this differently because of their culture. I have even seen people put Dharma books on the ground after they finished reading. I have seen people sit on books, using them as a seat. I've seen people carry their shoes around their neck, and sometimes they put them on their head, using them as a hat. I've even seen people use their hat as a cushion. Such behavior depends upon one's culture, and you might think that going clockwise or anticlockwise around sacred objects is also a cultural matter. But it isn't. You should never sit on a Dharma book, and you should never go anticlockwise around a Buddhist temple or Stupa. Other places don't matter. But you must go around images of the Buddha, Buddhist temples, and Stupas in a clockwise direction.

Dealing with Defilements

Why do we, as disciples of Buddhism, do what we do? Everything that we do as Buddhists is to accomplish our wish to become a buddha. But in order to be able to become a buddha, we first have to become free of the propensities to take birth in lower realms of existence. After that, we have to become free from samsara. After that, we have to attain realization and will then have reached enlightenment. That is the purpose of anything we do.

Why do we build temples? Why do we go on pilgrimages? Why do we take initiations? Why do I give initiations? Why do some people practice meditation? Why? Everything we do is for the purpose of attaining enlightenment. Attaining enlightenment is the whole purpose, the sole purpose. There is no other purpose.

What has to be enlightened? Do you know? Is it our mind? Is it our body? Is it our speech? What is it that has to be enlightened? Our mind. Our mind has to be enlightened. What about our body? We point to our body and call it "me" or "mine," but after we have died, we won't say, "That's me. That's my dead body." So, it's the mind that has to be enlightened.

How come the mind can become enlightened? Of course, because the ultimate essence of the mind is the same as the Dharmakaya of the Buddha. We don't recognize it; we don't realize it – that's all. When we do, then we become a buddha.

Our mind has no limitations. Our body, our speech, everything has limitations. Our thoughts have limitations. But the essence of our mind has no limitations. Mind is limitless. Since it is not composed of anything, it is free of all limitations. Therefore, it is too close and so simple that we fail to recognize it. It takes very much merit and very much purification to be able to recognize the Buddha within.

Furthermore, our mind is not enlightened because we perceive its limitless essence as a limited thing that we call "I." Due to not realizing our mind's limitless essence, it is very limited. The "I" naturally manifests attachment, anger, jealousy, pride, all of these things, all of these defilements - the "I" manifests all of them. As a result, we are servants of our body and speech. Our body and speech are servants of our defilements. Our mind, which is a buddha, is the servant of our defilements. This is the definition of *samsara*.

An easy method that I think is very useful for you is, for example, instead of doing anything

about your anger when it arises, just relax and look at your anger. It's not there. Anger is emptiness. Furthermore, instead of doing anything about your jealousy of someone or something, just sit down and look at it. It's not there. It's emptiness. The same with attachment. The same with ego. The same with any defilement. You know what happens when you follow after your defilements and live up to them, so I needn't tell you.

There are so many people who are slaves of their anger and kill others these days. When will this end? This will never end, because relatives, friends, hundreds of people who knew a victim will turn into enemies and try to kill the killer, who will kill all of them in order to save his own life. The hundreds who were then killed also had many relatives and hundreds of friends who turn into enemies and each one will want to take revenge for the death of their loved one, so there is no end. The same with jealousy. There are so many people to be jealous of, because everyone has something that others don't have and that they want. There's no end to jealousy. The same with ego. Being proud and bloated is thinking one has things that others don't have. In this way, every defilement is limitless and endless. Desire can never be satisfied through desire. Anger can never be pacified with anger. Jealousy can never come to an end through jealousy. It's only possible to transform defilements into wisdom by realizing that they aren't really there. What's left when no defilements are there? The nature of the mind. Who recognizes anger? Who thinks it's necessary to look at anger? Who finds that anger is not there? Your mind. And if you leave the essence of your mind alone, then it's perfect.

Nothing can be compared to the essence of the mind. It is larger than the entire universe and all space. It is brighter than all suns of the myriad worlds put together. Mind's essence is ultimate harmony with all things and at all times. It's always and ever perfect. Of course, realizing this is one thing, but it's possible to experience. So, I hope that what I spoke about here helps you at least experience your mind's true nature. If you can, you will progress and will realize it. So, that's all for now.

A Few Words about the Mind's True Nature

Our mind's true nature is the embodiment of three kayas. Our mind's true nature isn't a dualistic reality. Emptiness is the essence of our mind.

Since we can observe things, our mind isn't just emptiness. Who, then, is observing? Who says that it is empty? Who sees it? Who perceives that it's empty? Who sees it doesn't have dualistic existence? It's there, and we call our mind's presence "clarity." Our mind's nature is clarity.

When we have realized that our mind's empty essence and clear nature are all-pervasive, then – since we perceive everything with our mind and thus everything is a manifestation of our mind - we will have realized everything. As long as we don't recognize and realize the way our mind really is – the unity of the three kayas -, we can't really recognize and realize anything.

The Seven Branch Prayer

The first point of *The Seven Branch Prayer* is taking refuge and making prostrations. In whom do we take refuge and to whom do we make prostrations? The Three Roots: our Guru is the root of the blessings, the meditation deities are the root of deep mental absorption (*samadhi* in Sanskrit, *ting-nge-'dzin* in Tibetan), and the protectors, which include the Dakas and Dakinis, are the root of activities. It is written that the Three Roots manifest from

primordial, pure space. It's not the case that somebody achieved something and then appears to living beings. How do we prostrate? Free of the subject and object dichotomy, we prostrate to the Three Roots inseparably united with them. How can we become inseparably united with them? By not being incapable, destructible, corrupt and by having deep and genuine, limitless devotion.

The second branch is making offerings. Who is offering? What is offered? To whom? Being free of duality, making the offering of ever-presence to the spontaneous manifestation of *Dharmata* (*de-kho-na-nyid*, 'as it is'). This is the tantric way of making offerings. The usual way is, with one knee bent and hands folded at the heart, making offerings of best flowers, best fruits, best incense burning in a best container to the Three Jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

The third branch is confession. Normally, we confess anything wrong that we did. Because it is bad, we confess and say, "I'm sorry. I'll never do it again." In Tantra, the good, the bad, the positive, the negative happened relatively but ultimately never happened. There's no ultimate bad deed and negative karma. We confess our non-virtuous deeds and negative karma in the nature that they aren't the result of causes and conditions and therefore aren't established.

The fourth branch is rejoicing. What do we rejoice in? We rejoice in stainless virtue. What does this mean? Stainless means that anything dualistic is and can be polluted. What isn't dualistic is stainless and can't be polluted. What does it mean that things can be polluted or stained? Doing something positive and good while clinging to duality will render good results, but these results will finish. It's like saving lots of money to buy lots of things. If you buy lots of things with all the money you saved, then you have many things but eventually will run out of money and be penniless. Engaging in virtue will be good and as a result you will be healthy. Then you will be rich, and as a result of being rich you will be famous. Then you will be happy. So many things will happen. After they happen, they end and are finished. In the same way, when your good karma is finished, you are back to square-one. This is what it means when it is said that things can be polluted and stained.

Completely stainless means that stains will never happen, that you will continue progressing further and further, and that nothing will ever run out. It's like space, which will always continue providing space. It's only possible to practice virtue that can never be stained by abiding and remaining in non-duality, otherwise it's not possible. For example, we say, "I dedicate anything good I have been able to do non-duality." We can say that, but saying it doesn't make it non-dualistic, because it is the "I" that we are referring to, you know. It's impossible to say what we can't say; we can only say what we can say. As long as we are dualistic, everything that we say will be dualistic, even when we refer to non-duality. So, in Tantra, we rejoice in virtue that cannot be polluted or stained.

The fifth point of *The Seven Branch Prayer* is requesting the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to live long, i.e., to remain in primordial, pristine immortality. What does it mean when it is said that Guru Padmasambhava became immortal? It doesn't mean that he became some sort of superman. It means that he attained realization of Buddha Amitayus, *Tse-pag-me*, the 'Enlightened One of Immeasurable Life.' Guru Padmasambhava became one with Buddha Amitayus and thus he is immortal. We, in contrast, are mortal because of our karma and because our body dies. But our mind is immortal - it doesn't die and it will never die. When we realize the essence of our mind, then we realize the state of immortality. Our Dharmakaya will never die. If it benefits others, our Nirmanakaya might die. And so, we request the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to live long in primordial immortality. We aren't asking the

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to do something unreasonable. We're not saying, "Please don't die." Rather, we are saying, "Please remain in ultimate, primordial immortality."

The sixth branch is requesting the Buddhas to turn the Wheel of the ultimate, ineffable Dharma. The ultimate Dharma, free of words, is the ultimate essence. That is what really happened when Buddha Shakyamuni turned the Wheel of Dharma countless times. He didn't do homework and decide to give the Abhidharma on one day, to teach Sutras on another day, and to present Tantra at another time and place. The Buddha manifested Tantra. He manifested the Sutras and the Vinaya. He manifested the Abhidharma, all according to the capabilities and karma of those who were ready to receive.

The seventh branch is dedication. In Tantra we dedicate all virtue to the great essence, which is clear light. This means that everything is ultimately perfect at all times. Whatever isn't perfect is relative and thus impermanent. Ultimately, everything is perfect and is the mandala of the ultimate deities. Ultimately, we are the deities, but relatively we are the son or daughter of our parents. Our homes are made of bricks and our environment is paved with cement, created by paid laborers and artists. Ultimately, our environment is the mandala of the deity that we are. We dedicate in this pure space and recite the stainless dedication, that all sentient beings attain the spontaneous, primordial wisdom-body, thus becoming Dharmakaya Buddha. Ultimately, not relatively, all living beings are Dharmakaya Buddha. We pray that all sentient beings simply become what they always and already are - nothing less than the Buddha. This is the final dedication.

This is *The Seven Branch Prayer* in Vajrayana and the explanation of the tantric view, tantric meditation, and tantric practice. Those of you who have some understanding of Tantra will benefit from this discussion and those of you who have misunderstood Tantra so far, will have a correct understanding. And I think that those of you who are new to Tantra have received good instructions in a simple way. Thank you.

Dedication Prayers

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 all living beings become Dharmakaya Buddhas.

May the Glorious Lamas and Khenpos live long.
May peace and happiness fully arise for beings as countless in number as space is vast in extent.
Having accumulated merit and purified negativities,
May all living beings without exception swiftly establish the levels and grounds of Buddhahood.



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