



THE PRECIOUS TREASURY OF
PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

Longchen Rabjam

THE PRECIOUS TREASURY OF
PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

THE SEVEN TREASURIES SERIES

This series consists of the volumes written by Longchen Rabjam that, as a group, have come to be known as *The Seven Treasuries*. Although Longchenpa did not intend them to be a series, scholars traditionally treat them as such because of their interrelated themes.

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The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems

*A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the
Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*



Longchen Rabjam

Translated by Richard Barron
(Lama Chökyi Nyima)



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Foreword

His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

The publication of Longchen Rabjam's *Seven Treasuries* should be a cause for rejoicing among deeply committed English-speaking Buddhists who aspire to realize the Dzogchen, or Great Perfection, teachings of Vajrayana Buddhism. Though there are many spiritual traditions in this world, Buddhism offers the deepest examination of what constitutes the root of samsara, and of how to deal with all levels of obscuration and attain liberation. Among Buddhist teachings, none are more profound, more capable of freeing the mind from its most subtle obscurations, than those of the Great Perfection.

Yet, because Great Perfection transmission leads to wisdom beyond words and concepts, the translation of Dzogchen texts presents tremendous difficulties. Some lamas have said that it is not even worth the attempt, that too much distortion results. I respect their opinion, but feel that those of us with the supreme fortune to have received authentic transmission from great Dzogchen masters have a responsibility to maintain the oral lineage, including the translation of texts, as well as the mind-to-mind lineage of realization. If we eschew this work, the precious Great Perfection teachings will remain inaccessible to some excellent Western practitioners who have potential as meditators but who do not know Tibetan. An avenue for the flourishing of the transmission will be cut off.

I am also gravely concerned about the translations of Great Perfection texts produced by Westerners who know Tibetan but who rely solely on scholarly knowledge, without recourse to teachers. Intellectual understanding alone, without the ripening process that takes place under the direction of qualified Dzogchen teachers, will certainly result in misguided translations, perpetuated in misguided meditation by those who base their spiritual practice on such translations. But again, if qualified

Dzogchen masters refrain from working on translations because they fear imperfect results, can they lament when even more erroneous translations are published?

The translator of these texts, Richard Barron (Lama Chökyi Nyima), has truly mastered both literary and spoken Tibetan, but his deeper understanding is based on an extended retreat under the guidance of His Eminence Kalu Rinpoche, on a number of six-week Dzogchen retreats, and on listening to and translating the teachings of many eminent lamas. He has translated other Great Perfection texts and sadhanas, notably Dudjom Lingpa's *Buddhahood Without Meditation*, under my direction. He thus brings more capability to his work than mere theoretical and intellectual competence.

While we have not necessarily produced flawless translations, we have confidence in this groundbreaking attempt. It should be understood that works of this kind are not casually read and easily comprehended. In fact, for most people, the texts are quite difficult to fathom; their meaning unfolds according to the depth of the reader's spiritual preparation. However, simply having these books in one's home is more valuable than having statues or stupas, for they are truly relics of the dharmakaya. Such holy works carry powerful blessings and are worthy objects of faith and devotion.

The project of translating Longchen Rabjam's *Seven Treasuries* is ongoing. We encourage anyone with knowledge and experience of the Great Perfection to contact us with suggestions, clarifications, or corrections, which we will consider for incorporation into future editions. May these precious texts illuminate the minds of all who read and venerate them.

Introduction

Venerable Tulku Thondup Rinpoche

All the teachings of Buddhism are contained in just one treatise:
The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems.

A treatise as sublime as this has never appeared before—
in either India or Tibet—

and it will never appear again. This I can assure you.¹

Paltrul Rinpoche

The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems (*Grub mtha' rin po che'i mdzod*) is one of *The Seven Treasuries* (*mDzod bdun*), the most renowned sacred treatises on Dzogchen composed by the omniscient master Longchen Rabjam (1308–1363).

Among these volumes, *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems* and *The Precious Treasury of Wish Fulfillment* have long been studied in the sanctuaries of great monasteries and nunneries as part of the curriculum essential for mastering scholastic subjects and attaining meditative realization, as well as in the silent solitude of the high mountain caves of Nyingma yogis and yoginis.

The main focus and essence of *The Seven Treasuries* is Dzogchen, or Dzogpa Chenpo (Skt. *atiyoga*), the pinnacle of Buddhist teachings. However, *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems* also elucidates in detail the philosophical views of the Hinayana, Mahayana (sutra), and Vajrayana (tantra) teachings of Buddhism.

Buddhism was born about twenty-six centuries ago in India, and Longchen Rabjam first briefly reviews the tenets of the five major phil-

¹ Abu Hralbo (Paltrul Rinpoche), *mDzod bdun la Ita bar bskul ba*, in *Paltul Sung bum*, vol. Ka, ff. 2a/3 (Sikhron Mirig Petrun Khang).

osophical traditions of the non-Buddhist schools of ancient India. The main thesis begins with the tenets of exoteric (sutra) or common Buddhism: the shravaka and pratyekabuddha schools of Hinayana, and the Chittamatra, Svatantrika Madhyamaka, and Prasangika Madhyamaka schools of Mahayana.

The master then expounds the tenets of esoteric (tantra), or Vajrayana, Buddhism in general and the four classes of tantra of the New Tantric, or Sarma, canon in particular. The new tantras are those followed by the Kagyü, Sakya, and Geluk schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Longchen Rabjam then analyzes the views of the three outer tantras: kriyatantra, charyatantra, and yogatantra, and especially the three inner tantras: mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga from the Old Tantric canon. These are the tantras followed by the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He explains the way in which each tenet is superior to the ones that precede it.

Dzogchen is based on three main principles: the basis (or ground), the path, and the result (or fruition). Self-arising wisdom, the absolute awareness of the ultimate sphere, is spontaneously present in all of us. So long as we are not enlightened, however, our wisdom is obscured by stains. That state is called "the basis." It is where we ordinary beings remain. Spiritual training that entails the two accumulations—those of merit and wisdom—purifies the emotional and intellectual stains of the basis. This process is called "the path." It is along this path that the *Treasury* guides us.

The perfection of this purification causes our own spontaneously present buddha nature to awaken and our buddha qualities to shine forth. This is called "the result," the goal of our attainment. From this perspective, the basis and the result share the same nature, although the basis is the aspect that is still obscured by stains, while the result is the aspect that is free of all stains.²

The primordial basis, self-arising wisdom, is itself free of the extremes of limiting concepts—existence, nonexistence, both, or neither. Its essence is emptiness, or openness, like the sky. Its nature is clear, like the light of the sun and moon. Its compassion, or power, is all-pervasive, like light. These three facets remain, indivisible, in the ultimate sphere, which is unchanging throughout beginningless time as the five aspects of buddha

² See Longchen Rabjam, *Grub mtha' rin po ch'ei mdzod* (Adzom ed.), ff.191b/4 and 185b/3.

wisdom and the three buddha bodies, or kayas. The essence as emptiness is the dharmakaya. The nature as clarity is the sambhogakaya. And all-pervasive compassion is the nirmanakaya.³

Readers might wonder, “Why do I need to study various tenets that focus on the accumulation of merit? I am interested only in wisdom, emptiness, and Dzogchen.” The reason is that although both merit and wisdom are indispensable for reaching and realizing the ultimate wisdom of Dzogchen, we must start our journey from where we are. If we still perceive mental objects with tight grasping, if we are still inflamed by negative emotions like greed, hatred, or jealousy, then we are largely ordinary people perpetuating the never-ending cycle of suffering that is the wheel of life. We need merit to first tame our afflictive mental states and emotions so that we may then concentrate on realizing the wisdom that destroys these at the root.

The accumulation of merit involves positive concepts such as virtuous thoughts, feelings, and deeds. To complete the accumulation of merit, we must follow the laws of karma, observe the three precepts, and serve all beings with compassion. The accumulation of wisdom is the realization of freedom from concepts, as well as the realization of emptiness and effortlessness. Buddhahood will be attained only through these two accumulations, and wisdom will be realized only with the support of merit.

Longchen Rabjam says:

So long as you haven't [even] suppressed your bad thoughts and purified your negative emotions, [views of] emptiness and effortlessness will not [yet] benefit you.⁴

In addition, he says:

If you have contempt for karma and favor mere blank emptiness, believing that dharma with “no effort” is the ultimate, then you are cheating yourself of the chance to train [make progress], as you will be rejecting the two accumulations. So train in the two accumulations; this is my heart advice.⁵

³ See *ibid.*, ff. 182b/4.

⁴ Longchen Rabjam, *Rang la gros su gdams pa*, in *gSung thor bu* (Adzom ed.), vol. 1, ff. 306/1.

⁵ Longchen Rabjam, *sNying gtam sum bchu pa*, in *gSung thor bu* (Adzom ed.), vol. 1, ff. 357/4.

Paltrul Rinpoche writes:

[Realization] of the innate absolute wisdom comes as the result of having accumulated merit and purified the obscurations.⁶

Ultimately, we must unite the two accumulations, as Longchen Rabjam advises:

By observing the law of cause and effect in the state of emptiness, by preserving the three precepts through the realization of no effort, by serving beings through compassion that is free of concepts: train in the union of the two accumulations; this is my heart advice.⁷

To attain the two buddha bodies, dharmakaya (the ultimate body) and rupakaya (the form body), we must perfect the two accumulations. The master Nagarjuna, who codified the philosophy based on the Buddha's teachings on emptiness, explains:

The form body of the buddha is created by the accumulation of merit.

The ultimate body of the buddha is created mainly by the accumulation of wisdom.

Therefore, the two accumulations are the cause of the attainment of buddhahood.

So please always rely on merit and wisdom.⁸

The translation of all the volumes of *The Seven Treasuries* into English was one of the monumental projects envisioned by the late Dzogchen master Chagdud Rinpoche (1930–2002). The completion of four of the seven so far is a great contribution by Rinpoche's students to the fulfillment of his enlightened aspirations and is a great gift of blessings to all of us.

⁶ Paltrul Rinpoche, in *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung* (Sitron Mirig Petrun Khang, 1988), pp. 460/1.

⁷ Longchen Rabjam, *sNying gtam sum bchu pa*, in *gSung thor bu* (Adzom ed.), vol. 1, ff. 359/4.

⁸ Nagarjuna, *rGyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che'i phreng ba*, in *dBu ma rigs tshogs drug* (Buddha Educational Foundation, 2000), pp. 95/3.

As a humble devotee of the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam and his words of dharmakaya, I offer my heartfelt thanks to Chagdud Rinpoche for making this *Treasury* available in English. I also offer my gratitude to Lotsawa Chökyi Nyima, the Padma Publishing editorial and production teams, and all of the generous sponsors for making this historic translation project successful.

May the sunlight-like blessings of the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam, of all the lineage masters, and of the Dzogchen dharma protectors cause the flower-like hearts of compassion and wisdom of all beings to blossom, especially of those who may see, touch, hear, and enjoy the sacred words and profound meaning preserved in this precious volume.

Translator's Preface

The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems is the fourth volume to be translated in Longchenpa's *Seven Treasuries* series envisaged by the late Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. The title of the work is slightly misleading, as only the third of the eight chapters discusses the tenets of Buddhist philosophy; the scope of this book is, in fact, much wider.

The structure of *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems* is traditional. Longchenpa begins in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the coming of the Buddha into this world, interpreting this phenomenon according to various levels of Buddhist teachings. He uses the term "Buddha" to refer not merely to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, but to the totality of the three kayas, which is consistent with the Dzogchen teachings that remain Longchenpa's primary focus throughout *The Seven Treasuries*.

Chapter 2 examines the origin and development of the Buddhist teachings. It includes a discussion of the roles of teacher and student, for in spite of their complexity, the teachings were never meant to have a purely academic focus, but to entail a process of application and personal transformation.

Longchenpa continues to develop this theme in Chapter 3, perhaps the most challenging part of the book, in which he introduces the tenets of traditional systems of philosophy, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. The Tibetan understanding of the latter systems was based on Tibetan translations of Indian Buddhist commentaries, which tended to quote non-Buddhist authorities out of context and to present their tenets in a cursory and less than flattering light. Historically, Tibetan treatments of the Indian philosophical tradition have been confined to analyses of that tradition as it existed at the time of Buddha Shakyamuni and have been for the most part based on Indian Buddhist sources that cite non-Buddhist scriptures,

rather than on those scriptures themselves. It is nevertheless instructive to examine the perspective from which masters such as Longchenpa discussed traditional alternatives to the Buddha's message.

Turning his attention in the same chapter to the four major philosophical trends in the Indian Buddhist tradition, Longchenpa not only presents the tenets of each system, but also critiques the three lower schools, in each case from the perspective of the next stage in the development of Buddhist philosophical inquiry. His approach is to subject the view of a given system to a higher order of reasoning, so that one is led to more authentic conclusions concerning the ultimate nature of reality. In this sense, the progression from the materialist positions through the Chittamatra (Mind Only) system and culminating in the Madhyamaka (Superior) system serves as a model for the maturation of an individual's philosophical outlook.

Given that the philosophical underpinnings of Buddhist thought are never intended to be an end in themselves, in the remaining five chapters Longchenpa outlines the stages and principles of the "transcendent paths"—those that lead to some degree of insight and enlightenment beyond the confines of samsara. After examining the paths of the sutra approach (those of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva) in Chapter 4 and providing a general introduction to the Vajrayana in Chapter 5, he turns in Chapter 6 to the classes of Vajrayana teachings transmitted by the Sarma tradition (comprising those schools that developed from the tenth and eleventh centuries onward). During Longchenpa's lifetime, before sectarian conflict became a more prominent feature of the Tibetan cultural and religious landscape, there was a great deal of interaction between teachers of the various traditions; these flourished in the wake of new translations of Indian sources, a period that began with the great translator Rinchen Zangpo in the eleventh century. Longchenpa's primary affiliation was with the Nyingma tradition, in which he trained under a number of masters, foremost among them his main guru, Kumardza. However, earlier in his life, he also sought out such Sarma masters as the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339), of the Kagyü tradition, and the Sakya master Yakdé Panchen (1299–1378). In Chapters 5 and 6, Longchenpa draws on the knowledge he acquired during this eclectic period of his life.

The two final chapters of the *Treasury* concern the Nyingma teachings on the Vajrayana, according to the Nyingma model of the "three yogas":

mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga. Chapter 7 provides an overview of these teachings, while Chapter 8 focuses on the transmission Longchenpa received from Kumaradza, the pinnacle approach of “the most secret and unsurpassable cycle” of teachings unique to the Category of Direct Transmission in atiyoga.

Throughout the text, Longchenpa cites a large number of scriptural sources, and where feasible I have attempted to locate the passages in the original texts and to give citations in the notes. The Sources Cited gives information on texts that are readily found in published collections, but given the Tibetan penchant for referring to a given text by more than one title, and even by what amount to popular nicknames, the identification of sources can often be problematic. Longchenpa quotes from memory, drawing on his years of study in monastic colleges, and so he occasionally cites a source incorrectly; where possible, I have noted the source in which a citation is actually to be found. Moreover, Longchenpa sometimes cites a verse from a lengthy scriptural source, making a search for the relevant passage extremely difficult; hence such sources are not cited in the notes.

Certain passages that Longchenpa quotes differ from those in texts that are currently in common use. It was only during Longchenpa's lifetime that Butön Rinchen Drup (1290–1364), who passed away in the same year as Longchenpa, made a systematic effort to catalog the works that were to be considered authentic teachings of the Buddha and thus established the “official” edition of the Kangyur, the Tibetan canon of the Buddha's words. In doing so, Butön chose certain translations of Indian sources over others, and even excluded entire groups of texts. In particular, he omitted all of the Nyingma tantras, none of which were included in the Kangyur until the Dergé edition was prepared under the more tolerant direction of the Kagyü master Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné (1700–1774). Thus, it is possible that many of the sources cited by Longchenpa were never included in the official canon and are no longer available. As well, given that the Tibetan translations that became the standards were codified only during Longchenpa's lifetime, it is entirely possible that when he cites a passage that differs somewhat from the “standard” version, he is referring to an alternative translation that was omitted from the Kangyur and so never gained currency.

The language of *The Treasury of Philosophical Systems* is fairly straightforward, with one notable exception: that of Chapter 3, which presents the tenets of the four traditional schools of Buddhist philosophy.

Like philosophers worldwide, Buddhists developed their own highly specialized vocabulary and syntax for discussing the issues they deemed important. Added to this is the fact that Longchenpa wrote almost eight centuries ago and that he used a somewhat idiosyncratic style of argument in presenting these tenets. His treatment of the four schools presupposes a great familiarity with the subject matter on the part of his reader, and it has been necessary to augment the translation with endnotes to help guide the reader through the often intricate issues involved. I have adopted a somewhat free approach to rendering these passages, rather than translating so literally as to make them almost inaccessible.

As with the other volumes in *The Seven Treasuries*, the sources are three Tibetan editions of the text. Two are printed from wood blocks carved at Adzom Chögar in eastern Tibet in the late nineteenth century; one, based on the original blocks, was published as a photo offset reproduction in Gangtok, Sikkim, by H.H. Dodrupchen Rinpoche; the other was printed in the 1980s, by which time the blocks had been slightly reedited. The third edition is a photo offset of blocks carved at the printery of Dergé in eastern Tibet, published by Sherab Gyaltzen and Khentse Labrang.

The translation of *The Treasury of Philosophical Systems* has been a very challenging and rewarding process that began in 1987, when Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche first set in motion the project of translating *The Seven Treasuries* into English. Over the years, a number of Tibetan scholars and masters have contributed their knowledge to the task. I am grateful to the late Chagdud Rinpoche for overseeing the project, as well as for providing clear explanations of difficult passages. Others who contributed substantially to the accuracy of this translation were Yön-gé Mingyur Rinpoché, Khenpo Tsewang Gyatso, the late Khenpo Gyurmed Tingley, and Lama Sonam Tsering. Special thanks go to Khentrul Lodrö Tayé Rinpoche for his patient and insightful help. It goes without saying that any errors in this translation are entirely my own.

I am deeply indebted to the following people for their help in bringing this project to completion: Susanne Fairclough, for assisting with the translation; Robert Racine (Lama Orgyen Zangpo), for carefully reading and commenting on the text; Mary Racine, for editing and proofreading; and Linda Baer, for typesetting and production.

The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems

*A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the
Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*

In Sanskrit: *Yāna sakalārtha dīpa siddhyanta
ratna koṣa nāma*

། །ཀྱུ་གར་སྐད་དུ། ཡུ་ན་ས་ཀ་ལུ་ཐ་དྲི་པ་སི་རྒྱུ་རྒྱ་ཀོ་ཁ་རྒྱ་མ།

In Tibetan: *Theg pa mtha' dag gi don gsal bar byed pa grub
pa'i mtha' rin po che'i mdzod ces bya ba*

། །འོད་སྐད་དུ། ཐེག་པ་མཐའ་དག་གི་དོན་གསལ་བར་བྱེད་པ་
གྲུབ་པའི་མཐའ་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་མཛོད་ཅེས་བྲུ་བ།

Introduction

In the language of India, the title of this treatise would be translated as *Yāna sakalārtha dīpa siddhyanta ratna koṣa nāma*; in the language of Tibet, it is *Theg pa mtha' dag gi don gsal bar byed pa grub pa'i mtha' rin po che'i mdzod ces bya ba* (*The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*).

I pay homage to the youthful Manjushri!

The sublime, accomplished Buddha is praised by seers, honored by Brahma and Indra, and extolled by gods, demigods, kinnaras, and the excellent naga rulers.¹

The Omniscient One, foremost among beings, is the sublime wish-fulfilling gem who ensures that all our goals are accomplished.

So that my hopes may be completely realized, I honor him by bowing my head with the deepest faith.

To bring about benefit in the world, countless victorious ones and their heirs [2a] have turned the wheel of the sacred dharma according to the makeup and interests of beings.

For these times, I will briefly elucidate what I have learned from my gurus of the extensive variety of spiritual paths renowned in this world. For fortunate and motivated people whose brilliant intellects can discern what is valid and who are naturally wise in following scriptures, reasoning, and profound pith instructions,

I will describe here the methods of diverse spiritual approaches.
 Listen respectfully in order to drink the rain of nectar that
 falls from the clouds of my learning, and so progress more
 and more.

Having awakened to enlightenment as a manifestly perfect buddha, the glorious Samantabhadra abides as the very adornment of Ghanavyuha, the spontaneously present pure realm of the utterly lucid nature of phenomena, [2b] and is the ruler of all mandalas in the ten directions and four times.² For the benefit of all beings, whose nonrecognition of awareness blinds them, Samantabhadra, with the supreme might of the immeasurable and manifold display of a tathagata, has caused the world to be illuminated in diverse ways.³ The enlightened activities thus accomplished have ensured, and continue to ensure, that all beings are brought to one of the three degrees of enlightenment, according to their individual destinies.⁴ Among the countless beings in the ten directions and four times, an inconceivable number, beyond reckoning, have become enlightened to an extent commensurate with those destinies. In keeping with their own aspirations, they have then turned the wheel of dharma in all realms, so that the teachings of a variety of spiritual approaches have appeared. [3a] This has continued throughout beginningless time. The tantra *Vajrasattva: The Supreme Web of Magical Display* states:

With the connection forged through supreme compassion,
 teachings have appeared to beings of the six classes, in all places
 and times.

.

Throughout the inconceivable range of the ten directions and
 four times,
 various subjects have been taught in order to guide beings.
 Manifestations appear to everyone everywhere, meeting specific
 needs,
 as higher or lower spiritual approaches—
 even as an inconceivable number of erroneous views—
 and as the assembly of peaceful and wrathful deities.

This means that in as many eons—past, present, and future—as there are atoms in the universe and throughout the whole of boundless space, emanations of buddhas appear as peaceful and wrathful deities; in the forms of various ordinary beings; as shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas; and even as such things as medicine, gems, fine homes, and

parks. Such a variegated array manifests through the blessings of supreme compassion and the flourishing of all that is positive in individual beings. From this come the things that beings desire in the moment and that satisfy their personal needs, such as food, drink, dwellings, clothing, and anything else they might require. All that is wished for comes as though from a wish-fulfilling gem.

As for the manifestation of innumerable spiritual teachings and approaches according to beings' interests, a rain of teachings is imparted to some by spiritual mentors, buddhas, bodhisattvas, or ordinary individuals. [3b] For others, teachings come from a lotus, a wish-granting tree, or the expanse of the sky. Just as this takes place in our universe, so too does it occur within worlds in all ten directions. In some realms, beings are guided entirely by the Mahayana teachings, in others entirely by the Hinayana teachings, in others entirely by a mixture of these, and in others entirely by an abundance of approaches. Moreover, these approaches appear by the blessings of vajra form, speech, mind, qualities, and activity; by the power of consummate skillful means and sublime knowing; and by the merit of individual beings. In the glorious tantra *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, we read the following:

Such things as wish-granting trees, wish-fulfilling gems,
and all the elements
have no substantial existence.

Their occurrence depends on the merit in one's own mind.⁵
Such superb phenomena, amazing and miraculous displays,
do not come about as a result of anything other than
sublime knowing based on skillful means.

It is within such a context that they occur.⁶

Thus, just as there is an immeasurable array of spiritual teachings in all worlds, an immeasurable variety of teachings has appeared and become widely known in our universe during the excellent period called the "Fortunate Eon." This universe, "Difficult to Renounce," lies within a greater universe, "Basis Whose Center Is Adorned with a Flower," and is made up of a billion world systems, each with four worlds surrounding a central mountain.⁷ [4a] Beginning with the initial formation of the universe during this eon and on up to the present, the blessings of the transcendent and accomplished conqueror, glorious Samantabhadra, have caused the form of Vajradhara to emanate in the realm of Akanishtha and to teach the secret mantra approach of the Mahayana—the vast Vajrayana—to an

immeasurable array of retinues that includes Vajrapani.⁸ It is because of Vajrapani and others in these retinues that the teachings appear in such domains as those of gods, nagas, and yakshas.⁹ The teachings are upheld by many dakas, dakinis, siddhas, and masters of awareness, who disseminate them in their respective domains, compiling them in volumes of scriptures and venerating them.

Of the thousand buddhas who will have actually appeared in this eon, Vipashyin taught kriyatantra and other supreme secret approaches.¹⁰ Shakyamuni spoke of these, and one source mentions that “the buddha Adhimukta will speak of them.”¹¹ The secret mantra teachings of the Mahayana given by the succession of previous buddhas were brought from the domains of gods, nagas, yakshas, and gandharvas by accomplished dakas and dakinis with power over longevity, then upheld by dakas and dakinis in our human world at Mount Malaya, a volcano in the kingdom of Sahora, and so continued to exist. As well, collections of tantras that existed in regions like Oddiyana, Sri Lanka, and Shambhala were revealed by such great masters as Nagarjuna, Padmakara, and Vimalamitra.¹² These teachings became widespread in India and Tibet, [4b] and thus many mahasiddhas appeared.

Among the varieties of spiritual teachings that have appeared in these ways, I will present a concise classification of those that are currently well known in Tibet. My presentation has two major divisions: a classification of the general range of ordinary teachings and a classification of the extraordinary teachings concerning the vajra heart essence of utter lucidity. The first division has two parts: a general discussion of the development of Buddhism and a detailed discussion of philosophical systems. The first part consists of Chapter 1, which concerns how the Buddha appeared as a teacher, and Chapter 2, which concerns the nature of the sacred dharma that he taught.

1

The Buddha

I. THE TEACHER

A. The Hinayana Interpretation

According to the Hinayana interpretation, our Teacher gave rise to bodhi-chitta, or “the awakening mind,” in the presence of the buddha Mahashakyamuni three immensely long eons ago, with the following words recorded in *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya*:

O Sugata, whatever your form is like,
whatever your retinue, life span, and realm,
and whatever your noble and sublime marks of perfection,
may I swiftly accomplish the same!

Thereafter, during those three immensely long eons, the Bodhisattva pursued spiritual development, serving fifty-five thousand buddhas during the first eon, sixty-six thousand during the second, and seventy-seven thousand during the third.¹ *The Foundation of Scriptural Transmission* states:

From the enlightened guide Rashtapala
to the buddha Vipashyin,
I venerated a total
of fifty-five thousand buddhas.
During that time, I was not discouraged. [5a]
From the buddha Sadhu
to the sage Indradhvaja,
I venerated a total
of sixty-six thousand buddhas.
During that time, I was not discouraged.

From the buddha Dipamkara
to Ratnashikin,
I venerated a total
of seventy-seven thousand buddhas.
During that time, I was not discouraged.

According to *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

Vipashyin, Dipamkara, and Ratnashikin
came at the close of the three immensely long eons.
Preceding that succession,²
the first was Shakyamuni.³

Finally, it is maintained that he awakened to buddhahood through a process entailing twelve deeds and, having passed into nirvana with no trace of his mind-body aggregates remaining, abides in the basic space of peace.⁴

Thus, the Buddha developed the positive qualities associated with the path of accumulation for three immensely long eons. Then, at Vajrasana, with attainment of the highest level of this path of accumulation as the basis, he traversed the rest of the five paths—those of linkage, seeing, meditation, and no more learning—in a single sitting.⁵ This interpretation is consistent with the process undergone by a pratyekabuddha of keen acumen. The same source states:

The enlightenment of the Teacher and those who are like
rhinoceroses
is fully attained in a single, final state of meditative stability.⁶

Moreover, the following verse attests to the fact that in his final lifetime in conditioned existence, the Bodhisattva was an ordinary being:

Service to one's parents, sick people, those who give spiritual
teachings,
and bodhisattvas in their final rebirth—
even though none of these are spiritually advanced—
is said to be of inestimable value.⁷ [5b]

B. The Ordinary Mahayana and Vajrayana Interpretations

In the Mahayana tradition as well, some maintain—in keeping with the Hinayana interpretation—that the Bodhisattva first gave rise to bodhi-

chitta, then pursued spiritual development for three immensely long eons, and finally became a buddha in this human world through a process entailing twelve deeds. But they further hold that the Buddha simultaneously manifested enlightened embodiments elsewhere in the universe. Difficult to Renounce, benefiting beings. The sutra *The Complete Array of Qualities* states:

From the point that I first gave rise to the intention to attain unsurpassable enlightenment, I pursued spiritual development with great diligence for three immensely long eons. When the average span of human life was one hundred years, I saw that ordinary beings were blind and without a guide; I awakened to buddhahood in this human world and completely turned the inconceivable wheel of dharma.

Certain authors in the secret mantra approach agree for the most part with this interpretation, but more specifically maintain that while the Bodhisattva was practicing asceticism, although his body was seated by the banks of a river, his mind was in Akanishtha, being empowered with great rays of light.⁸ By cultivating a profound state of nondual meditative absorption, he thus awakened to buddhahood. Immediately after this, he manifested at Vajrasana in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood. In *The Sphere of Freedom*, the venerable Buddhajnana writes:

Although Shakyamuni
pursued spiritual development for three immensely
long eons,
he had not realized the goal, so at Nairanjana
he dwelled in the meditative absorption of “nothingness.”⁹
At that time, the sugatas of the ten directions¹⁰
brought an end to his mental patterns [6a]
and thoroughly revealed to him the nondual state of
profound lucidity,¹¹
totally pure like the expanse of the sky.
At midnight, just like other victorious ones,
he meditated on thatness, and at dawn
in a single instant he realized truth.
To guide ordinary beings,¹²
he remained at Bodhimanda
and conquered the great hordes of Mara.¹³
To care for beings,
he turned the wheel of dharma.¹⁴

Similarly, *Magical Display as the Guiding Principle* states:

For Siddhartha, the person practicing austerities,
victorious ones of the ten directions gathered like clouds,
and for his spiritual enrichment,
in the evening and at dawn
they bestowed the empowerment of the eclipse of sun and
moon.¹⁵

With the source of this display having been shown to him,
the Tathagata arrived at suchness.

The preceding are the ordinary interpretations of these approaches.

C. The Extraordinary Mahayana and Vajrayana Interpretations

According to the extraordinary Mahayana interpretation, having first aroused bodhichitta and pursued spiritual development, the Bodhisattva awakened to buddhahood in the realm of Akanishtha Ghanavyuha.¹⁶ Subsequently, he manifested in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood in an immaculate abode, and shortly thereafter he manifested in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood at Vajrasana.¹⁷ In *The Journey to Sri Lanka*, we read the following:

The Buddha did not actually awaken to buddhahood
in the realm of desire or in the realm of formlessness;
you, who were free of desire and attachment, became a buddha
in Akanishtha in the realm of form.¹⁸

.

In the delightful realm of Akanishtha Ghanavyuha, [6b]
beyond the immaculate abodes, the completely awakened
Buddha awakened to buddhahood.¹⁹

It was an emanation who awakened to buddhahood in this world.

Some authors in the secret mantra approach hold a similar view and maintain that, immediately after attaining buddhahood in Akanishtha,²⁰ the Buddha descended from the peak of Sumeru to Bodhimanda and there awakened to buddhahood at the foot of the bodhi tree. *The Summary of Suchness* states:

The transcendent and accomplished conqueror, having awakened
to buddhahood, knew that he had become the embodiment of the

enlightened form, speech, and mind of all tathagatas. Soon after, he descended from the peak of Sumeru to Bodhimanda. To conform to the perceptions of ordinary people, having taken a seat of grass at the foot of the bodhi tree, . . .

Others, however, explain that it was after being empowered in Akanishtha by all buddhas that the Buddha awakened to buddhahood as Vajradhara in the Akanishtha realm of our world system.²¹ He then immediately awakened to buddhahood as Shakyamuni at Vajrasana and so benefited beings. According to the tantra *The Empowerment of the Vajra Holder*:

The Bodhisattva, the great spiritual hero, the all-noble one, the holder of the vajra, was naturally empowered in the greater universe known as Basis Whose Center Is Adorned with a Flower. After that, within our universe, Difficult to Renounce, in the human worlds throughout the intermediate-sized universe of world systems that comprise four worlds each, the transcendent and accomplished conqueror, with the name Shakyamuni, having defeated Mara, awakened to a manifestly perfect state of enlightenment.²² [7a]

D. The Interpretation of the Unsurpassable Approach

The foregoing ordinary and extraordinary interpretations were given in response to certain kinds of beings to be guided. However, the quintessential and definitive meaning, which is found in the unsurpassable approach, is as follows: Our Teacher awakened to buddhahood an inconceivable number of immensely long eons ago. Through the Tathagata's immeasurable and manifold display, ordinary beings were benefited in whatever way was necessary to guide them. The Teacher guided beings solely through emanations, such as those who manifested as though first giving rise to bodhichitta (so that beginners would not feel inadequate), those who attained higher and higher spiritual levels (so that bodhisattvas could attain those levels), and those who performed the twelve deeds. This is discussed in the following passage from the sutra *The Reunion of Father and Son*:

In the past, countless eons ago, in a realm composed of as many universes as there are grains of sand in the bed of the river Ganges, a tathagata known as Indraketu awakened to buddhahood,

benefited beings, and passed into nirvana. From that point until the present eon, this buddha manifested an inconceivable number of times in the manner of one awakening to buddhahood. This buddha continues to manifest as ordinary beings who first give rise to bodhichitta and then eventually awaken to buddhahood, and will continue to do so until samsara is emptied. . . .

O great spiritual hero of skillful means,
 in order to bring ordinary beings to complete spiritual
 maturity,
 you revealed yourself as a buddha,
 a true victorious one, to billions. [7b]
 Even now you, O guide,
 will reveal yourself as many buddhas.

Moreover, the sutra *The White Lotus* states:

O children of spiritual heritage, many hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of eons ago, I awakened to the state of a manifestly perfect buddha.

There are teachings of the unsurpassable approach of the supreme secret that accord with this interpretation. They say that, with enlightenment taking place in the context of primordial being, there is a state of evenness in immutable basic space that eludes measurement in terms of eons. Without straying from that state of dharmakaya, countless sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya manifestations have appeared to all beings in whatever ways are necessary to guide them, and they will continue to manifest everywhere for as long as the universe exists. According to the tantra *The Array of the Precious Wish-Fulfilling Secret*:

The buddha who awakened prior to all,
 the supremely secret, victorious holder of the vajra,
 revealed a manifold display in an inconceivable number of realms.
 Throughout a succession of immensely long eons,
 benefit was ensured in myriad ways—
 through countless peaceful and wrathful modes,
 even in such forms as hunters and prostitutes.
 Moreover, now in this fortunate eon,
 a thousand enlightened guides will manifest
 who similarly adopt myriad modes,
 benefiting countless beings.

While not wavering from the basic space of dharmakaya, within the context of the lucid manifestation of sambhogakaya, an inconceivable miraculous display spontaneously shines forth in the environments of the six classes of beings to benefit them. [8a] The glorious tantra *The Heart Essence of Secrets: The Ascertainment of Suchness* (a synopsis of the teachings found in the cycle *The Supreme Web of Magical Display*) states:

The phrase “through supreme compassion, blessings are granted” is a reference to the six sages, spiritual beings who are emanations of awareness. They emanate from the vajras of the enlightened form, speech, and mind of the Tathagata. As they emanate, owing to the influence of beings’ karma, a great sage—a transcendent and accomplished conqueror—appears in every world system in the six directions—zenith and nadir—as well as other dimensions, in every one of the vast three-thousand-fold universes throughout the boundlessness of the ten directions.²³ These sages benefit the five kinds of ordinary beings by guiding them in four ways.²⁴

The four ways of guiding are as follows: guiding through the enormous merit of enlightened form, whereby the twelve deeds are carried out; guiding through the collections of teachings—enlightened speech—which provide a variety of spiritual approaches; guiding through sublime states of perception, whereby enlightened mind entails knowledge of beings’ levels of acumen; and guiding through inconceivable qualities and activities of enlightenment, manifesting various miraculous displays, emanating light rays, and so forth.

The Highest Continuum describes how the twelve deeds are carried out:

It is the nature of the nirmanakaya that, in various ways,
it comes into being through manifest forms of rebirth,
while not straying from dharmakaya.
Descending from Tushita,
entering a womb, taking birth,
being trained in all the arts and martial skills,
enjoying the company of a retinue of queens,
resolving to gain release from samsara, practicing austerities,
going to Bodhimanda, [8b]
defeating the legions of Mara, awakening to perfect
enlightenment,

turning the wheel of dharma,
 and passing into nirvana: all those who demonstrate these
 deeds²⁵
 do so within the total range of impure realms
 for as long as there is conditioned existence.²⁶

II. THE TEACHINGS

After having thus awakened to buddhahood, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma in the following ways.

A. The Hinayana Interpretation

According to the shravaka schools, the Buddha did not teach for a period of seven weeks after his enlightenment. Then, in response to supplications by Brahma and Indra, he journeyed to Varanasi, where he taught the four truths. His audience, made up of “the five noble ones” as well as eighty thousand gods, perceived the truth.²⁷ From that point until his eightieth year, the Buddha presented his teachings in three stages. These schools maintain that he taught in response to specific situations, giving a distinct teaching in each place according to the capacities of those to be guided. *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya* states:

On the banks of the Varata River, he gave to the nagas a great outpouring of teachings concerning the ten kinds of positive actions. . . . The descendants of Vasishtha, together with their five hundred attendants, simultaneously gained unclouded vision free of distortions through the teachings on unsurpassable enlightenment.²⁸

Regarding the Buddha’s passing into nirvana at the age of eighty, *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations* explains:

In each of the following locations, the Sage,
 the sublime person, spent one year:
 the sacred site where he turned the wheel of dharma,²⁹ Vaishali,
 Makkola, the abode of the gods,
 Shishumara, Kaushambhi,
 Atavaka, Chaityargira,
 the bamboo grove of Venuvana, Vairata,
 and the city of Kapilavastu. [9a]
 He spent two years at the sacred site of Blazing Cave,

four in the medicinal groves of Bhaishajyavana,
 and five in the city of Rajagriha.
 He spent six years practicing austerities,
 twenty-three in Shravasti,
 and twenty-nine at the palace.
 Thus, the Victorious One was eighty
 when he, the holy and sublime sage, passed into nirvana.³⁰

Some shravaka authors maintain that he prolonged his life for two months, as we read in *The Commentary on "The Hundred Thousand Stanzas"*:

Having vanquished Mara, the lord of death, he prolonged his life for two months.³¹

B. The Ordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the well-known interpretation of the ordinary Mahayana, in the excellent place of Varanasi, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue made up of the five noble ones and eighty thousand gods, teaching the excellent dharma—the first cycle of the Buddha's words, the various teachings pertaining to the four truths; this he did between the ages of thirty-six and forty-two. He began by teaching principally the training in discipline, what came to be known as the compilation of Vinaya. The ethical codes of Vinaya contain extensive overviews that classify actions according to their nature or their relation to formal precepts. The discourses of Vinaya concern the stages of meditative absorption and the celibate way of life undertaken in yogic practice. The further teachings of Vinaya give extensive, detailed explanations and analyses of these topics.

Then, at the excellent place of Vulture Peak, [9b] the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to several excellent retinues. Among the four relatively ordinary retinues were about five thousand arhats, including Shariputra and Maudgalyayana;³² about five hundred nuns, including Shakyamuni's stepmother, Prajapati; and groups of laypeople, including the householder Anathapindaka and the laywoman Sagama. As well, there were enormous numbers of gods, nagas, demigods, and gandharvas. The extraordinary retinue was made up of an enormous number of bodhisattvas—including Bhadrakala, Ratnasambhava, and Jaladatta—who had truly attained great levels of realization. On excellent occasions, he taught these reti-

nues the excellent dharma—the intermediate cycle of the Buddha’s words, the various teachings pertaining to the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent; this he did between the ages of forty-three and seventy-two. He taught principally the training in mind, what came to be known as the compilation of Sutra. The ethical codes of Sutra classify the precepts of the bodhisattva vow. The discourses of Sutra discuss meditative absorption in profound and extensive ways. The further teachings of Sutra analyze related topics—spiritual levels and paths, powers of recall, and meditative absorption—in great detail.

Then, in excellent places—not any one place—such as the human world and the abodes of gods and nagas, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue of innumerable monks, nuns, gods, nagas, bodhisattvas, and others, [10a] teaching the excellent dharma—the final cycle of the Buddha’s words, the various teachings pertaining to definitive truth; this he did between the ages of seventy-three and eighty-two. He taught principally the training in sublime knowing, what came to be known as the compilation of Abhidharma. The ethical codes of Abhidharma have to do with taming the afflictive states in ways that are easy to implement and involve little hardship.³³ The discourses of Abhidharma discuss the vast range of techniques for engaging in the experience of suchness. The further teachings of Abhidharma analyze in great detail the mind-body aggregates, the fields of experience, the components of perception, the controlling factors, consciousness, and tathagatagarbha (the innately, totally pure “buddha nature”) and discuss related topics.³⁴ As the sutra *The Seven Hundred Stanzas* states:

The Sage taught the collections of the dharma thoroughly
to benefit beings.

In stages, at various places and times,
the Buddha imparted his teachings in melodious tones.

C. The Extraordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the extraordinary interpretation, in terms of the intelligence of those to be guided, for those whose karma allowed them to comprehend the teachings gradually, it seemed that the Buddha taught in three successive cycles. For those whose intelligence enabled them to comprehend everything all at once, he seemed to teach, in its entirety and on a

single occasion, everything that needed to be taught. According to the sutra *The Majestic Array of Qualities*:

Without saying anything at all, [10b]
 I manifest to beings in infinite and pervasive ways.³⁵
 When there are those who sincerely wish to comprehend in a
 gradual way,
 that is what occurs for all of them.
 For those who comprehend all at once,
 the varieties of spiritual teachings manifest in their entirety.
 Such is the great quality of enlightened speech—
 to fulfill beings' hopes just as they wish.

Some masters hold exclusively that the three cycles were taught all at once, while others maintain that they were taught in stages. Both points of view amount to nothing more than ignorance of the significance underlying the distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary interpretations, which is based on the acumen of individual beings.

Like a precious wish-fulfilling gem, then, the Teacher ensured benefit for beings exactly according to their interests. This benefit came about because, by his blessings, individual beings heard him, his speech marked by sixty melodious qualities, as if he were speaking in their respective languages. Nevertheless, these words and sounds actually had no autonomous existence. Their manifestation was similar to that of an echo and arose because of the coming together of three things: the interests of those to be guided, the Buddha's blessings, and the occasions on which these two factors coincided. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

The sound of an echo
 occurs within someone's consciousness;
 it is nonconceptual and unfabricated.
 Similarly, the enlightened speech of the Tathagata
 occurs within someone's consciousness,
 but it is not located externally or internally.³⁶

Referring to the same theme, *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime* states:

O Shantimati, from the night that I awakened to manifestly perfect buddhahood to the night that I pass into nirvana, [11a] I will not have spoken even a single syllable of spiritual teachings.

Some ignorant people say that this means he did not teach in the ultimate sense, only in the relative sense. But they seem to be confused about what is actually so—that enlightened speech, which is beyond words and letters, seems to be expressed in words and letters that conform to the perceptions of beings.

Therefore, regarding these cycles of the Buddha's words, which manifested in the perceptions of those to be guided, let us put aside the question of whether he taught in a single or in numerous locations. When those to be guided differ in three ways—in terms of bias, character, and interest—what each of them hears the Tathagata speak will be a different teaching, and all of these teachings will occur simultaneously. In *The Majestic State of Meditative Absorption*, we read the following:

Benefactor of the world, a single instance of your enlightened
speech
arises as sounds that accord with different interests.
Each one thinks, "This is what the Victorious One taught me."
That is why you smile.

Moreover, the sutra *Prophetic Enlightened Intent* states:

In a single instance of vajra speech—
nonconceptual, unchanging, and delightful—
there are many different interpretations
based on the mentalities of those to be guided.

Because it seemed to some that the Buddha spoke these three cycles of teachings in succession at different times, there exists such a classification. As *The Intermediate-Length "Mother"* indicates:

How marvelous that in the human world there occurred the second turning of the wheel of dharma!

According to *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Seven Hundred Stanzas*:

Restating his teaching three times, [11b] he turned the wheel of dharma in twelve ways.³⁷

There are also cases in which what the single Teacher spoke on a single occasion in a single place was perceived as different teachings by the individuals to be guided. The sutra *The Array of Treasure Urns* states:

On that occasion, some bodhisattvas heard a variety of teachings about supreme compassion, while others heard a variety of teachings about the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent.

As we find in *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent*:

. . . for while different teachings were spoken, they were not explained in separate places on separate occasions.

You may wonder, "Doesn't the preceding citation disprove the claim that the Buddha ever spoke in stages?" However, the intended meaning of the foregoing passages is that a single theme of the teachings is subject to different analyses and that no other location or occasion is involved; but this does not imply that he did not speak on other topics in other places and at other times.

III. THE BUDDHA'S NIRVANA

Then, at age eighty-two, the Buddha saw that he could no longer ensure benefit by continuing to manifest physically, so it became his intention to demonstrate his passing into nirvana. The sutra *The Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana* states:

At this time, when the life span is one hundred years,
it is only fitting that I pass into nirvana at eighty.
But for your sake, O brahmin,
I will endeavor to prolong my life for an additional two.³⁸

The ordinary scriptural sources state that he lived for eighty years, whereas the extraordinary sources state that he lived to be eighty-two.³⁹ [12a] Although different methods of calculation are involved, these sources are considered to be in fundamental agreement. An excellent explanation is given by the master Bhavadeva, who states that if one counts the actual years, there were eighty, whereas if one counts from the Buddha's birth (disregarding the ten months he spent in the womb) and adds up the intercalary months, one arrives at a total of eighty-two. That is, by separately counting the intercalary month that was traditionally added every three years, at the end of eighty years one obtains a total of twenty-four months (or two years) extra, thus giving the total of eighty-two; there are also the two months by which the Buddha deliberately extended his life. Alternatively, there are twenty days that can be counted as the

equivalent of two extra years; both the “year” of his birth and “year” of his passing into nirvana are counted as full years, though each is only ten days long.⁴⁰

In any event, he passed into nirvana while lying between two shala trees in the town of Kushinagara, the region in which the Malla, a clan of powerful athletes, arose. His funeral pyre spontaneously burst into flames, and his sacred remains were divided into eight portions. One of these was given to the Malla clan of Kushinagara, one to the Malla clan of the region of Papa, one to the Mahabuluga clan of the warrior class in the region of Avakalpana, one to the brahmins of Vishnudvipa, one to the Shakya clan of Kapilavastu, and one to the Licchavi clan of Vaishali. One was worshiped by the Bheda clan of the brahmin class of Magadha. The vase that held the Buddha’s remains was given to the brahmins Drona and Sama.⁴¹ The ashes from his funeral pyre were taken by the Pippala clan of the brahmin class. The clans all went their separate ways with their portions, which they enshrined in great stupas.

Of his canine teeth, [12b] the fourth was taken to the naga domain by the nagas of the city of Ravana.⁴² The third was worshiped by the king of the rakshasa demons of Kalinga. The second was given to Ajatashatru, the king of Magadha, as his share; this, together with the relics that multiplied from it, was enshrined in a stupa ornamented with designs of lotus garlands. These relics were later brought with honor to Tibet and are said to reside at present in the White Stupa at Samyé. The first tooth was brought with honor by Indra to the Trayastrimsha abode.⁴³

All of this is referred to in *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya*:

Of the eight portions of the Seer’s remains, including the canine teeth,

seven were worshiped by people in the human world.⁴⁴

Of that sublime being’s four canine teeth,

one was worshiped in the Trayastrimsha abode,

a second in the lovely city of Rajagriha,

a third in the country of the king of Kalinga,

while the fourth canine tooth of this sublime being

was worshiped by the naga king in the city of Ravana.

King Ashoka, dwelling in Pataliputra,

spread the contents of the seven stupas far and wide.

By the power of this act, the earth, the foundation of our prosperity,

was clearly adorned with the tangible signs of the king's aspirations.

In this way, the Seer's remains were highly honored by gods, nagas, human sovereigns, kinnaras, and yaksha lords as they worshiped and venerated them.

Thus, the portions of the remains, including the four teeth, were kept as objects of worship in the different domains. [13a] In particular, in keeping with his aspirations in previous lives and his miraculous abilities, the Buddhist king Ashoka, the son of King Patala, took the seven portions left in our human world and, on the Indian subcontinent and in surrounding regions, erected as many stupas as there are grains in two handfuls of sand. There were said to be ten million such stupas, or chaityas. This is what *The Fortunate Eon* means by "the Buddha's remains will continue to increase."



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the first chapter, a classification of the histories concerning the Teacher.

2

The Buddha's Teachings

Next, I will discuss the nature of the sacred dharma taught by the Buddha under three major headings: compiling the Buddha's words, the nature of the Buddha's words and the shastras, and the duration of the teachings.¹

I. COMPILING THE BUDDHA'S WORDS

The first heading has two parts: compiling the teachings of the mantra approach and compiling those of the paramita approach.

A. Compiling the Teachings of the Mantra Approach

The mantra teachings are those that the Bhagavat spoke on the summit of Sumeru, in Akanishtha, and at other locations.² Maitreya and innumerable other bodhisattvas, a multitude of dakinis, and many mahasiddhas who were holders of the mantra approach of awareness gathered in the south of India on a mountain called Bhimasambha. Traditionally, Manjushri is renowned for having compiled the tantras of enlightened form, Avalokiteshvara the tantras of enlightened speech, and Vajrapani the tantras of enlightened mind, qualities, and activity.³ [13b] The tantras compiled at this time were those spoken by Shakyamuni himself, manifesting as Vajradhara.

All those tantras whose nature was such that they were spoken countless eons ago by the primordial guide—called Samantabhadra, Vajradhara, or Vajrasattva—were not compiled at this point. This was because they had already been compiled by retinues of dakinis, siddhas, and vajra holders on those previous occasions when they were spoken, and so were already in the enlightened mind of Guhyapati and preserved in the realms of the dakinis.⁴

People with little exposure to the teachings maintain that there are no tantras of the secret mantra approach other than those spoken by Shakyamuni, manifesting on the inner level as Vajradhara, during the period when the span of human life was one hundred years. This is not a reasonable opinion, for we find explanations such as the following:

In the first age, that of perfection, there was kriyatantra.

In this eon alone, from the beginning up to the present, the great Vajradhara, appearing over an inconceivable period of time—in Akanishtha, in the charnel ground of the supreme secret approach, and in the places where dakinis gather—taught innumerable categories of tantras in stages.⁵ He taught in the past, still teaches in the present, and will continue to teach in the future. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri* explains:

What was taught by buddhas in the past,
and will, moreover, be taught by those in the future,
is what is taught again and again
by perfect buddhas appearing in the present.⁶ [14a]

Moreover, the tantra *The Display of Timeless Awareness* states:

From the beginning, before all the eons,
to the furthest point in the future,
for that long I, the original Vajradhara,
have taught, now teach, and will teach
the dharma of the unsurpassable secret approach,
marvelous and majestic, to ordinary beings.

B. Compiling the Teachings of the Paramita Approach

I. THE FIRST COUNCIL

The sutra teachings were compiled by three councils. It should be known that the first council was characterized by nine factors, as is noted in the following verse:

The occasion, the gathering, the location,
the supplication, the articles offered, the sponsor,
the purpose, the points of dispute, and the main project
of compilation:
the learned speak of these nine factors.

To elaborate, the occasion was the summer of the year after the Buddha passed into nirvana. The location was near the city of Rajagriha, at the Cave of Secrets of Asurava on the northeast slope of Vulture Peak, where five hundred arhats gathered. King Ajatashatru was the sponsor. To counter the criticism of the children of the gods, Ananda undertook the compilation of Sutra, Upali that of Vinaya, and Mahakashyapa that of Abhidharma.⁷ By thus collecting the twelve branches of the Buddha's excellent speech and grouping them into these Three Compilations, they ensured that they would not disappear.⁸ *The Minor Scriptural Transmissions* states:

The summer after the Teacher's nirvana,
in the Cave of Secrets at Rajagriha,
the provisions for the five hundred arhats assembled there
were furnished by Ajatashatru, and the Three Compilations were
codified.

The categories of general discourses, discourses in verse, [14b]
prophecies, didactic verses,
and aphorisms: these five were included in the compilation
of Sutra.

The categories of ethical directives, morally instructive
biographies,
the works called historical accounts,
and the accounts of the Buddha's previous lives: these four were
included in the compilation of Vinaya.

The categories of the most extensive teachings, accounts of the
marvelous qualities of enlightenment,
and teachings that define phenomena: these three were included
in the compilation of Abhidharma.

It is held that the compilation of Sutra was undertaken by
Ananda, that of Vinaya by Upali, and that of Abhidharma
by the elder Mahakashyapa.

2. THE SECOND COUNCIL

The second council took place in Vaishali, eighty years after the Buddha's nirvana, to resolve the questions raised by the monk Mahadeva as to whether the following would be allowed:

As to the propriety of reciting nonsense syllables, rejoicing,
tilling the soil, using jars, using salt,

traveling, touching food or stirring drinks with the fingers, using sitting mats, and handling gold: these were held to be ten instances of inappropriate behavior.⁹

Seven hundred arhats, including Shantin and Chandrabhota, assembled in the temple of Kusmapuri in Vaishali. The reverend monk Yashas having made the supplication, the arhat Upagupta recited the Three Compilations.¹⁰ The Buddhist king Ashoka was the sponsor. After the council, the four fundamental schools that had gone their separate ways during the controversy over the foregoing issues were once again four schools united under a single doctrine. These schools were the Mulasarvastivadin, the Mahasanghika, the Sthaviravadin, and the Sammatiya. [15a]

3. THE THIRD COUNCIL

The third council was convened more than three hundred (actually closer to four hundred) years after the Buddha had passed into nirvana, when five hundred bodhisattvas with the power of complete recall, five hundred arhats, and sixteen thousand monks gathered in Pushpakuta Park at Jalandhara in Kashmir. King Kanishka was the sponsor. The teachings were recited by Vasumitra, a bodhisattva in his final incarnation, and the great arhat Purnika. The supplication was made by the king himself, and the eighteen separate schools that had developed were united as one spiritual system.

Of the eighteen schools, the Mulasarvastivadin and its subschools—the Kashyapiya, Dharmaguptaka, Mahishasaka, Bahushrutiya, Tamrashatiya, and Vibhajyavadin—made a total of seven. These were the lineages developed by students of Rahulabhadra, a member of the warrior class who, had he not taken monastic ordination, would have become king of the Shakya clan. Instead, he took ordination and was proclaimed by the Bhagavat to be the best of those devoted to his training. These schools used the sublime Sanskrit language, similar to that spoken by the Trayastrimsha gods. Their formal outer robes were made with odd numbers of cloth strips (from nine to twenty-five) and embroidered with their emblems, which were water lilies, lotuses, and jewels.¹¹ [15b]

The Mahasanghika and its subschools—the Purvashaila, Haimavata, Prajnaptivadin, and Lokottaravadin—made a total of five. These were the lineages developed by students of a common founder, the elder

known as Mahakashyapa, a member of the brahmin class who took Buddhist monastic ordination and was proclaimed by the Buddha to be the best of those having the qualities of spiritual training. The language these schools used was Prakrit—that is, the local dialects of individual regions—similar to that spoken by the Abhasvara gods.¹² Their formal outer robes were made with odd numbers of cloth strips (from nine to twenty-three) and embroidered with their emblems, which were swastikas and endless knots.

The Sthaviravadin had three subschools: the Jetavaniya, Abhayagirivasin, and Mahaviharavasin. These were the lineages developed by students of the venerable Katyayana, a member of the rattan workers' caste who took monastic ordination and was proclaimed by the Buddha to be the best at converting people in border countries. The language used by these schools was Apabramsha, a corrupt vernacular similar to that spoken by pishacha demons.¹³ Their formal outer robes were made with odd numbers of cloth strips (from nine to twenty-one) and embroidered with their emblem, a conch shell.

The Sammatiya had three subschools: the Kaurukullaka, Avantaka, and Vatsiputriya. These were the lineages developed by students of the venerable Upali, a member of the barber caste who took monastic ordination [16a] and was proclaimed by the Buddha to be the best of those upholding the ethical codes. The language used by these schools was Paishachita, another language similar to that spoken by pishacha demons, as well as by the gods of the immaculate abodes. Their formal outer robes were made with cloth strips in the same way as those of the Sthaviravadin school, and their emblem was a conch shell.

Furthermore, at the first council, the teachings were recalled in the minds of the compilers and transmitted mentally to the arhats while they were in a state of meditative equipoise.¹⁴ At the second council, the teachings were transmitted through oral recitation. At the final council, the oral recitations were written down and thus compiled.

II. THE NATURE OF THE BUDDHA'S WORDS AND THE SHASTRAS

My discussion of the nature of the Buddha's words and the shastras has four parts: a classification of the Buddha's words, which he taught in

such an excellent manner; a classification of the shastras that comment on the Buddha's enlightened intent; the difference between the Buddha's words and the shastras; and how the teachings should be explained and received.

A. The Buddha's Words

The first part consists of five topics.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUDDHA'S WORDS

The characteristics of the Buddha's words are that they manifest as syllables, words, and phrases as a result of the governing condition—buddhas, the teachers who communicate with enlightened speech—and that they are found in the collections of sutras and tantras.

2. THE CONTENT AND TREATMENT

The content is an explication of the three exalted trainings. The presentation is communicated with flawless speech. The proof lies in three kinds of valid cognition.¹⁵ The result is that which is positive in the beginning, middle, and end. Such is the nature of the Buddha's words. Maitreya states:

They present the three exalted trainings; the words spoken are flawless;

they are marked by three kinds of valid cognition; and they are positive in the beginning, middle, and end.

Such are the Buddha's words, the superior speech of victorious ones.

It should be known that anything else is a scriptural source of another tradition.

The three exalted trainings are those in discipline, mind, and sublime knowing.¹⁶ The three kinds of valid cognition are those of direct experience, deductive reasoning, and scriptural authority. [16b]

3. THE BASIS OF THE TERM "THE BUDDHA'S WORDS"

What is characterized as the Buddha's words is based on the manifestations of the enlightened speech of the Teacher in the form of syllables,

words, and phrases that arose in the minds of those to be guided. That is, these manifestations—in the form of the verse and prose found in the sutras and tantras—came about because of the interests of the audience. The teachings, which conformed to the destinies of those to be guided, also came about through the Teacher's blessings. These manifestations were like an echo; in actuality they did not exist as words or parts of speech. As explained in *The Highest Continuum*:

The sound of an echo
occurs within someone's consciousness.¹⁷

The Vaibhashika system of the shravakas maintains that the Buddha's words are essentially groups of words that are organized in the listener's mind; this system considers these to be subsumed within the aggregate of distinct formative factors.¹⁸ The Sautrantika system maintains that the Buddha's words are essentially a collection of phrases that are organized in the speaker's mind; it considers these to be subsumed within the aggregate of form.

For our purposes, however, the Buddha's words consist essentially of the manifestations of syllables, words, and phrases arising from the condition of the Teacher and the audience coming together. These manifestations are organized primarily by the afflictive aspect of consciousness, and they are subsumed within the aggregates of both form and formative factors.¹⁹ This is established by scriptural references such as the previously quoted "occurs within someone's consciousness." *The Treasury of Abhidharma* explains:

The eighty thousand collections of teachings
that were spoken by the Sage
are syllables and words.
They are subsumed within forms and formative factors.²⁰

4. AN ANALYSIS OF THE BUDDHA'S WORDS

The Buddha's words can be analyzed in five ways.

a. Essence

If we analyze the Buddha's words with respect to their essence, we find that there are two aspects: scripture and realization. [17a] The same source states:

The sacred dharma of the Teacher has two aspects,
 epitomized by scripture and realization.
 It is this and this alone that is to be upheld,
 discussed, and put into practice.²¹

The dharma as scripture comprises the twelve branches of the Buddha's excellent speech as they are explained in *The Major Commentary on "The Eight Thousand Stanzas"*:

The categories of general discourses, discourses in verse,
 prophecies,
 didactic verses, aphorisms, morally instructive biographies,
 historical accounts, ethical directives,
 most extensive teachings, accounts of the Buddha's previous lives,
 teachings that define phenomena, and accounts of the marvelous
 qualities of enlightenment:
 thus, these twelve
 are the twelve branches of the Buddha's excellent speech.

The dharma as realization comprises the particular spiritual levels, paths, and states of meditative absorption and realization that are experienced by holy beings, whether those who are still learning or those for whom no more learning is necessary.²²

b. Progression

If we analyze the Buddha's words with respect to their progression over time, we find that there are three successive cycles of teachings. As for the first cycle, when one is a beginner, one's afflictive states are reinforced by the perception of a dualism that seems to exist in its own right. Thus, there are a variety of spiritual teachings on the four truths, which demonstrate primarily the process of ethical discernment—deciding what to eliminate and what to use as an antidote—in order to protect the mind from these afflictive states. The intermediate cycle comprises teachings that characterize phenomena as nonexistent in order to put an end to a preoccupation with antidotes. The final cycle comprises a variety of teachings that definitively ascertain ultimate truth, revealing how the fundamentally unconditioned nature of being abides. These are the three cycles.

c. Acumen

If we analyze the Buddha's words with respect to beings' levels of acumen, we find that there are the approach of shravakas, that of pratyeka-

buddhas, and the unsurpassable approach. [17b] Regarding these three, *Reciting the Names of Manjushri* states:

In the results ensured by three spiritual approaches
lies the fruition of a single approach.²³

d. Governing Condition

If we analyze the Buddha's words with respect to the governing condition, we find that there are three kinds of teachings: those communicated directly by buddhas, those that came about through blessings, and those that came about through permission being granted.

i. Teachings Communicated Directly

Teachings of the first kind were communicated directly by the transcendent and accomplished conqueror Vajradhara in Akanishtha and by other buddhas in other realms. The tantras of enlightened form were taught in the pure realm of Ghanavyuha, and the teacher was Vairochana. The tantras of enlightened speech were taught in Sukhavati by the teacher Amitabha. The abode of the tantras of enlightened mind was Abhirati, and the teacher was Akshobhya. The tantras of the qualities of enlightenment were taught in Ratnapurna by the teacher Ratnasambhava. The tantras of enlightened activity were taught in Sukarmasiddhi by Amoghasiddhi. The retinues consisted of countless buddhas, bodhisattvas, gatherings of dakinis, and others. Moreover, the teachings given by these five teachers in these five pure realms came about through the display of the single wholly positive state, Samantabhadra, the embodiment of which is the heruka Vajradhara; they manifested in these ways according to the requirements of specific situations. Similarly, abodes such as "the bhaga of the vajra queen" have the same nature as Akanishtha and these other realms. These, then, are the teachers and the abodes of the sambhogakaya teachings.

Regarding the nirmanakaya teachings, [18a] in separate locations the transcendent and accomplished conqueror Shakyamuni communicated these teachings in the midst of a retinue, his enlightened speech manifesting with sixty melodious qualities.

ii. Teachings That Came About Through Blessings

The following are examples of the Buddha's words that came about through blessings:

1. The Buddha's words that came about through the blessings of enlightened form, as when the Buddha placed his hand on the head of Vajragarbha and blessed him, so that Vajragarbha had the confidence to explain the sutra *The Ten Spiritual Levels* as a discourse in response to a request by Vimuktachandra.
2. The Buddha's words that came about through the blessings of enlightened speech, as when the Buddha instructed Manjushri, "Relieve the guilt of Ajatashatru," after which Manjushri taught the sutra *Relieving the Guilt of Ajatashatru*.²⁴
3. The Buddha's words that came about through the blessings of enlightened mind, as when the transcendent and accomplished conqueror rested in the meditative absorption of profound perception, thus blessing Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara so that *The Heart Essence of Sublime Knowing* was communicated.²⁵
4. The Buddha's words that came about through the blessings of the spontaneously present qualities and activity of enlightenment, as described in the introduction to *The Hundred Thousand Stanzas*, when the Tathagata's form appeared from an effulgence of light and taught the dharma. Other examples include the melodious sound of teachings issuing from mountains, trees, birds, lotuses, drums, and so forth. *The Explanatory Essays* states:

Through the blessings of this Teacher,
 teachings came even from birds, pieces of wood, pebbles,
 lotuses, wish-granting trees,
 and powerful drums.
 Because they arose from the blessings of the Victorious One,
 these teachings are held to be "the Buddha's words." [18b]

According to *Aralli*:

Although they came from mountains, pebbles, pieces of wood,
 lotuses, wish-granting trees,
 and powerful drums,
 because they arose from the blessings of the Victorious One,
 these teachings are held to be "the Buddha's words."

Similarly, teachings given by any shravakas who were moved to speak by the Buddha's blessings, and those given by men, women, boys, girls, and others who were influenced by the Buddha's supreme enlightened ac-

tivity, were all included in the Buddha's words as well. *The Compendium* states:

Whatever teachings were given by any shravakas who were followers of the Victorious One—
 teachings that were explained and expressed with understanding and then gave rise to sublime and exalted bliss and the attainment of their fruition—
 they all came about through the influence of the spiritual being, the Tathagata.
 Why, you ask? Because whatever the methods taught by the Victorious One,
 the excellent people who were his students first trained in them and, having gained direct experience, instructed others in such training, just as the Buddha intended.
 This was ensured by the Buddha's influence, not by their own powers.

It can thus be seen from this presentation how sections of the sutras and tantras in which the enlightened speech of the Buddha himself is interspersed with the words of others are nevertheless considered the Buddha's words.

iii. Teachings That Came About Through Permission

An example of the Buddha's words that came about through permission being granted can be found in the sutra *Passing into Nirvana*, in which the Buddha says:

O Ananda, when I have completely passed into nirvana and the teachings are being compiled, introduce them with "Thus have I heard. On one occasion . . ."; insert connective narrative throughout the text; [19a] and conclude with the phrase "All unreservedly praised what was spoken by the transcendent and accomplished conqueror." Compile them in this way.

e. Antidotes and Their Enumerations

If we analyze the Buddha's words with respect to antidotes and their enumerations, we find that there are eighty-four thousand groups of teachings. *The Illuminating Lamp* states:

The great sage having spoken
 eighty-four thousand groups of teachings . . .

Of these, twenty-one thousand groups of Vinaya were taught as antidotes to twenty-one thousand variations of attachment, while twenty-one thousand groups of Sutra, Abhidharma, and the Three Compilations in equal measure were taught respectively as antidotes to twenty-one thousand variations of aversion, ignorance, and these three afflictive states in equal measure. As *The Revelation of the Inexhaustible Treasure* indicates:

As antidotes to the twenty-one thousand forms
 of attachment, aversion, ignorance,
 and these three mental poisons engaged in equally,
 that number of groups of teachings were spoken.

According to the glorious *Heart Essence of Secrets*:

As antidotes to eighty-four thousand afflictive states, eighty-four thousand teachings were spoken, are spoken, and will be spoken.²⁶

The Three Compilations provide the respective antidotes to the three mental poisons; these antidotes constitute the cause-based dialectical approach.²⁷ The phrase “Three Compilations in equal measure” refers to the secret mantra approach of those who maintain awareness, which is the antidote to the unlimited ways in which the three mental poisons function in combination. This constitutes the fruition-based approach of the Vajrayana.²⁸ We thus arrive at a total of eighty-four thousand. [19b] The tantra *The Array of Qualities* states:

The Three Compilations, which are exoteric,
 were taught as antidotes, respectively,
 to attachment, aversion, and ignorance.
 The secret mantra approach, unsurpassable in that it applies
 to these equally,
 was taught as the antidote to all afflictive states.
 In all, these are the eighty-four thousand
 groups of teachings
 taught by victorious ones as antidotes to afflictive states.

The term “body” or “aggregate” refers to an assemblage of limbs and appendages. In a similar way, the term “groups of teachings” refers to the groupings of all the various teachings that present the aspects of ground, path, and fruition; that act as conditions for uprooting specific afflictive

states; and that contribute to the attainment of liberation. These should be understood to be like a pharmacopoeia, which includes every specific type of medicine that acts as an antidote to a particular illness. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* explains:

As antidotes to patterns of behavior,
appropriate groups of teachings were spoken.²⁹

According to *The Illumination of the Three Worlds*:

To conquer afflictive states,
there should certainly be a similar number of groups of teachings.

Regarding the size of a group of teachings, the Kashmiri scholar Jnanavajra and certain others assert that it amounts to one thousand stanzas. *The Categories of the Spiritual Levels* comments:

Those eighty-four thousand groups of teachings recalled by the elder Ananda make up the Three Compilations. It might be asked, "What is the size of a single group of teachings?" One group of teachings is equal to one thousand stanzas. [20a]

Nagabodhi and others maintain that it consists of as many words of a given teaching as could be borne on the back of a young elephant in its prime, if these words were written on bark or palm leaves as fine as silk, if the writing covered both sides of the leaf without spaces between words, and if a fraction of a hair's tip was used as a pen. Others hold that it refers to a complete presentation of a single topic, such as the mind-body aggregates, the fields of experience, or the components of perception. Still others posit that the size is that of a shastra of moderate length; they say that it is like that of an Abhidharma text written by Shariputra, which consists of four thousand stanzas and is considered a group of teachings. As *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

Some say it is the length of a shastra
or that it constitutes a single topic, such as the mind-body
aggregates.³⁰

These interpretations, however, assign some fixed quantity to all of the teachings that discuss antidotes to a specific afflictive state. But such a fixed quantity does not necessarily exhaust all of the teachings on a topic, so it is best to consider a "group" to be the sum total of teachings that are the antidotes to any given afflictive state.

5. THE TERM “THE BUDDHA’S WORDS”

The Buddha’s words are defined as “what is spoken by a supreme and sublime being.” They were spoken for the dual purpose of ensuring short-term and ultimate benefit for beings. *The Unfolding of Timeless Awareness* states:

To accomplish the two kinds of benefit for beings, the words of
the Bhagavat
were proclaimed with a lion’s roar in the midst of his retinue.
They caused all that is positive to increase [20b]
and all illnesses—afflictive states—to be thoroughly pacified.

B. The Shastras That Comment on the Buddha’s Enlightened Intent

Now, my classification of the shastras that comment on the Buddha’s enlightened intent is discussed under two headings: the qualifications of the masters who wrote these texts and the nature of the shastras they wrote.

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE AUTHORS

The ideal author was someone, such as Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, or Asanga, who perceived the truth that is the nature of phenomena.³¹ A lesser kind of author was someone who had been graced with a vision of a chosen deity and so received permission to write; Chandragomin and Shantideva, for example, were blessed by the bodhisattva of supreme compassion.³² At the very least, the author—someone like the master Shrigupta, Jnanagarbha, or Shakyamati—should have been learned in the five traditional fields of knowledge and have received instructions on teachings deriving from a lineage of gurus.³³

The five traditional fields of knowledge comprise the “outer” subjects, including grammar and valid cognition; the “inner” subjects, such as the Three Compilations;³⁴ the arts, including those of constructing temples and painting images of deities; the medical sciences, such as those discussed in *The Eight Branches* and *Somaraja*; and areas of expertise such as the eight secular skills, which involve classifying the characteristics of men, women, mountains and forests, lakes and springs, clothing design, gemstones, horses, and elephants.

An example of instruction that derives from a lineage is found in *Reasoning Through Detailed Explanations*:

To those who wish to explain the sutras,
 I will give a few words of instruction.
 The instruction is as follows: [21A]
 You should provide an explanation of the purpose, a summary,
 a refutation of objections, an overview of the contents,
 the words, and the underlying meaning.

Those who are thus learned in the different fields of knowledge and who have gained accomplishment are innumerable, but the most renowned authors are “the six ornaments” and “the eight sublime ones,” who are like the sun and moon or like precious gems. The six ornaments are Nagarjunagarbha, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti, and Gunaprabha. The eight sublime ones include the foregoing with three figures added—Aryadeva, Chandragomin, and Vira—and Dinnaga omitted.³⁵

2. THE NATURE OF THE SHASTRAS

The nature of the shastras that were written can be discussed in five ways.

a. The Characteristics

What characterizes the shastras is that they were written by authors qualified to comment on the enlightened intent of the Buddha's words and they fulfilled the two functions of correcting and protecting. In *Reasoning Through Detailed Explanations*, we read the following:

Whatever corrects the enemies—afflictive states—without exception,
 and protects one against ignoble states of existence,
 is a shastra; these two qualities of correcting and protecting
 are not found in other traditions.

b. The Basis of the Characteristics

As for the basis of these characteristics, the nature of a shastra is such that, as a result of the author acting as the governing condition, the content—which manifests in the speech or writing of the one presenting the text—becomes clear in the listener's mind.

c. An Analysis

An analysis of the shastras demonstrates that their sources are found in the Three Compilations. Specifically, there are shastras that address the

first of the three exalted trainings, the exalted training in discipline. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states: [21b]

Because they discuss moral failings, circumstances, restoration,
the certainty that comes with renunciation, candidates,
historical precedents, detailed analyses,
and clear moral guidelines, their concern is Vinaya.³⁶

Others address the exalted training in mind. The same source explains:

Because they deal with locations, characteristics,
categories, and deeper meanings, their concern is Sutra.³⁷

Still others address the exalted training in sublime knowing. We read in the same source:

Because they direct one, provide details,
prevail over objections, and bring understanding, their concern is
Abhidharma.³⁸

Composed in these ways, the shastras have been assigned to the individual categories of Vinaya, Sutra, Abhidharma, and the secret mantra approach. They are, moreover, devoid of the six flaws found in non-Buddhist treatises and have three qualities that are characteristically Buddhist. *The Definitive Conclusion on the Levels of Realization Resulting from Hearing Teachings* states:

Neither meaningless nor erroneous, but endowed with meaning;
neither merely theoretical nor contentious, but concerned with
spiritual practice;
advocating neither deceit nor lack of compassion, but the
elimination of suffering:

Buddhist shastras are held to be devoid of these six flaws and to
have these three positive qualities.

To elaborate, treatises that are not ultimately meaningful are works like the four Vedas. Treatises that are erroneous maintain that freedom can be attained through such philosophical views as realism and nihilism.³⁹ Treatises that are merely theoretical are works on poetics and the like. Those that are contentious are works of logic and so forth. Those that advocate deceit are works on military strategy and related subjects. [22a] Treatises that advocate a lack of compassion are those that profess, for example, that the sacrifice of cattle is spiritual practice, and thus are harmful to oneself and others. Treatises found in Buddhist traditions are

devoid of these six negative qualities and instead have three positive ones, for they discuss the important topic of bringing about happiness in the short term and freedom ultimately, as well as the attainment of enlightenment and the complete elimination of the suffering of samsara.

There are countless variations on the ways in which these topics are discussed. There are treatises that synthesize information from diverse sources, make hidden meanings evident, present extensive treatments of topics, explain difficult points, give word-by-word exegeses, summarize the meaning of a text, or analyze a subject developmentally.

Texts can include chapters, detailed analyses, aphorisms, or subdivisions. They may consist of formal prose, verse, or a combination of these or be written in a loose, flowing style. Thus, the elucidation of the specific subject matter of these texts can be concise, of moderate length, complex, or extensive, bringing out the implications of the Buddha's words with great clarity. By analyzing the Buddha's words from four perspectives—the provisional meaning, the definitive meaning, intent that is straightforward, and intent that requires interpretation—the shastras ensure that the teachings will endure.⁴⁰ This is stated in *The Explanatory Essays*:

The teachings are contained in both the Buddha's words and the shastras—

the Buddha's excellent speech and the commentaries on his enlightened intent. [22b]

It is because of these that the teachings of the Shakya will endure in this universe.

d. The Term "Shastra"

The derivation of the Sanskrit term *śāstra* is as follows. *Śā* with the affix *s* has the meaning "to correct," while *tra* with the affix *ya* has the sense of "to protect." The term thus implies "endowed with the qualities of correcting and protecting."⁴¹ As *Reasoning Through Detailed Explanations* indicates:

Because they serve both to correct and to protect,
they are supreme treatises.

e. The Purpose

The purpose of the shastras is to guide beings by elucidating the Buddha's words, which are profound yet difficult to understand, and by dem-

onstrating the path to liberation. *The Explanatory Essays* states:

In elucidating the meaning of the Buddha's words
and ensuring the goal of liberation for those who apply them,
the shastras are indeed vast in scope.
Wise people accept them with respect.

C. The Difference Between the Buddha's Words and the Shastras

As for the difference between the Buddha's words and the shastras, the Buddha's words describe any spiritual methods that arose as a result of the Teacher—the Buddha—being the governing condition and that are sacred supports of the path that ensures the two kinds of benefit. In *The Highest Continuum*, we read the following:

Whatever has ultimate meaning and inspires a close connection
to spirituality,
was spoken to eliminate afflictive states throughout the three
realms,⁴²
and expresses the qualities of the state of peace,
that is the speech of the Seer; anything contrary would be from
another tradition.⁴³

The shastras describe methods that relied not on the Teacher—the Buddha—as the governing condition, but rather on individuals whose minds were separate from his. They were composed to elucidate the path to liberation by commenting on the Buddha's enlightened intent as found in either the Buddha's words or other shastras. [23a] According to the same source:

Whatever is explained by those with completely undistracted
minds—
those who are influenced solely by the Teacher, the Victorious
One—
and is in accord with the path that brings about liberation,
that is held in as much esteem as the Seer's words.⁴⁴

D. How the Teachings Should Be Explained and Received

How the teachings should be explained and received is discussed under three headings.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MASTER

The characteristics of a master who explains the teachings are given in *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Rely on a spiritual mentor who is disciplined, calm, and very peaceful,⁴⁵
is endowed with qualities of enlightenment and with diligence,
has received a wealth of scriptural transmissions,
and has totally realized suchness, possesses eloquence,
embodies kindness, and has cast off discouragement.⁴⁶

The tantra *The Vajra Array* admonishes:

In all circumstances, one should rely on
teachers who hold a treasury of knowledge and a complete
transmission,
who maintain their commitment and precepts, are good-hearted,
learned, and diligent in helping others—
who are masters of the secret vajra approach.⁴⁷

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A STUDENT

The characteristics of a student who listens to the teachings are given in *The Foundation of Scriptural Transmission*:

Devoted to a spiritual master, completely pure in moral conduct,
extremely diligent in practicing meditative stability and reciting
texts,
focused, disciplined, and patient:
such a one is truly said to be a practitioner who maintains
precepts diligently.

The Vajra Array states:

One should know a vajra disciple to be someone
who is fortunate, is devoted, is very generous,
has a stable yet spacious mind, is diligent in practice,
and has the sublime qualities of compassion and commitment.

Typically, it is the nature of spiritual activity to have a threefold structure: the preparation, giving rise to bodhichitta; [23b] the principal practice, retaining the meaning of what one has heard; and the conclusion, dedicating the practice to the enlightenment of all. If a teaching is of the sutra approach, one retains the meaning of what one hears by listening

while viewing whatever one perceives from the perspective of the eight analogies concerning illusoriness.⁴⁸ If the teaching is of the mantra approach, one retains the meaning of the teachings being explained and received by not becoming distracted from a clear visualization of the deities and mandalas concerned.

On such occasions, there is calm abiding, for consciousness rests without distraction in a one-pointed state of attention to the words and underlying meaning of the teaching. There is profound insight, for one distinguishes the words from their underlying meaning and comprehends that meaning. In the sutra *The Array of Qualities*, we read the following:

O Manjushri, the very act of hearing this one-pointedly, without distraction, and retaining it firmly in the mind: this is the meditative absorption of calm abiding in which sound is the focus. Analyzing in detail and evaluating clearly: this is profound insight that thoroughly discerns the meaning. In this way, calm abiding and profound insight are integrated, functioning as a single state of mind.

As well, the six transcendent perfections are complete in the receiving of teachings. The tantra *Manifest Realization*, a manual of pith instructions for all spiritual practices, states:

Offering flowers, a seat, and so forth in the best way possible,
preparing the environment, behaving appropriately,
avoiding harm to any living creature,
supplicating the guru,
retaining the guru's instructions without distraction,
and questioning one's understanding:
these endow one with the six prerequisites of illumination.

3. HOW ONE BENEFITS FROM THE TEACHINGS

The benefits of explaining and hearing teachings are that one distinguishes between what can be substantiated and what cannot, [24a] dispels the darkness of ignorance by knowing what to reject and what to accept, and thus traverses the path to liberation. *The Explanatory Essays* by the master Ratnagupta states:

Hearing the teachings is a lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance.

If one comes into contact with people of superior character, one becomes an excellent person.

Hearing is the source of consolidating positive qualities.

It is like one's hands, with which one can accomplish all that is necessary.

Moreover, *The Account That Extols the Hearing of Teachings* by Ratnakarashanti explains:

By hearing teachings, one gives up what is meaningless.

By hearing teachings, one attains nirvana.

By hearing teachings, one turns away from harmful actions.

By hearing teachings, one ensures the totality of the qualities of enlightenment.

Furthermore, sublime knowing is the most exalted of the six transcendent perfections, and its cause is the hearing of teachings, which is therefore considered to be supremely important. *The Highest Continuum* states:

Because generosity brings about the attainment of wealth,
discipline leads to higher realms, meditation eliminates afflictive
states,

and sublime knowing eliminates all afflictive and cognitive
obscurations,

they are most excellent, and their cause lies in the hearing of
teachings.

.

Sublime knowing is most excellent, and its basis

lies in the hearing of teachings; therefore, to hear teachings is
most excellent.⁴⁹

In discerning the meaning of the teachings by hearing them correctly, one would never denigrate the teachings or the individual teachers, because to do so would cause a grievous obscuration. According to the same source:

Any denigration of spiritually superior beings or contempt for the
teachings they have spoken

is an afflictive state, which compounds one's deeply rooted
delusion. [24b]

Therefore, do not allow your mind to engage in the distortions of
habitual attitudes.⁵

When people do not have the insight to perceive things accurately, either they view the teachings or teacher as false (because they fail to examine the nature of things, taking statements of provisional truth too literally or placing their trust in the disparaging comments of envious sectarian critics), or they cast aspersions out of envy and hope for mere personal gain. These actions lead to a truly enormous degree of obscuration, so those who are wise about the nature of things and are honest would not indulge in such harm—even to save their lives, let alone their wealth—for this would cause rebirth in the Hell of Endless Torment.⁵¹ Although even those who have committed one of the five acts of immediate karmic retribution can be liberated by contemplating profound truths, this is not the case for those who have rejected the teachings.⁵² *The Highest Continuum* states:

Owing to inferior intelligence, a lack of what is positive,⁵³
 reliance on false pride,
 the obscurations that come from a lack of the sacred dharma,⁵⁴
 taking the provisional meaning to be the definitive one,⁵⁵
 ambition for gain, succumbing to one's ideology, relying on those
 who repudiate the dharma,
 distancing oneself from those who uphold teachings, and inferior
 devotion,
 the teachings of those who have defeated the inner foes have been
 rejected.⁵⁶

The wise should not fear fire, the virulent venom of snakes,
 murderers, or lightning as much as they should fear discrediting
 profound teachings.

Fire, snakes, enemies, and thunderbolts can merely rob one of
 life;

they will not lead to the terrifying fate of beings who go to the
 Hell of Endless Torment.

There are those who, consistently relying on evil companions,
 have negative attitudes toward buddhas, [25a]

kill their fathers or mothers or arhats, commit unconscionable
 actions, or create divisiveness within sublime spiritual
 communities.

Nevertheless, they can swiftly gain liberation by truly
 contemplating the nature of phenomena.

But how can there be liberation for anyone whose mind is averse
 to the dharma?⁵⁷

Therefore, it is imperative not to disparage teachings of any kind by saying, "This is wrong, this is counterfeit, this is bad," because they serve beings with various interests, and the various manifestations of individual teachers and teachings each ensure benefit in their own way.

One might object, "But the Buddha said, 'Just as gold is fired, cut, and polished, you must examine my words well, and only then should you accept them, not just out of respect.' How does one explain this quotation?"⁵⁸

The Buddha's intention in saying this was to point out that when one studies teachings that are personally inspiring, one should hone the sublime knowing that arises from contemplation of the words and their underlying meaning to determine whether one's understanding is mistaken. This does not mean the scriptures say that the Buddha was advocating that one entertain doubts as to the truth of these or any other of his teachings.

To summarize, the Buddha's teachings encompass all of the methods associated with the path that leads one to renounce samsara and to endeavor to attain nirvana. Whatever these methods are called or however they are described, I advise you not to be averse to or reject them. Such methods have already been described in a passage cited earlier:

Whatever has ultimate meaning [and] inspires a close connection to spirituality, . . .⁵⁹

Therefore, the value of hearing teachings can be seen to be that of gaining mastery of these methods. [25b]

III. THE DURATION OF THE TEACHINGS

How long the teachings will endure is discussed from two perspectives: that of the ordinary tradition and that of the extraordinary one.

A. The Ordinary Tradition

In discussing the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, the sutra *The Fortunate Eon* and *The Minor Scriptural Transmissions* state that they will last for one thousand years. *The White Lotus of Compassion* and the sutra *The Request of Chandragarbha* maintain that they will endure for two thousand years. In his commentary on *The Vajra Cutter*, Kamalashila writes that they will last for five periods of five hundred years, while *The*

Commentary on "The Hundred Thousand Stanzas" states that they will endure for five thousand years. The first figure is based on the majority of practitioners gaining freedom from samsara within this period of time; the second, on people proceeding toward some fruition and studying the scriptures;⁶⁰ and the third, on practitioners' view being largely in accord with their meditation.

My explanation here is based on the last figure. By dividing each of the five millennia in half, we arrive at ten periods of five hundred years each. It is explained that because Prajapati and other women received monastic ordination, the final period of five hundred years will be one of mere outer signs, known as "the decline."⁶¹ Of these ten periods, then, three periods of five hundred years constitute "the time of fruition," three "the time of scriptural transmission," three "the time of spiritual practice," and one "the time of holding to mere outer signs," making a total of ten periods.

During the first of the three periods of the time of fruition, [26a] many practitioners became arhats or "nonreturners," although some became "once returners."⁶² During the second period, many became nonreturners, although again there were some once returners. During the third period, many became "stream winners," although there were a small number of the previous kinds of practitioners.⁶³ During the first of the three periods of the time of scriptural transmission, Abhidharma was widespread and upheld by many people; during the second period, Sutra; and during the third period, Vinaya. During the first of the three periods of the time of spiritual practice, there were many who practiced mainly the exalted training in discipline; during the second period, many will practice the training in mind; and during the third period, the training in sublime knowing. It is worth noting about this discussion that a majority of authors seem to reverse the order of the time of scriptural transmission and that of spiritual practice, but I do not consider this correct.

Given these ten five-hundred-year periods, in which time do we now find ourselves? We are living in the time of spiritual practice, because there are many ordinary people who feel intensely disillusioned by samsara and yearn to attain liberation. More specifically, within the time of spiritual practice, the first period (for the practice of discipline) has passed, and people are now pursuing the exalted training in mind.

If you wonder how many years have elapsed from the Buddha's nirvana to the Fire Male Horse year, 3,516 have passed;⁶⁴ this means that

the teachings will last for another 984 years. From an alternative point of view—that 3,532 years have passed—there are then 968 years remaining. In either case, the time when people hold to mere outer signs is not considered a time when the teachings are present.⁶⁵

The Teacher, the transcendent and accomplished conqueror, entered his mother's womb in the Fire Female Hare year and took birth in the Earth Male Dragon year. In the Water Male Tiger year, [26b] he attained buddhahood, and in the Fire Female Pig year, he passed into nirvana. In the Wood Female Bird year, 177 years later, King Rama came to power in India. After another 800 years (totaling 977 after the Buddha's nirvana), King Chandrapala came to power in the Wood Male Dragon year. In the Wood Male Horse year, 231 years after that, it is reported that King Ishvaradasa calculated that 1,208 years had elapsed since the Buddha's nirvana. Then, 724 years later, another calculation was made in Nepal, determining that 1,932 years had passed since the nirvana. Subsequently, 814 years after this date (some 2,746 years after the Buddha's nirvana), the Nepalese king Rasmivarma came to power in the Iron Male Monkey year. In the Fire Female Ox year, 245 years later, King Trisong Detsen came to power in Tibet, when a total of 2,991 years had passed.⁶⁶

In another 134 years, and 3,125 years after the Buddha's nirvana, in the Iron Male Tiger year, there was a gathering of king, patrons, and priests in the province of Ngari in upper Tibet.⁶⁷ Twenty-seven years later, during the entire summer of the Fire Male Dragon year, all the teachers in upper and lower Tibet gathered and performed calculations, proclaiming that since the Buddha's nirvana, some 3,152 years had elapsed.⁶⁸

Fifty-six years later, more than 3,200 years after the Buddha's nirvana, began the era of such great translators as Loden Sherab, Drakjor Sherab, and Nyima Sherab.⁶⁹ [27a] Counting from that point until the Fire Male Horse year of this present cycle, we find an interval of 324 years.⁷⁰ If we add this to the previous figures, we arrive at a total of 3,532 years (again, there is the alternative calculation, indicating that 3,516 years have elapsed).

The teachings of the great Seer,
 the Man of the Sugarcane Clan, the Kinsman of the Sun,⁷¹
 have already lasted a thousand times the number of fire,
 a hundred times the number of arrows, ten times the number of
 the moon,
 plus the number of tastes. These have passed, and from now on

there remain a hundred times the number of orifices, ten times the number of nagas, and the number of the great Vedas.⁷²

The foregoing calculations are supported by the fact that the following have not disappeared: the upholding of the signs and attributes of the nirmanakaya, instructions in the three exalted trainings and Three Compilations that describe them, and the practice of the rituals found in the text *The Hundred and One Activities*.⁷³

B. The Extraordinary Tradition

In the extraordinary tradition, the sutra *Sacred Golden Light* states:

The Buddha will not pass into parinirvana, nor will the teachings disappear.

Also according to the cycle *Magical Display*:

The Buddha will not pass into parinirvana, nor will the teachings disappear. In order to mature and guide the ignorant, . . .⁷⁴

Moreover, the tantra *The Complete Array of Wish Fulfillment* states:

For as long as all the great multitude of beings continues to exist, for that long will emanations of buddhas be uninterrupted and the teachings that free beings not disappear.

Furthermore, it is said that although the teachings will not be maintained by those who wear the robes of shravakas,⁷⁵ [27b] nevertheless gods, nagas, seers, dakinis, and others who can extend their lives for eons will preserve the sutras and tantras, teaching them to others as well as putting them into practice. Consistent with beings' mentalities, emanations of buddhas will appear, teaching the dharma and bringing benefit. These emanations will manifest in the forms of various beings—humans, nagas, demigods, and others—and the inexhaustible teachings demonstrating the path to peace will last until samsara ends. Thus, it is held that the Mahayana teachings will last as an eternal, ongoing cycle.

And so, although one section of the scriptures may disappear, others will assume new importance and provide illumination. This is because the teachings are expressions of the innate compassion that never fails to respond for the benefit of beings and the enlightened activity that sponta-

neously accomplishes that benefit. As is stated in the sutra *One Hundred Cases of Karma*:

The waves of the ocean, home of sea creatures,
 may someday come to an end.
 But for their spiritual children, who are to be guided,
 buddhas will never cease to appear.

Therefore, when a nirmanakaya sage passes away, it is like the reflection of the moon disappearing from water, but the sambhogakaya dwelling in Akanishtha is ever present, like the actual moon. Whenever there are beings with devoted interest and good fortune, who are akin to vessels of water, an appropriate emanation, together with teachings that guide by whatever spiritual approach is necessary, is spontaneously present. Whether for one being to be guided or one hundred, whether for a single continent or a three-thousand-fold universe, [28a] according to the perceptions of any number of beings these emanations occur in a way that is not dependent on time.⁷⁶ This is analogous to the arising of as many forms of the moon as there are vessels of water, without these reflections having any prior or later existence. Although these emanations and teachings may seem to appear and disappear in beings' perceptions, they actually do not arise or disappear, for they are similar to reflections or dream images. One who thoroughly appreciates this principle is known as a spiritual person of the highest degree.

In conclusion, let me offer a few verses:

In a lake of limpid blue water appear
 reflections of planets and stars, which beautify it with their
 radiance.

But though these reflections manifest, planets and stars do not
 actually arise, nor do they disappear because of turbidity.⁷⁷
 Thus, analogous to the orb of the moon is the sovereign lord—
 constant, pervasive, and unchanging—resplendent in the abode
 of Akanishtha.⁷⁸

What adorn the pristine waters of beings' minds
 are forms that will be discerned in different ways by all beings
 as a result of their amassed merit—their excellent devotion and
 virtue.

The teachings of victorious ones and the multitudes of the noble
 sangha
 then come into being by the power of the Sugata's deeds.

These wish-fulfilling teachings are all-pervasive like the sky,
and there the massing clouds of innate compassion will abide for
a long time.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the second chapter, an explanation of the methods of the teachings, the sacred dharma.

3

The Approaches and Their Philosophical Systems

My specific analysis of the vast range of philosophical systems found in my own and other traditions has two parts: [28b] establishing the general relationship among the spiritual approaches and delineating their particular details.

I. THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE APPROACHES

Any detailed classification of the philosophical systems that have developed, each with its respective goal as a frame of reference, would be endless. So long as the power of people's minds has not been exhausted, there is no end to the possible variations of letters, words, and phrases or to mental analysis. Thus, there are tenets that can be classified as distinct from one another, as *The Journey to Sri Lanka* states:

So long as the mind functions,
there is no end to spiritual approaches.

Should one wonder what kinds of approaches are meant, the same work lists the following:

The approach of the devas, the approach of the Brahma world,
likewise the shravaka approach,
the pratyekabuddha approach,
and the Mahayana:

I have explained the entire range of spiritual approaches.

The approach of the devas is that of the ten kinds of positive actions, while the approach of the Brahma world is that of the four states of medi-

tative stability; together these two are known as “the approach of the existing situation among gods and humans.”¹

The shravaka approach is that of the four noble truths; the pratyekabuddha approach is that of the twelve links of interdependent connection; and the Mahayana approach is that of the thirty-seven factors contributing to enlightenment and the other topics that are subsumed within two aspects of nonexistence: the nonexistence of a personal identity and the nonexistence of the identity of phenomena.² In this vein, *The Heart Essence of Secrets* explains that there are five approaches that accord with the guidance taking place: the approach of gods and humans, the shravaka approach, the pratyekabuddha approach, the bodhisattva approach, and “the unsurpassable approach” (that is, the secret mantra approach). This source states:

In the results ensured by four spiritual approaches
lies the fruition of a single approach.³

Although all of these derive from two approaches to unsurpassable enlightenment, [29a] they can be considered a single approach with respect to the ultimate fruition being sought.⁴ According to *The Intermediate-Length “Mother”*:

Subhuti, there is but a single approach, the approach of unsurpassable buddhahood.

Moreover, *The Smaller Commentary on “The Ornament of Manifest Realization”* explains:

The classification into three spiritual approaches is intentionally provisional, not a definitive description.⁵

The implication of these quotations is that the ultimate destiny of all beings is the unsurpassable state of complete and perfect enlightenment.

There are traditionally said to be two approaches: the greater approach, or Mahayana, and the foundational approach, or Hinayana. *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime* states:

Kashyapa, there are two approaches, the foundational and the greater.

It is also taught that there are three, as in *The Sublime Heart Essence of the “Mother”*:

Subhuti, there are the shravaka approach, the pratyekabuddha approach, and the bodhisattva approach.

Another text, *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, speaks of three approaches based on causes, as well as a fourth, the secret tantric approach:

In the results ensured by three spiritual approaches lies the fruition of a single approach.⁶

Alternative classifications, even of an infinite number of spiritual approaches, are spoken of, and given that there are infinite approaches, there are also infinite philosophical systems, each system providing proof of the validity of its respective approach.⁷ There are also classifications consisting of a twofold division (into outer and inner approaches), a threefold division (into the foundational, intermediate, and greater approaches), and a more extensive division (into nine approaches).⁸

The Heart Essence of Secrets states:

Lack of realization, incorrect realization, [29b]
partial realization, lack of total realization,
guidance, enlightened intent, the secret,
and the naturally secret meaning . . .⁹

In this context, “lack of realization” refers to the approach known as the existing situation among gods and humans. That is, as a result of engaging in the ten kinds of positive actions and holding them in high esteem, but without aspiring to any state of meditative absorption, one remains on the level of gods in the realm of desire or on the level of human beings.¹⁰ According to the tantra *The Most Sublime Secret*:

Engaging in the ten kinds of positive actions and rejecting
negative ones
are the causes of rebirth as a god in the realm of desire or as a
human being.

If the ten kinds of positive actions are pursued in combination with any of the four states of meditative stability, rebirth into a particular meditative state will be achieved depending on one’s mental development in this lifetime, with the force of the ten kinds of positive actions serving as the impetus to that attainment.¹¹ As the same source indicates:

Abiding in one of the four states of meditative stability (which come about through the impetus of the ten kinds of positive ac-

tions) ensures rebirth as one of the four types of beings in the realm of form.

Brought about through the impetus of the ten kinds of positive actions, the four formless states of meditative absorption lead to rebirth in the four states of the realm of formlessness. The same source explains:

The four formless states of meditative absorption, through the impetus of the ten kinds of positive actions, lead to the four states of “infinite space” and so forth.

“Incorrect realization” refers to the approach of holders of extreme views, who profess realism or nihilism. “Partial realization” refers to the approach of shravakas, who realize the nonexistence of a personal identity. “Lack of total realization” refers to the approach of bodhisattvas, in that they are still deluded about the profound secret. “Guidance” is a reference to kriyatantra, “enlightened intent” to charyatantra, “the secret” to yogatantra, [30a] and “the naturally secret meaning” to the unsurpassable class of tantra.

Alternatively, *Engaging in Secret Conduct: The Tantra of the Potential* refers to the following:

... the guide of the sixteenth, and foremost, spiritual approach.

The enumeration in this source includes the two approaches of the existing situation (among gods and among humans), the two non-Buddhist views, the two shravaka systems (the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika), two Mahayana systems (the Chittamatra and Svatantrika Madhyamaka), the Prasangika Madhyamaka, kriya, charya, yoga, maha, anu, and ati—totaling fifteen—with the approach of the vajra heart essence, the spontaneous presence of utter lucidity, being the sixteenth.¹²

There is no fixed number of philosophical systems that can account for the variety of spiritual approaches, for there are innumerable ways to analyze and synthesize such systems, as evidenced by works attributed to Vajradhara and learned masters whose spiritual accomplishments were great.

Those of lesser intelligence, whose vision (in terms of their sublime knowing) is shortsighted, hold to one interpretation. Daunted by detailed presentations of an inconceivable number of spiritual approaches and variety of philosophical systems, they say that such presentations are in-

valid. They are like cattle opining, "Since we bovines are endowed with horns, human beings and gods must all have horns."

Given that the methods of these spiritual approaches entail an unlimited variety of terminology and purpose, the alternative ways to traverse a path and attain a specific spiritual level or state of meditative absorption are incalculable. Because the omniscient Buddha spoke from a knowledge of everything, [30b] he gave teachings consistent with the attitudes of his listeners, speaking of what would delight and interest them. Thus, he spoke of paths to be traversed and of no path, of paths involving effort and effortless paths, of paths to free one in a single lifetime or to free one within an eon, and so forth. His sacred advice to us was to avoid those who view things incorrectly because they are daunted or intimidated by this vast reservoir of spiritual traditions and instead to study these traditions with a sense of purpose.

II. THE PARTICULAR DETAILS OF THE APPROACHES

Now, my delineation of the particular details of the spiritual approaches has two parts: a brief overview of non-Buddhist philosophical systems and an extensive analysis of Buddhist systems.¹³

A. Non-Buddhist Systems

There are said to be five traditional systems of speculative thought founded by teachers of the past whose extreme views fell outside the purview of the "inner" Buddhist teachings.¹⁴ The Samkhya system is considered the progenitor of all these. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

The soul—that which receives experiences and is eternal, but not
a creator—

is determined by the Samkhyas to have no attributes and no
activity.¹⁵

Owing to minor variations of this analysis,
the distinct systems of the extreme views emerged.¹⁶

Of these systems, four—the Samkhya, Shaivite, Vaishnavite, and Jain—promulgate views of realism, whereas the Barhaspatya system professes nihilism.

I. THE SAMKHYA SYSTEM

The first system, that of the Samkhyas, arose when people lived for twenty thousand years.¹⁷ A seer named Kapila, who had attained a certain state of freedom by practicing austerities, composed many treatises.¹⁸ His philosophical system was promulgated by his two main students, Bharadvaja and Patanjali-putra.¹⁹ [31a] Of these two, Bharadvaja maintained that all objects of knowledge could definitively be considered to be of twenty-five kinds. Patanjali-putra, known as “the follower of Kapila,” further held that the true nature of these twenty-five was emptiness. In *The Anthology of the Heart Essence of Timeless Awareness*, we read the following:

The Samkhyas speak of attributes;
the follower of Kapila held these to be empty.

This system is known variously as that of the Enumerators, the Followers of Kapila, or the Positers of Three Attributes.²⁰

The Samkhya system, the progenitor of the main systems of Indian philosophy, posits that all objects of knowledge are subsumed within the two categories of soul and primal matter.²¹ My discussion has five headings: the soul, primal matter, the way these are understood, the disadvantage of not understanding them, and the benefit of understanding them.

a. The Soul

The soul—that which receives experiences and is eternal, but not a creator—
is determined by the Samkhyas to have no attributes and no activity.²²

This previously quoted verse refers to the soul in the sense of the spirit of an ordinary being.²³ It is described as having five properties: it is cognizant; it is eternal and unitary; it is free of being a producer or a product; it is that which receives experiences, in that it appreciates sense objects; and it is hidden from anyone’s perception, for it resides within the matrix of primal matter, the natural cause of things.

b. Primal Matter

Primal matter is of two types. First, there is primal matter as the natural cause of things, which consists of a balanced triad of pleasure, pain, and indifference, also termed “attraction,” “aversion,” and “ignorance”; or

“lightness,” “impulse,” and “density.”²⁴ [31b] It has five properties: it is inanimate matter; it is eternal and unitary; it functions as the cause that gives rise to all of its specific manifestations; it is not produced by anything; and it is hidden from the perception of even the seer Kapila himself.

Second, there is primal matter as the resultant manifestation. Although it has by nature the same triad of attributes, they are no longer in a state of equilibrium, and so the manifestation is that of inanimate matter that is temporary, is impermanent, and makes itself evident in a multiplicity of ways. If we analyze this type of primal matter, we find that it manifests in twenty-three ways, the first manifestation being “the great principle,” or ordinary consciousness—an inner agent, clear consciousness, termed “the epitome of cognition.” It is compared to a mirror with two surfaces; externally it perceives the five kinds of sense objects (visual forms and so forth), while internally it is endowed with (or takes the form of) cognizance of pleasure, pain, or indifference.

From this evolves the second manifestation, “selfhood”—that is, the conceit of belief in a unique self.²⁵ If we analyze this conceit, we find that it has three aspects: conceit occurring as a result of impulse, conceit occurring as a result of the elements, and conceit occurring as a result of specific manifestations.²⁶ Nevertheless, it is considered a single manifestation.

Eleven faculties evolve from the first aspect of conceit. Five are faculties associated with ordinary consciousness: the ear, nose, tongue, body, and eyes. Five are faculties associated with physical activities: the mouth, hands, feet, genitals, and bowels. The eleventh is the coordinating mental faculty, which is a faculty of both mind and body. From the second aspect of conceit evolve five “rudimentary components” of sound, odor, taste, tactile sensation, and color. From these, respectively, evolve the five elements of space, earth, water, air, and fire; [32a] this accounts for beliefs such as that of sound having the quality of space.²⁷ The third aspect of conceit does not give rise to a specific result of its own, but merely complements or supports the two other aspects. About these points, the text by Ishvarakrishna states:

From nature comes the great principle;²⁸
 from this comes conceit;
 from this come sixteen grouped factors.²⁹
 Among these sixteen, moreover,
 from the faculties evolve the five major elements.³⁰

Among these twenty-four objects of knowledge, the twenty-three specific manifestations are relatively real, whereas the nature of the rest is held to be ultimately real:³¹

The most sublime quality of the three attributes
is not within the scope of perception;
whatever is within the scope of perception
is thoroughly hollow, like an illusion.

These objects of knowledge are the twenty-four kinds of inanimate primal matter; with the soul, there are twenty-five objects of knowledge—that is, all that is to be known, which is subsumed within the two levels of truth.

c. The Way of Understanding the Soul and Primal Matter

There are two ways in which the soul and primal matter can be understood: in relation to the way in which causes and effects come into being and in relation to the way in which spirit experiences primal matter. First, although nature is held to be the sole cause, seven other things can have a causal function:³² the great principle, conceit, and the five rudimentary components. Whereas sixteen factors—the eleven faculties and the five elements—are considered to be solely resultant, spirit is held to be neither cause nor result:

Primal matter is a producer, not a product.
Seven factors—the great principle and the others—are both
producers and products. [32b]
Sixteen factors are products.
Spirit is neither a product nor a producer.³³

Given that the way in which things are produced is solely a matter of their being produced from themselves, cause and effect are held to be one and the same.³⁴ As for the way in which things are brought into being, it is simply a matter of things that existed previously becoming obvious; the Samkhya system does not hold that something previously nonexistent is brought into being as something new. As for the way in which things disintegrate, the system maintains simply that there is a temporary subsidence, or removal of something from plain view, but does not accept impermanence in the sense of the final disintegration of the nature of something.³⁵

Second, spirit experiences primal matter in the following way: Latent states of pleasure and the other secondary attributes are naturally present in primal matter.³⁶ There are three overt states: the pleasurable, painful, or indifferent experience of external sounds and other stimuli; the pleasurable, painful, or indifferent experience of consciousness itself; and the pleasurable, painful, or indifferent experience of the impressions of sense objects that arise in that consciousness. When spirit experiences these overt states, it cognizes them. As for the way in which experience takes place, impressions of sense objects—sounds and so on—arise on that surface of the “mirror” of consciousness that is directed outwardly, whereas impressions of the cognition of these objects arise on the surface that is directed inwardly. The experience of primal matter by spirit is held to be the combination of these two processes:

That which arises in consciousness is known by spirit.

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Just as milk, even though it is not sentient,
is the reason for the calf's growth,
just so primal matter functions
as the reason for the flourishing of spirit.

.

Primal matter is completely involved to ensure
the experiences of spirit,
just as a dance exhibition is performed
to satisfy the viewers.³⁷ [33a]

d. The Disadvantage of Not Understanding the Soul and Primal Matter

The Samkhya system maintains that the disadvantage of not understanding the foregoing is that one misperceives primal matter, in both its natural state and its changing and temporary manifestations, as manifestations of the soul. Misled by fixation on this process of change, one wanders in samsara:

From the activity of this natural state come the attributes.
Because the mistaken mind is obscured by density,
it unwisely thinks, “I, the soul, have created something.”
But it does not even have the ability to eliminate anything.

.

Ultimately, this spirit is
 by nature pure thought,
 but in failing to understand its nature to be such,
 it is deluded, wandering always in samsara.

That is, the Samkhya system maintains that while the twenty-three specific manifestations of primal matter appear like illusions on the relative level, one wanders in samsara because one fixates on these as if they were the soul and thus believes that they truly exist. The system holds that the nature of the soul—beyond being a producer or a product, but rather eternal, pervasive, and unwavering—is ultimate truth and that those who understand this, and do not deviate from this state, gain freedom.

e. The Benefit of Understanding the Soul and Primal Matter

The benefit of understanding these things is that it brings freedom:

If one understands these twenty-five fundamental factors,³⁸
 whatever outward appearance one adopts is fine,
 whether one has long locks or a topknot on one's head;
 in whatever location one finds pleasing,
 one will gain freedom. There is no doubt of this.

2. THE SHAIVITE SYSTEM

According to the second system, that of the Shaivites, the god Maheshvara taught many categories of tantras.³⁹ His two students were Akshapada and Kanada. [33b] The first was a seer assigned to guard Uma.⁴⁰ His lust was aroused, and fearing that he would fail in his austerities, he fixed his eyes on Uma's feet and so upheld his ascetic discipline and accomplished his goal. Because of this, he was known as Akshapada (Foot Gazer). Those who adhere to the principles of his treatise, *The Discourse on Logic*, are called Nyayas (Logicians). The other student was known as Kanada (Eater of Grain), because he ate only a single grain of rice per day while practicing austerities. Those who adhere to the principles of the treatise he wrote, *The Clarification of Specific Analyses*, are called Vaisheshikas (Analysts). Proponents of this system maintain that the pleasure and pain experienced by beings, and all that pertains to samsara or to liberation, are creations of Maheshvara's pleasure or displeasure. One of their sources states:

This being is not innately conscious.⁴¹

The soul has no control over its pleasure or pain.

Directed solely by Maheshvara, it will go either to the abyss or to higher states of existence.

They also maintain that if one performs ritual sacrifices, in this very life one will gain the status of whoever is sacrificed or gain possession of whatever is offered, and that in a future life these sacrificed beings or possessions will accompany one in a higher realm:

A brahmin for those who wish to be brahmins,

a warrior for those who wish to be warriors,

and wealth for those who wish for wealth:

engage correctly in sacred rituals of sacrifice and offering.

They say that freedom is attained by offering one's body in a fire ritual with the purpose of pleasing Maheshvara.

Proponents of this tradition are called variously Worshipers of Shiva, Followers of Uluka (Owl Man), or the Proponents of Six Categories.⁴² [34a] They rely on logic, using reasoning to maintain that all philosophical tenets can be subsumed within the following six categories:

Substantial entities, secondary attributes, actions, generalities, particularity, and inherent relationship: these are the six.

Of these categories, substantial entities are ninefold. There are five kinds of eternal substantial entities—soul, time, space, mind, and ether—and four kinds of impermanent substantial entities—earth, water, fire, and air. Of twenty-five secondary attributes that are based on these substantial entities, thirteen are based on the entity of the soul: pleasure, pain, indifference, truth, falsity, composite formation, concerted effort, and the six kinds of consciousness. Seven attributes are based on time and space: number and size, connection and separation, remoteness and proximity, and distinctness.⁴³ The five remaining attributes are sound as the quality of space, odor as that of earth, taste as that of water, tactile sensation as that of air, and color as that of fire.⁴⁴ There are five kinds of actions: upward and downward, extending and contracting, and mobile. Generalities are of two kinds, universal and limited.⁴⁵ Particularity is the factor that prevents things from merging with one another. Inherent relationship is the factor that connects substantial entities and their qualities.

As well, the soul is held to be inanimate and to have five properties; it

is eternal, singular, all-pervasive, included in the scope of a being's experience, and a receiver of experiences:⁴⁶

Furthermore, as for the soul, here the soul is held to have attributes such as a capability of experiencing desire and aversion,⁴⁷ [34b] to be the seat of experience, to participate in all situations, to be a receiver of experiences, and to be, in essence, inanimate.

Although the soul is inanimate, the five sense consciousnesses are held to be its attributes, and so it is capable of perceiving sense objects. Although it is eternal in essence, effort and inherent relationship are seen to be its attributes, and these in turn are held to find expression in processes like taking rebirth in a physical body:

The soul itself is eternal but acts as a producer.
Like a bird released from a broken pot,
from this world it transfers to the next,
and with this continuity
the "soul" takes rebirth.

3. THE VAISHNAVITE SYSTEM

According to the third system, that of the Vaishnavites, the god Vishnu composed hundreds of thousands of treatises. The four-faced form of Brahma, who was born from a lotus that sprang from Vishnu's navel, caused the entire universe to emanate, and so is known as "the progenitor of the world." With his four mouths, Brahma explained the four great treatises of knowledge: *The Samaveda*, *The Atharvaveda*, *The Yajurveda*, and *The Rigveda*. These Vedas are held to be eternal, in that they have always existed, throughout beginningless time, and Brahma merely recalled and recited them.

Subsequently, seers compiled the Vedas and expounded their own source texts, giving rise to schools within the system, of which there are five. The Grammarians adhere to the principles of the grammatical treatise *Light Rays of Speech* by Vishnu. The Investigators are epistemologists who adhere to the principles of the treatise *Weapon of Eloquence* by the seer Agni. The Secret Ones are practitioners of meditation who adhere to the principles of the treatise *Stages of Meditation in Nine Cycles*

by the seer Satya. [35a] The Logicians expound the Vedic tradition and adhere to the principles of the treatise *Clear Logical Investigations* by the seer Bhrigu. The Followers of Charaka are students of the Ayurvedic tradition of healing who adhere to the principles of the hundred thousand medical treatises by the seer Atreya and other authors.

All of these schools accept the four Vedas as authoritative: *The Sama-veda* for bringing people joy, *The Atharvaveda* for ensuring victory for one's faction, *The Yajurveda* for ensuring benefit in the present and in future lives, and *The Rigveda* for attaining a more sublime goal. This system is referred to as that of the Worshipers of Vishnu, the Worshipers of Brahma, or the Followers of the Vedas.

4. THE JAIN SYSTEM

As for the fourth system, that of the Jains, according to the great and divine Jina:⁴⁸

Life force, exhaustion, restraint,⁴⁹
delight, death, karma,
evil, merit, and liberation:
all objects of knowledge are defined by the categories denoted by
these nine terms.

Those who profess to follow the principles set forth in *The Vision of Adornment* maintain that liberation has color and shape, and that plants are sentient (because, they say, plants die by withering away if the leaves are cut and or by drying up if the bark is stripped off).

In this system, one adopts the ideal of conduct explained by
the holy Jina:

If one's body is burned out of faith in the goddess Durga,
thousand-eyed Indra holds this to be the highest victory.

If one is decapitated during an eclipse,

Karna maintains that one will attain the state of Brahma.

To die from binding or burning oneself, or some other form
of self-mortification,

is said by Jina to be liberation.

This system is referred to as that of the Followers of Jina, [35b] the Proponents of Nine Categories, or the Naked Ascetics.

5. THE BARHASPATYA SYSTEM

The fifth system expounds a view of nihilism. There was one known as Devaguru (Guru of the Gods), who, after gaining spiritual accomplishment in the Trayastrimsha heaven under the tutelage of Brihaspati, taught Sanskrit grammar to Indra.⁵⁰ While the demigods were waging battle against the gods, the latter, fearing the karmic consequences of their actions, began losing the will to fight. At some point, so that the gods would be victorious in the conflict, Devaguru composed a treatise entitled *The Essence of View*, in which he refuted all beliefs in previous or future rebirths, the karmic process of cause and effect, liberation, and freedom. This view was eventually disseminated in the human realm by Valmiki, who stated that there are no past or future lifetimes:

Good lady, enjoy yourself until you die,
for nothing is experienced after death.
When the body has become like dust,
how can there be rebirth?⁵¹

He also denied the existence of beings other than those the eye can see:

As many as fall within the domain of the senses,
there is that number of beings and only that many.

He denied all traditional systems of learning:

Alas! What the very learned have to say
is deceptive, like a wolf's tracks.⁵²

He denied that buddhahood was the result of following a spiritual path:

Consciousness is predicated on the body,
results from the body, and is an attribute of the body.
Thus, because of this threefold situation,
it is not possible to achieve anything through personal cultivation.

He denied valid cognition: [36a]

Because one is caught in speculation, there can be no valid
cognition.

He denied causality, which involves something creating something else:

Who made the stamens of a lotus?
Who drew the patterns on a peacock?

Who sharpened the tips of thorns?

These are all without cause, coming about through their own essence.

.

The rising of the sun, the downhill flow of water,
the roundness of peas, the length and sharpness of thorns,
the beauty of a peacock's variegated feathers,
and the loveliness of a princess:
these are not made by anyone; they come about through their own essence.

This system professes that the cause of things is their own essence and that things occur simply in a transitory way, like mushrooms springing up in a meadow. It maintains that the soul, pleasure, and pain exist until one dies, but with death this continuum is cut off. The adherents of this system are called the Followers of Brihaspati, the Charvakas (Materialists), or the Hedonists.

If we analyze the traditions of non-Buddhist systems, we find that there are 360 incorrect views; there are 120 variations each of the extremes of realism, nihilism, and the two extremes taken together, which gives a total of 360. But if we condense these, there are sixty-two, and even more concisely, there are two incorrect views: those of realism and nihilism. *The Compendium* states:

Just as believing the perishable aggregates to be real is included among the sixty-two views, . . .

Of these views, twenty entail realism, twenty entail nihilism, and twenty-two entail both. For a more extensive treatment, one can refer to *The Unfolding of Timeless Awareness* and the sutra *The Net of Brahma*. In setting forth my analysis here, [36b] I had actually considered formulating a refutation of each of these so that the reader might realize that they are inferior paths and therefore not follow them; but I feared becoming too wordy and so have not elaborated.

B. Buddhist Systems

Now, my detailed analysis of Buddhist systems of thought has two aspects: the ways in which they are superior to non-Buddhist systems and an extensive analysis of the systems themselves.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF BUDDHIST SYSTEMS

A Buddhist is someone who holds the Three Jewels as sacred sources of refuge and accepts the four axioms that define Buddhist doctrine.⁵³ Anyone who does not accept these is not a Buddhist.

a. The Hinayana Concept of the Three Jewels

As for defining the Three Jewels as sources of refuge, the Hinayana approach considers the buddha to be a sublime emanation such as Shakyamuni; the dharma to be embodied in scripture and realization; and the sangha to comprise shravakas and pratyekabuddhas—that is, beings who are involved in any of the four stages of entrance and the three stages of dwelling (the stage of dwelling in the fruition state of an arhat is said to be included within the jewel of the buddha). The “four stages of entrance” are entrance into the stage of a stream winner, a once returner, a non-returner, and an arhat.⁵⁴ The “three stages of dwelling” are dwelling in the fruition state of a stream winner, a once returner, and a nonreturner.⁵⁵

b. The Mahayana Concept of the Three Jewels

According to the Mahayana approach, the buddha is the totality of the three kayas; the dharma encompasses scriptural transmission (contained in the sutras and tantras) and the realization of one’s self-knowing timeless awareness (including the views, states of meditative absorption, and so forth associated with stages such as those of development and completion); and the sangha is made up of bodhisattvas, masters of awareness, and other spiritually advanced beings (other than buddhas) whose nature is such that they are on the paths of learning and no more learning.

These Three Jewels function as sources of refuge in two ways: as causal factors and as resultant states. [37a] Just as someone with a destination in mind may request safe conduct, taking refuge in the causal sense means to take refuge by regarding the buddha as the teacher, the dharma as the path, and the sangha as companions while one traverses that path. Taking refuge in the resultant sense means to take refuge while focusing on the fruition—what these three objects of refuge embody—which one will experience in the future.⁵⁶ So these are ways of referring to two frames of reference, of causal factors and their fruition. For an extensive treatment of these topics, one can consult my treatise *The Su-*

preme Chariot of Definitive Meaning, where I have provided a definitive discussion.⁵⁷

The four axioms that define Buddhist doctrine are as follows: Everything compounded is impermanent; everything that is corruptible produces suffering;⁵⁸ all phenomena are empty and have no independent nature; and nirvana is the state of peace.

All that is compounded—every phenomenon produced through causes and conditions—is impermanent. Things are called impermanent because they are produced in the present moment but do not endure into the second moment. *Didactic Aphorisms* states:

Alas! Compounded things are impermanent.⁵⁹

Phenomena that are characterized as being of samsara—that is, corruptible—do not transcend the natural cause-and-effect process of suffering:

Those things that are subject to deterioration
involve afflictive states and formative factors that lead to
suffering.

To elaborate, samsara is a state of suffering. [37b] *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya* states:

Hell beings are afflicted by the fires of hell.
Spirits are afflicted by hunger and thirst.
Animals are afflicted by the predation of one species on another.
Human beings are afflicted by restless searching.
Demigods are afflicted by conflict and quarreling.
Gods are afflicted as a result of their heedlessness.
In samsara, there is never even
a pinpoint's worth of happiness.

None of the phenomena included in the universe of appearances and possibilities, whether samsara or nirvana, have an identity, because they have no independent nature of their own. *The Commentary on Awakening Mind* explains:

Just as heat is the ordinary nature of fire,
and sweetness the ordinary nature of cane sugar,
so also the true nature of all phenomena
is said to be emptiness.

Nirvana is a state of cessation, or peace. According to *Didactic Aphorisms*:

Therefore, attaining a state of peace is happiness.⁶⁰

Moreover, *An Account of Rebirth in the House of Iron* states:

Although I heard the teachings of the dharma, which lead to the peace of nirvana, I did not put them into practice.

These axioms are discussed in all Buddhist spiritual approaches.

2. AN ANALYSIS OF BUDDHIST SYSTEMS

My extensive analysis of the individual approaches has two parts: the cause-based dialectical approaches and the fruition-based secret mantra approach.⁶¹

The Cause-Based Approaches

My two-part discussion of the cause-based approaches will include a general analysis of the philosophical systems and a detailed analysis of how their paths are followed.⁶²

Philosophical Systems

First, there are two major approaches: the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

(a) THE HINAYANA APPROACH

There are, roughly speaking, three main philosophical systems in the Hinayana approach.

(i) *The Vatsiputriya System*

As to the system of the Vatsiputriyas (Followers of Vatsiputra), [38a] when the Buddha was about to pass into nirvana, a teacher of the tradition of Naked Ascetics approached him. With the words, "Come here," the Buddha ordained him and he became a shravaka. This teacher, Vatsiputra, then asked the Buddha whether the individual self is the same as the mind-body aggregates, or distinct from them, or both, or neither.⁶³ The Buddha's answer was to say nothing at all, which Vatsiputra interpreted to mean that the self does exist but is indescribable. Although he had em-

braced the dharma, he accepted the existence of an indescribable self, for his view was tainted by a form of extremism.

The source texts of this system maintain that the entity of the self is the agent that carries out all positive and negative actions, experiences the results (whether desired or not), which are its own creations, and casts off the mind-body aggregates of one life and takes up those of the next. They hold that this self is not eternal, because former lives are left behind and later ones are taken up. However, they also maintain that it is not impermanent, because the self that has committed actions in this life has already experienced doing so, and the self in a future life will still experience the results of those actions, which it did not commit. These two selves in fact constitute a single self. It is this self that experiences the playing out of karmic results, which are thereby "exhausted," but will continue to experience those that are "not yet exhausted." The Vatsiputriyas hold that since the agent receiving, or undergoing, the experience is the same as the self, it cannot be impermanent. Therefore, they say that "self" is what exists as one's sense of identity, not describable in any way whatsoever, as eternal or impermanent.

Their position is not a sound one. [38b] In fact, it is untenable, because their refutation of this "self" being some permanent thing does not constitute proof that it is some impermanent thing; their refutation of its being some impermanent thing depends on the proof of its being some permanent thing. And how is it possible for something to be neither eternal nor impermanent?⁶⁴

(ii) The Vaibhashika System

The shravaka adherents of the system of Vaibhashikas (Proponents of Distinct Substantial Entities) believe that there are five bases of the knowable, which are different kinds of substantial entities:⁶⁵ the bases of form, bases of mind, bases of mental states, distinct formative factors, and uncompounded phenomena.⁶⁶

Bases of Form

The first group includes forms that are visible and physically obstructive:⁶⁷ these constitute the obvious matter produced by the combination of minute indivisible particles of earth, water, fire, and air (particles that are ultimately real entities), with space intervening between them.⁶⁸

Forms that are not visible but are obstructive include the five sense faculties (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile) and sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile sensations.⁶⁹ Forms that are neither visible nor obstructive (which extend throughout the body like a fire spreading through a forest) are subsumed under the headings of ordination, the antithesis of ordination, and partial cases.⁷⁰

Of the minute indivisible particles, moreover, those in the external world are of eight kinds: particles of the four elements and particles of color, odor, taste, and tactile sensation. The tactile faculty of the body involves these eight and a ninth kind of particle, that of the tactile faculty itself. The other sense faculties (such as the visual faculty), in addition to the foregoing nine kinds of particles, involve a tenth, that of the respective faculty.⁷¹

For the Vaibhashikas, even though one attempts to do away with these minute particles by reducing them physically or deconstructing them with logic, the mental concept of such particles is not eliminated. [39a] The Vaibhashikas take this continuity to be characteristic of the ultimate level of truth and so consider these particles ultimately real entities.⁷² As for more obvious kinds of matter, by reducing them physically and analyzing their components, one eliminates one's mental concept of them; for the Vaibhashikas, this is characteristic of the relative level of truth, and so these are only relatively real things. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

The mind is no longer occupied with
what has been eliminated when reduced and evaluated by the
mind.

As with a vase or water, there is existence on the relative level;⁷³
the ultimately existent is otherwise.⁷⁴

Bases of Mind

The bases of mind are the six avenues of consciousness: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and the coordinating mental faculty.⁷⁵ When the five sense faculties perceive their five kinds of objects, the five respective sense consciousnesses cognize these objects;⁷⁶ consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty ascertains past and future and analyzes entities in detail. The sense consciousnesses do not perceive their objects,⁷⁷ because it would then follow that they would perceive something even if it were obstructed, since consciousness is unimpeded. According to the same source:

It is the vision, along with its physical support, that perceives forms,⁷⁸ and not the consciousness based on that faculty. Why? Because when they are obstructed, forms are not perceived; that is their opinion.⁷⁹

Bases of Mental States

There are fifty-one bases of mental states:

contact, focus, sensation, discernment, and attention;⁸⁰ intention, interest, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and understanding;⁸¹ faith, self-respect, modesty, absence of attachment, absence of aversion, absence of ignorance, diligence, total pliancy, conscientiousness, impartiality, and absence of malice;⁸² [39b] desire, anger, pride, ignorance, belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates, and doubt;⁸³ hatred, resentment, hypocrisy, spite, pretense, deception, envy, avarice, arrogance, malice, lack of self-respect, immodesty, lethargy, agitation, lack of faith, laziness, heedlessness, forgetfulness, distractedness, and inattentiveness;⁸⁴ regret, drowsiness, conceptualization, and analysis.⁸⁵

These mental states exhibit a fivefold congruence with respect to the consciousness that is their primary factor.⁸⁶ There is a congruence of reference, in that the consciousness and the mental state are engaged with the same object. There is a congruence of data, in that they ascertain similar data. There is a congruence of time frame, in that they function at the same time. There is a congruence of support, in that they depend on the same faculty as the governing factor. And there is a congruence of substance; just as no more than one visual consciousness functions for a single individual at any one time, no more than one of any given mental state (such as contact) attendant on that consciousness can come about.⁸⁷

When consciousness observes the perceived object of a given faculty, it cognizes that object; similarly, the mental states cognize the specific details of the object. Although the data of an object do not arise directly in either the mind or the mental state, [40a] the latter invariably function simultaneously in the dualistic encounter between a perceived object and a perceiving subject.⁸⁸ The Vaibhashikas profess that both mind and men-

tal states constitute consciousness of the external world, but not that they constitute “reflexive consciousness.”⁸⁹

Distinct Formative Factors

The following are distinct formative factors:⁹⁰ acquisition, the meditative stability of a state of cessation, the meditative stability of a trance state, the trance state itself, the faculty of life force, production, deterioration, duration, impermanence, groups of words, groups of phrases, groups of letters, the ordinary state of being, continuity, differentiation, correspondence, connection, number, sequence, location, time, and grouping.⁹¹ These are considered substantial entities that are distinct from those in the three previous categories of form, mind, and mental states.

Nine phenomena exist in the realm of the future:⁹² any given compounded phenomenon, production, deterioration, duration, impermanence, production of production, deterioration of deterioration, duration of duration, and impermanence of impermanence.⁹³ The production of production functions such that it initiates production, and production causes eight phenomena to occur in the realm of the present: the compounded phenomenon itself, deterioration, duration, impermanence, and the four phenomena of the production of production and so forth.⁹⁴ Then, with nine phenomena existing in the realm of the present, the impermanence of impermanence functions such that it leads to impermanence, and impermanence causes eight phenomena—the compounded phenomenon itself, its production, deterioration, and duration, and the production of production and the rest—to be relegated to the realm of the past. Because the three times are substantially existent, these entities never cease to exist, as is explained:

These entail the production of production and so forth;
this makes eight phenomena plus one.⁹⁵ [40b]

The Vaibhashikas consider that so far as an object moving into another time frame is concerned,⁹⁶ the transfer is that of its function being taken up by another object, but for them this does not constitute the arising or cessation of the compounded phenomenon itself.⁹⁷ They posit that when actions (positive or otherwise) are committed, there is acquisition (that is, what they call “a substantial entity that ensures accountability”). For them, acquisition is not a matter of habit patterns being established in the mind.⁹⁸ Furthermore, moral failings and their antidotes

and so forth are cases of acquisition steadily increasing; the attainment of the fruition, then, does not constitute the exhaustion of mental habit patterns,⁹⁹ but rather the incorruptible state of “acquiring” an absence, as the development of overt afflictive states from more subtle ones has come to an end.¹⁰⁰

Uncompounded Phenomena

There are three uncompounded phenomena: space (that is, the absence of any tactile sensation), the cessation of consciousness owing to discernment (an absence that comes about through the application of an antidote),¹⁰¹ and the cessation of consciousness independent of discernment (in which something does not happen, because its necessary conditions are incomplete).¹⁰² For the Vaibhashikas, what is incorruptible are these three uncompounded phenomena, plus consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty when it is focused on the truth of the path, as well as all that is associated with that consciousness.¹⁰³ Everything else is corruptible. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

Phenomena are either corruptible or incorruptible.
Compounded phenomena (other than the path)
are termed “corruptible.”¹⁰⁴

.

What is incorruptible is the truth of the path,
as are the three kinds of uncompounded phenomena:
space and the two kinds of cessation.¹⁰⁵

This system does accept the axioms that nirvana is peace and that all that is corruptible produces suffering, but as implied by the foregoing explanations, it does not adequately address the axioms that no phenomenon has an identity and that all that is compounded is impermanent.¹⁰⁶

A Refutation of the Vaibhashika Position

This system’s position cannot be defended as a correct interpretation, [41a] for three reasons:¹⁰⁷ the assertion that minute particles are ultimately real entities is untenable; the assertion that mind and mental states do not involve reflexive consciousness is untenable; and this system’s position on distinct formative factors is untenable.¹⁰⁸

First, the Vaibhashikas maintain that obvious kinds of matter are formed from central particles surrounded by other particles in the ten di-

rections.¹⁰⁹ Suppose this were so; given that a central particle would be facing all of the particles in the ten directions around it, either the portion of the surface of the central particle that faced the particle to the east would also face all of the particles located in the other directions, or each portion of the surface of the central particle would face the particle located in its respective direction. In the first case, no matter how many particles were amassed, they would have to share the same location, facing the portion of the surface of the central particle that faced the particle or particles to the east of it. Since they would all converge at the same location (that of the particle to the east), it would not be feasible for them to form any more developed object. In the second case, given the relationship between the central particle and the particle to the east of it, the central particle would have at least two aspects—for example, the portion of its surface that faced the eastern particle and another portion that did not—so it is not feasible that this particle would be indivisible and thus an ultimately real entity.

Second, given that the Vaibashikas do not accept that there is a reflexive function of consciousness, according to them what cognizes the objects of consciousness could not be cognized by consciousness itself.¹¹⁰ This in turn would mean that objects to be cognized (visual forms and so forth) would not be cognized. This would be analogous to the following: Because an invisible spirit cannot be seen in the first place, its specific sensory attributes cannot be seen.¹¹¹

Third, if production, deterioration, duration, and impermanence were something other than the compounded phenomena they affect, [41b] this would mean that these phenomena themselves were without production, without duration, without deterioration, and permanent. The proof of this would lie in the Vaibhashikas' own contradictions.¹¹²

(iii) The Sautrantika System

The shravaka adherents of the system of the Sautrantikas (Followers of the Sutras) are for the most part in agreement with the main principles of the Vaibhashika system, with the following exceptions.

Bases of Form

With respect to the bases of form explained earlier, a specific Sautrantika tenet concerns what are termed “indiscernible forms,” which include

things such as the continuity of an attitude of renunciation.¹¹³ The Sautrantikas hold that these are not forms, but are classified as such because they come about as a result of something that has form and depend on something that has form as their support.¹¹⁴ As for other bases of form, the Sautrantikas hold that the sense faculties are subtle forms that serve as the governing conditions for consciousness and that sense objects are the referential conditions, because they present data to the sense consciousnesses.¹¹⁵ The Sautrantikas maintain that obvious kinds of matter are formed by the amassing of indivisible particles that converge without actually being in contact with one another.

Bases of Mind and Mental States

For the Sautrantikas, among the bases of mind and mental states, the five sense consciousnesses and their attendant mental states take the five kinds of sense objects (visual forms and so forth) as their frame of reference, but do not actually perceive these five kinds of objects. Instead, the situation is similar to that of a person's face presenting an image identical to itself in a mirror. Data that resemble the object present themselves in the second moment of the process of mind becoming conscious of an object.¹¹⁶ In any current moment, the imperceptible object having presented its data in the previous moment, those data, which resemble the object itself, now arise in that current moment.¹¹⁷ As for the future moment, the object that presented its data for the current moment presents those data for the next moment.¹¹⁸ The data of the object arise in consciousness, [42a] which experiences something that resembles the object; this is conventionally termed "cognizing the object." *The Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition* states:

The experience of sense data that resemble the object is described as "consciousness experiencing an object."¹¹⁹

Thus, the Sautrantikas hold that consciousness entails sense data:

For those who maintain that consciousness entails sense data, two aspects are in fact distinct from one another.¹²⁰ But given that there is something that serves as a kind of reflection of the object, it is feasible for the object to be sensed in a nominally valid way.¹²¹

As for one being conscious of an object, the phrase “consciousness of an object” indicates that a sense object is being taken as consciousness’s frame of reference. But given that such states of consciousness entail the experience of a lucid, reflexive quality in the very moment, consciousness experiences itself, which is also a valid function of consciousness.¹²² This is explained as follows:

Given that consciousness experiences itself clearly,
the manifestation of something resembling an object is the
mental image.

Therefore, consciousness, which itself experiences all mental
images,
remains distinct from the objects.¹²³

As for the appearance of two moons and so forth, although the image of a double moon arises in one’s consciousness, the Sautrantikas call this an “error,” because externally there do not exist two moons presenting their respective images.¹²⁴ They do not say that this is an error as a result of sense objects being false.¹²⁵

As for consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty and its attendant mental states, they maintain that direct perception by the mind occurs in the second moment after an object is perceived by the consciousness associated with a given faculty (that is, when the data present themselves, and the object in question is perceived because of the data that resemble it).¹²⁶

Images of horses, elephants, and so forth may appear in dreams; and generic ideas (which lack such distinctions as time, location, and nature) may appear in the conceptual mode of mind in an imprecise way.¹²⁷ These appearances are in essence consciousness, [42b] but they constitute error, for there is no corresponding external thing presenting its data. For the Sautrantikas, all states of consciousness that involve precise experience and reflexive consciousness are without error.¹²⁸

Distinct Formative Factors

As for distinct formative factors, the Sautrantikas hold that these are contexts involving form, mind, and mental states (just as making a fist is the context in which the hand is clenched), and so they do not consider these factors to be substantial entities that are distinct from those of these three categories.¹²⁹

Among these factors, “acquisition” refers to the context in which habit patterns become established in the mind. The three states of meditative stability are contexts in which there is a body wherein mind and mental states are arrested.¹³⁰ The “faculty of life force” refers to the context in which form, mind, and mental states share a commonality; “similarity” refers to the context in which these three categories exhibit similarities. “Production” refers to the context in which there is acquisition of these three categories where they did not exist previously; “deterioration” refers to the context of change in these three; “duration” refers to the context of these three continuing; and “impermanence” refers to the context in which the continuity of these three is interrupted. The “ordinary state of being” refers to the context in which these three remain unaffected so long as one has not acquired the attributes of a spiritually advanced being. “Continuity” and so forth refer to contexts of causality that involve these three categories.¹³¹ The three groups of words and so forth refer to contexts involving linguistic conventions.¹³²

Uncompounded Phenomena

For the Sautrantikas, the three types of uncompounded phenomena do not exist as substantial entities, for they are as utterly nonexistent as the son of a barren woman. [43a]

A Refutation of the Sautrantika Position

The Sautrantika position is untenable, for six reasons:¹³³ it is untenable to assert that external objects are ultimately real; it is untenable to assert that obvious forms of matter that manifest have the same nature as consciousness;¹³⁴ it cannot be proved that there are objects that present sense data; it is untenable to assert that mind is utterly nonexistent during periods of meditative stability; it is untenable to assert that generic ideas are real entities of the perceptual process;¹³⁵ and the specific characteristic of sound cannot constitute an actual expression of meaning.¹³⁶

The first refutation has already been covered in the refutation of the Vaibhashika position.

Second, if obvious forms of matter that manifest were of the same nature as consciousness, how could one refute the statement “Suffering is not a different entity than happiness”?¹³⁷ The Sautrantikas would refute the statement that suffering and happiness are not different by saying,

“We experience them as being different.” The Chittamatrins’ rebuttal would be, “We experience obvious forms of matter that manifest as being different from consciousness. Does this not refute your own position that these are of the same nature as consciousness? This position leads to nothing but contradictions, because a single consciousness would be established to exist externally, so it could not be the inner perceiving agent, and because happiness and suffering could come together at the same time in a single consciousness, with each canceling the other out.”¹³⁸

Third, even though the three conditions necessary for consciousness to perceive visual forms are complete,¹³⁹ if an object that presents its data is inferred through some arbitrary criteria, why couldn’t one just as well prove from such arbitrary criteria in one’s perceptions that there was an invisible spirit at work?¹⁴⁰

Fourth, if the mind were not existent in the body during meditative stability but came into existence again afterward, this would be a case of production without cause,¹⁴¹ since consciousness would have been arrested previously.¹⁴²

Fifth, if generic ideas were real entities of the perceptual process, [43b] this would mean that there would be no sequence to successive moments of consciousness.¹⁴³

Sixth, the specific characteristic of sound is such that it does not manifest as a generic idea and is not apprehended conceptually. If this were not the case, a functioning ear’s hearing of the specific characteristic of sound would lead to the actual occurrence of knowledge (that is, comprehension of the meaning being expressed). The reasoning is as follows: Although sound can serve as a cause for comprehending the meaning being expressed, if one held that it is what expresses the meaning, it would follow logically that even diet or celibacy would be something that expresses meaning.¹⁴⁴ Nor does what is written constitute something that expresses meaning. If it did, it would mean that a functioning eye’s seeing of what was written would lead to the insight that comprehended the meaning being expressed. Therefore, the true definition of “what expresses meaning” is the natural manifestation of word-based ideas, which involve specific factors of connection and familiarity, because it is from these that knowledge actually occurs as comprehension of the meaning being expressed.¹⁴⁵ The term “connection” refers here to an unconfused orderly sequence, while “familiarity” refers to the mind ascertaining this.¹⁴⁶

(b) THE PRATYEKABUDDHA APPROACH

At this point, I will not give the refutation of the pratyekabuddha approach. Aside from its acceptance of a perceiving agent as an ultimately real entity, this approach resembles the Chittamatra system.¹⁴⁷ The shravaka schools accept the nonexistence of any personal identity, but they maintain that minute particles—real entities that are perceived in sense objects—do have ultimate existence.¹⁴⁸ In the pratyekabuddha approach, however, these particles are held to be nonexistent. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* explains this as follows:

... because they have rejected the objects that are perceived
by the conceptualizing mind
and because they have not rejected a perceiving agent.
One should understand that this accurately summarizes [44a]
the path of those who prefer to be solitary, like a rhinoceros.¹⁴⁹

The method by which this path is traversed parallels for the most part that of the shravaka approach, and so is subsumed under that heading. *The Smaller Commentary on "The Ornament of Manifest Realization"* states:

... the shravakas, as well as those included in their category—the pratyekabuddhas, who are one degree superior to them in actual realization ...

Therefore, I have not written here of this approach, since the refutation of its position is entailed in the above refutation of the shravaka schools as well as in the refutation of the Chittamatra system below.

(c) THE MAHAYANA APPROACH

My definitive treatment of the methods found in the Mahayana approach has two parts: an explanation of the way in which this approach is superior to the Hinayana and a detailed analysis.

(i) *The Superiority of the Mahayana Approach*

We read in *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Greatness of scope,
as well as twofold accomplishment,

timeless awareness, the application of diligence,
 every kind of skillful means,
 the supreme accomplishment of what is authentic,
 and the supreme enlightened activity of buddhahood:
 because it is endowed with seven aspects of greatness,
 it is truly called the greater approach.¹⁵⁰

With respect to scope, to make providing for one's own welfare one's ultimate objective is the lesser scope, whereas to be concerned solely with ensuring the welfare of others is the greater scope.

With respect to accomplishment, it is the greater accomplishment to unite the two distinctive qualities of skillful means and sublime knowing, but the lesser accomplishment to be deficient in either or both. *The Compendium* states:

Without skillful means, and lacking sublime knowing, one is reduced to the state of a shravaka.

Furthermore, as *The Precious Garland* indicates:

In the shravaka approach,
 there is no explanation of the bodhisattva's aspiration, conduct,
 or complete dedication of positive actions.
 How could that be the greater approach? [44b]
 In [the Mahayana] approach, through compassion alone
 one continues to be involved in conditioned existence until
 enlightenment.¹⁵¹

With skillful means (which embody compassion) and sublime knowing (where one is not limited to any dualistic framework), one transcends both conditioned existence and mere quiescence. According to *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*:

Because of sublime knowing, one does not remain caught in
 conditioned existence,
 and because of compassion, one does not stagnate in
 quiescence.¹⁵²

With respect to timeless awareness, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas have a lesser degree of awareness. The former realize merely the nonexistence of any personal identity; the latter realize, in addition, only one aspect of the nonexistence of any identity of phenomena (that is, the lack of any independent nature of what are perceived as objects).¹⁵³ The greater

approach is that of bodhisattvas, who realize that everything is devoid of either of the two kinds of identity.

With respect to diligence, the lesser approach is one in which, after a short time, enthusiasm wanes and the welfare of others is ignored. In the greater approach, one exerts oneself for a long period of time with great enthusiasm. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

For the sake of a single positive thought arising in the mind
of another,
one does not despair even after a billion eons.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva* explains:

For the sake of limitless beings and over a long period of time,
the limitless intention to gain the unsurpassable happiness
of a sugata is perfected.
It goes without saying that one must always be generous.¹⁵⁵

In addition, as the previously cited source, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, indicates:

When carrying heavy burdens on their heads for the sake of
beings,
it is inappropriate for sublime bodhisattvas to dally.
Since you and others are thoroughly constrained by numerous
feters,
it is only fitting that you exert yourself a hundredfold.¹⁵⁶

With respect to skillful means, in the lesser approach one seeks a state of mere quiescence for oneself alone; the greater approach is the opposite of this. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states: [45a]

There are shravakas seeking mere quiescence, who are led by all-
knowing awareness to thorough pacification,¹⁵⁷
and there are those who benefit beings by ensuring the good of
the world through their knowledge of the path.¹⁵⁸

With respect to accomplishment, a limited state of mere quiescence is the lesser achievement, whereas the supreme nirvana that transcends such extremes is the greater achievement. We read in *Advice Similar to a Treasure Chest of Precious Jewels*:

Remaining in a limited state of mere quiescence, they become
completely peaceful in basic space.

More exalted than these lesser individuals are those who attain the nirvana that transcends such extremes, for they ensure benefit through the spontaneous accomplishment of the welfare of both self and others.

This is the most excellent wish fulfillment, involving the display of a treasure trove of everything desirable, without exception.¹⁵⁹

With respect to enlightened activity, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas remain quiescent in basic space, and so benefit for others does not ensue. According to the same source:

With the mind's activity dissolving into an isolated state of mere quiescence, there is no thought for the welfare of others.

In the Mahayana approach, once one has awakened to buddhahood, one acts to ensure benefit until samsara is emptied. The previously cited source, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, states:

Thus, it is held that enlightened activity is uninterrupted as long as samsara lasts.¹⁶⁰

As well, *The Two Sections* explains:

Where there is a great degree of sublime knowing and compassion, this is the greater approach; where there is a small degree, it is the lesser approach.

Moreover, as the tantra *The Complete Display of Timeless Awareness* indicates:

Compassion, which focuses on beings, and sublime knowing, which embraces the basic space of phenomena: these are explained to be the greater approach. Other approaches fall short of this. [45b]

(ii) *A Detailed Analysis of the Mahayana Approach*

Although there are many texts that expound the opinions of various masters, presenting particular analyses and syntheses, here I will discuss the two major traditions: the Yogachara (Practitioners of Yoga), or Chittamatra (Mind Only), system and the Madhyamaka (Superior) system.¹⁶¹

The Chittamatra System

My discussion of the first major tradition, the Chittamatra, has two parts: its general and specific tenets.¹⁶²

General Chittamatra Tenets

Chittamatrins hold that all that is knowable is subsumed under three headings: imputation, dependence, and the absolute.

IMPUTATION

Imputation is here defined as the mind assigning and describing things in terms of categories.¹⁶³ If we analyze this, we find that there is “purely theoretical imputation,” which concerns things that may be perceived clearly but are nonexistent (like the image of two moons, which is nonexistent in actuality yet can be described in conventional terms), as well as things such as “identity.”

In addition, there is “imputation involving categories,” which includes all manner of systematic and detailed analyses, and all that can be labeled in terms of letters, words, and phrases.¹⁶⁴ These ways of analyzing things—beginning with categories such as words and their underlying meaning, or the expressions of meaning and the meaning thus expressed, up to and including categories such as the mind-body aggregates, the components of perception, and so forth—are conceptual elaborations imposed by the ordinary mind. They are thus imputed, in that they serve as means to bring about understanding, without there necessarily being any connection between them and the objects being analyzed.

DEPENDENCE

Dependence has two aspects.¹⁶⁵ First, “impure dependence” pertains to the myriad specific manifestations that constitute the animate and inanimate universe, arising because of mind’s myriad habit patterns; these manifestations include sense objects, perception, and one’s physical embodiment. Here the term “sense objects” refers to the five kinds of objects (visual forms and so forth). “Perception” refers to the eight avenues of consciousness—that is, consciousness that is established as fields for sensory experience as a result of other conditions. [46a] “Physical embodiment” refers to the mind-body aggregates that perpetuate samsara.¹⁶⁶

These manifestations are classified as dependent by virtue of the fact that they are dependent on other conditions, namely, karma and habit patterns.

Second, “pure dependence” pertains to utterly pure realms of experience, aspects of timeless awareness, and so forth.¹⁶⁷ These are considered dependent in that they rely on circumstances that are conditioned by the power of obscurations being purified.¹⁶⁸

THE ABSOLUTE

The absolute also has two aspects.¹⁶⁹ First, there is “the unchanging absolute”—that is, the way of abiding, the ultimate ground of all experience, the basic space of phenomena that is utterly lucid by its very nature, “buddha nature.” We read in *The Highest Continuum*:

... as it was before, so it is later on—
unchanging suchness itself.¹⁷⁰

According to *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Although there is no difference between some earlier state
and any later one,
still, suchness has become “purified.”¹⁷¹

Moreover, the sutra *The Dense Array of Adornment* states:

With the term “ground of all experience,” that essence
has been very aptly labeled.

Overlying this is a nonrecognition of awareness that has no beginning and acts as the foundation of all afflictive states. It is this aspect, undifferentiated in any sense and therefore ethically neutral, that is termed “the basis of all ordinary experience that supports a multiplicity of habit patterns.”¹⁷² It is in essence nonconceptual and does not involve conscious perception of sense objects. If one becomes habituated to this state, one’s karma will be such that it will propel one toward rebirth in the realm of formlessness.

However, some Chittamatrins (those who accept a flawless ground) include the foregoing support for habit patterns within the coordinating mental faculty (since they consider this support to be identical to the nonconceptual mode of consciousness that is this faculty).¹⁷³ They do not maintain that there is something such as a basis of all ordinary experi-

ence. [46b] They do, however, accept that there is an ultimate ground of all experience.

For them, consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience is lucid consciousness that has not differentiated into the coordinating mental faculty or any of the five sense consciousnesses.¹⁷⁴ As a result of one's habituation to this state, one's karma will propel one toward rebirth in the realm of form. These Chittamatrins who hold the "flawless" position take this aspect—consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience—to be the basis for differentiated avenues of consciousness. They say that it constitutes ethically neutral consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty.

Evolving from it are the five sense consciousnesses (visual consciousness and so forth). These are categorized as five from the standpoint of the individual sense faculties that cause sense data to arise to inner consciousness—data that are similar to those that manifest in the external world—but Chittamatrins hold that the agent of experience is simply a state of reflexive consciousness that is naturally lucid, without the duality of objects and the subjective agent perceiving those objects.¹⁷⁵ For them, consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty is consciousness that is produced in the wake of the five sense faculties and experiences objects that are both external and internal phenomena. They use the term "the afflictive aspect of consciousness" to refer to the process of investigation that gives rise to any of three reactions—attraction, aversion, or indifference—which then arise as afflictive states such as the three (or five) "mental poisons."¹⁷⁶

Those Chittamatrins who posit the nonduality of mind and its myriad perceptions combine two modes of consciousness: consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty and the afflictive aspect of consciousness; they thus accept seven avenues of consciousness, including the basis of all ordinary experience.¹⁷⁷ In their source texts, they posit that mind consists of consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience, together with its attendant factors, the five nonconceptual sense consciousnesses. They hold that the coordinating mental faculty is consciousness that is produced in the wake of these sense consciousnesses, together with its attendant mental states—that is, the fifty-one states that involve the conception of "I" and "mine":

Mind—this is consciousness as the basis of all ordinary
experience. [4-a]

The coordinating mental faculty—this is conceiving in terms of an “I.”

This also accords with the explanation in *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

Immediately after the six have ceased,
the consciousness that follows is the coordinating mental
faculty.¹⁷⁸

For example, when one sees a lily, it is possible to be simultaneously conscious of the sound of bees, the scent and texture of the flower, and the taste of something. This, the Chittamatrins say, is because these sense objects are perceived in a single moment of the five nonconceptual sense consciousnesses. For them the bare, lucid aspect of such nonconceptual consciousness at that point constitutes consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience.¹⁷⁹ When joy or sorrow occurs in the moment that there is awareness of sense objects, this is experienced as a process of conceptualization and mental investigation.¹⁸⁰ Once the nonconceptual yet lucid and perceptual mode of consciousness (the five sense consciousnesses and a sixth avenue, consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience) has ceased, there is an aspect of a perceiving agent—that is, the conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty. This arises moment by moment and does not continue into a second moment. That is, the idiom “the cessation of the six” refers to the shift from the nonconceptual to the conceptual mode; in actuality, however, the sense consciousnesses, together with consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience, continue undiminished as individual facets, or aspects.¹⁸¹ The function of seeing a form is always that of visual consciousness, which is in essence nonconceptual; one should understand that the same principle applies to the perceiving of sounds and the other sense objects.

Second, “the unerring absolute” is the incorruptible spiritual path, together with its fruition, because one proceeds authentically and does not regress once the destination has been reached.¹⁸²

These topics, together with supporting scriptural quotations, are presented in more detail in my work *The Supreme Chariot*. [47b]

Specific Chittamatra Tenets

To delineate the specific tenets of the Chittamatra system, these concern five bases of the knowable: bases of form, bases of mind, bases of mental states, situational paradigms (which are variations of the above three),

and uncompounded phenomena.¹⁸³ How these tenets are set forth is represented by two groups: Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data and those who consider it to be devoid of sense data.¹⁸⁴

CHITTAMATRINS WHO CONSIDER CONSCIOUSNESS TO ENTAIL SENSE DATA

Bases of Form For those Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data, the bases of form (that is, things that manifest as forms in one's perception) come about as a result of mind and mental states, arising as the sense data of forms out of ingrained habit patterns; they are not substantial entities distinct from consciousness. The five kinds of sense objects (visual forms and so forth) that manifest as they do, and even things like a double moon that are known to be fictitious, constitute the five sense consciousnesses, together with their attendant mental states, manifesting as such objects. Even dream images of horses, elephants, and so forth result from a confused state of nonconceptual consciousness, together with its attendant mental states, manifesting as such images.

Generic and word-based ideas, moreover, constitute the conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty, together with its attendant mental states, manifesting as generic ideas. Even though, in actuality, moments of consciousness are essentially discrete, the use of the term "generic" amounts to a reference to there being data that are common to many objects on which consciousness fixates.¹⁸⁵

As for deceptive appearances that seem to manifest to the sense faculties, as well as sensory appearances that manifest as the inanimate universe, those Chittamatrins who accept the basis of all ordinary experience accept that these appearances constitute that basis itself and its attendant factors, manifesting as such appearances.¹⁸⁶ [48a] Those who do not accept this basis hold that these appearances constitute the non-conceptual mode of the coordinating mental faculty (which is an uninterrupted continuum), together with its attendant mental states, manifesting as such appearances.

Bases of Mind The Chittamatra interpretations of the bases of mind are represented by three groups: those who hold that consciousness truly exists in multiple states, those who maintain that these multiple states truly exist as a single consciousness, and those who posit that there is but one avenue of consciousness.¹⁸⁷

Those of the first group, the master Shakyamati and others, say that there are bases of mind such as multicolored objects, and for each of their colors, moreover, there are many components, and so on, down to a multiplicity of particles.¹⁸⁸ Although the states of visual consciousness (which are of an identical nature with these bases) are likewise multiple, there is a single state of consciousness that perceives each object. Similarly, in the case of the auditory consciousness and the rest, there are innumerable subdivisions, so that the single thing called “consciousness” has countless variations.¹⁸⁹

Those of the second group, Chittamatrins who posit the nonduality of mind and its myriad perceptions, say that just as there is no contradiction involved in consciousness perceiving an object,¹⁹⁰ there is no contradiction in perceptions of multiple sensory appearances being valid in a single consciousness. Although multiple colors manifest, they are nonetheless expressions of a single visual consciousness, and so multiple states of visual consciousness do not occur in a single individual. Similarly, auditory consciousness and the other sense consciousnesses do not occur as multiple things of like nature, but as single things of like nature.¹⁹¹ And given that multiple things of dissimilar nature do not occur, these Chittamatrins hold that there are six avenues—that is, the five consciousnesses associated with the five senses, plus consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty.¹⁹² Even when the conceptual mode of this coordinating faculty has been interrupted, it is still present in a nonconceptual mode, [48b] and so the coordinating mental faculty abides continuously, for, they say, habit patterns are based within it.

There are also Chittamatrins who posit the nonduality of mind and its myriad perceptions and who hold that there are eight avenues of consciousness.¹⁹³ They believe that the six avenues—that is, the five sense consciousnesses plus consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty—are arrested when one is unconscious, is intoxicated, falls into a deep sleep, or is in a state of meditative equipoise, and so are nonexistent for the time being. As is explained in *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes*:

In addition to sleep and unconsciousness, states in which mind
is not existent
are the two states of meditative equipoise
and states in which there is a continuous absence of
perceptions.¹⁹⁴

Because these avenues are unstable, involving a process of emerging and subsiding, the basis of habit patterns, according to these Chittama-trins, is consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience. For them, this basis is in essence unobscured and ethically neutral.¹⁹⁵ It is characterized as consciousness that serves as the basis for all karmic potential.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, it functions without expressing itself in any perceptible way whatsoever, and entails the five integral factors of contact and the rest (of which the factor of sensation is one of indifference) and only vague impressions.¹⁹⁷ This basis functions in an uninterrupted way, like the flow of a river, until the vajra-like state of meditative absorption has become evident.¹⁹⁸ Once this vajra-like state of absorption has become evident, the basis of all ordinary experience is transformed into the mirror-like aspect of timeless awareness. Within this basis are established the habit patterns that lead to the complete maturation of karma—that is, the ability of the six avenues of consciousness and their attendant mental states (whether they are functioning in a negative mode or in a corruptible positive one) to give rise to a physical body.¹⁹⁹ [49a] In addition to these patterns, by virtue of which there is the ability to produce a body, there are also habit patterns established that produce results in keeping with causes—pat-terns that are either ethically neutral or positive and incorruptible,²⁰⁰ as well as other patterns that are either positive but corruptible or negative. These patterns have the ability to produce results that accord with causes in all such cases; this is the aspect of karmic potential. These Chittama-trins say that the aspect of complete karmic maturation consists of the karmic factors that cause a higher or lower state of rebirth to manifest to a being's five sense faculties (as the initial phase of taking rebirth in a given state) and that propel consciousness (which provides a sense of continuity from one lifetime to another) toward that state.²⁰¹ So they studied the following:²⁰²

Therefore, consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience is the sum total of complete karmic maturation and of karmic potential.

It is involved in the taking of rebirth and the perpetuation of environments.²⁰³

It is consciousness but also involves what is unconscious.²⁰⁴

It is unobstructive, ethically neutral, and entails the five integral factors of contact and the rest (the factor of sensation being one of indifference), and it is eliminated in the state of an arhat.²⁰⁵

Furthermore, they speak of “the afflictive aspect of consciousness.”²⁰⁶ This is inwardly directed, taking the basis of all ordinary experience as its frame of reference and perceiving it to be an “I” or identity; it is obstructive, but ethically neutral. It exhibits congruence with its nine attendant mental states: believing in identity, being deluded with respect to identity, taking pride in identity, and being attached to identity, plus the five integral factors. It has been arrested in the state of an arhat, in states of cessation induced by meditative stability, or in states of meditative equipoise on a transcendent spiritual path; if these states have not been realized, it continues like the flow of a river. [49b] As is explained:

It is self-occurring, abiding in the basis.²⁰⁷

It is called the coordinating mental faculty, for it takes this basis as its frame of reference.

It embodies consciousness and thinking in terms of an “I”—involving such mental states as believing in this identity, being deluded with respect to this identity, taking pride in this identity, and being attached to this identity. Whenever these arise, that is it.

As well, it entails contact and so forth. It is nonexistent for an arhat, nonexistent in a state of cessation induced by meditative stability, and nonexistent on the transcendent spiritual path.

Therefore, these Chittamatrins say that there are eight avenues of consciousness: the six avenues, plus consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience and the afflictive aspect of consciousness.

My discussion of the third group, the Chittamatrins who posit a single avenue of consciousness, has four topics: the way in which consciousness examines objects, the way in which factors to be eliminated are removed with antidotes, the reasoning underlying the ascertainment of a multiplicity of experiences, and a restatement of these topics.

In the first place, according to the bodhisattvas who profess this singularity, a single consciousness engages a multiplicity of sense objects.²⁰⁸ Just as images of the manifold aspects of a sense object—blue and yellow and so forth—arise within a single visual avenue of consciousness, there is no contradiction in the data of a multiplicity of forms, sounds, and so forth arising for a single consciousness per se.²⁰⁹ In a single cognitive act, generic ideas about the specific aspects of an object do not manifest, but there is nothing incongruous about their not manifesting, for the clear

image in the cognizing consciousness is such that all of its specific characteristics are experienced together.²¹⁰ Thus, there is a conceptual component, in that one cognizes the generic ideas about each specific aspect (of blue and so forth), [50a] and a nonconceptual component, in that one experiences the specific characteristics of the perceived object—the clear perception of all the specific aspects together, without exception—without the generic ideas about these aspects manifesting. But there is nothing contradictory about these being substantially the same.²¹¹

In the second place, the expression “an antidote overcomes a factor to be eliminated” pertains to a situation like the contact between fire and ice, in which separate things function such that one thing is undermined and another undermines it (by creating circumstances antagonistic to the former thing’s continuity).²¹² Those Chittamatrins who say that there are eight avenues of consciousness maintain that what is undermined is the aspect of karmic potential in the basis of all ordinary experience, and that the power of what undermines it—the mind, which has become accustomed to the nonexistence of identity—eliminates the ability of this potential to bear fruit.

However, this is not the case here. Rather, when the continuum of something that is youthful becomes that of something older (since the former youthful expression of that very continuum has been replaced), there is the expression “old age overcoming youth.” Similarly, when the continuum of a substantial entity of consciousness (that has an aspect of error) itself becomes consciousness that is unerring, it no longer has the capability to produce error. The expression “an antidote overcomes a factor to be eliminated” thus describes the removal of a previously existing factor to be eliminated by an antidote that occurs at a later time.²¹³

In the third place, one might raise the objection that if there were but one avenue of consciousness, this would contradict one’s experience of a multiplicity of consciousnesses.²¹⁴ But this is not what is held here.²¹⁵ Rather, these Chittamatrins say that it only seems as though there are numerous consciousnesses, since the data of numerous sense objects arise in a single consciousness, which perceives through the numerous avenues of the fields of experience. To use an analogy, this situation is similar to someone being certain that there are numerous monkeys when in fact a single monkey is appearing at numerous windows in a mansion, or to someone assuming that there are many fires when seeing a fire inside a building through windows in the four directions. [50b]

In the fourth place, *Didactic Aphorisms* states:

Whoever tames the mind—which is difficult to tame,
has no physical form, dwells deep within,
ranges far, and acts alone—
this person, I say, is a true brahmin.²¹⁶

Bases of Mental States Two Chittamatra tenets pertain to the bases of mental states: the untenability of the opinion that mind and mental states are not substantially the same, and the belief that they can be proved to be inseparable. The first tenet involves five considerations: the impossibility of establishing a congruence of reference; a contradiction of one's experience; the contradiction of mind and mental states being inseparable, when each perceives certain aspects and not others; the incompatibility between autonomy and dependence; and a refutation of objections.

First, although the mental states discussed previously are substantially the same as mind, some hold that these five states are essentially distinct from the primary factor of consciousness,²¹⁷ but are congruent with the consciousness that is their primary factor through a fivefold congruence.²¹⁸ Some contend that in such a case there can be no congruence of reference, because mind is conceptual but mental states can occur as nonconceptual states, so the primary factor perceives the generic idea, while the attendant states perceive the characteristics specific to the object itself.²¹⁹

Second, if the attendant mental states were conceptual, it would follow that when even just the five integral factors occurred, there would be six conceptual things, and that when many attendant states arose, there would be many substantial entities of consciousness occurring in a single mental continuum.²²⁰ This contradicts common sense, for in fact we do not experience it to be the case.

Third, it could be said, "With visual consciousness, the overall impression of an object is perceived, but the specific features of the object are not, and the primary factor is not perceived by its attendant mental states."²²¹ Thus, according to your position that mind and mental states are substantially the same, [51a] you Chittamatrins may think that there is nothing contradictory about positing things that are substantially the same both perceiving and not perceiving certain aspects, but in fact there is a contradiction."²²²

Fourth, it could be said, "Suppose that the primary factor of mind perceives both an object's essence and its specific features, and that the

attendant mental states perceive both as well.²²³ These circumstances would involve two alternatives, depending on what is or is not perceived. The primary factor perceives the object's essence autonomously, and so one maintains that this primary factor 'perceives the essence.' But since it perceives the object's specific features owing to the influence of its attendant states, one does not maintain that this primary factor 'perceives the specific features.' Because the attendant mental states perceive the object's specific features autonomously, one maintains that these attendant states 'perceive the specific features.' But because they perceive the object's essence owing to the influence of the primary factor of mind, one does not maintain that these attendant states 'perceive the object's essence.'"²²⁴

If the foregoing were in fact the case, one of three alternatives would apply: either the primary factor of mind occurs earlier in time, or the attendant mental states occur earlier, or they occur at the same time.²²⁵ If the first alternative were the case, there could be no congruence of time,²²⁶ and although it would be feasible for the primary factor to perceive the attendant mental states in essence, it would not be feasible for the attendant states to perceive the specific features of the primary factor.²²⁷ If the second alternative were the case, here as well there could be no congruence of time,²²⁸ so that although it would be feasible for the attendant states to perceive the specific features of the primary factor, it would not be feasible for that primary factor to perceive the attendant states in essence.²²⁹ If the third alternative—that mind and mental states occur at the same time—were the case, this single mental act could not entail their relationship of mutual support.²³⁰ The primary factor of mind would be incapable of giving rise to the perception of the essence of these simultaneous attendant states, and the attendant states could not give rise to the perception of the simultaneous primary factor's specific features.

Fifth, it might be said, "Suppose that they do not occur at the same time. [51b] Instead, the primary factor of mind in the previous moment gives rise to the perception of the overall impression of the attendant mental states in the present moment, whereas the attendant states in the previous moment give rise to the perception of the overall impression of the primary factor of mind in the present moment." This cannot be the case.²³¹

Take the case of visual consciousness that occurs as soon as one comes out of a state of meditative stability.²³² Given that consciousness occurs before the attendant mental states have arisen, either it perceives the spe-

cific features or it does not.²³³ If these features are perceived, no distinct factor of consciousness is required for this function,²³⁴ so it is infeasible for the perception of the specific features to be the result of the attendant states. If they are not perceived, this means that although the essence is perceived by the primary factor, the specific features are not, and thus a flaw is entailed, for then there are two modes—of perception and nonperception—in a single perceptual act.

Alternatively, take the case of the attendant mental states of visual consciousness that occur as soon as one comes out of a state of meditative stability. Given that these attendant mental states perceive the specific features, either they also perceive the essence or they do not. If they do perceive it, the essence is perceived even before the primary factor of mind has arisen; no distinct feature of consciousness is required for this function, so it does not follow that the perception of the essence is the result of the preceding primary factor. If they do not perceive it, the attendant states perceive the specific features but not the essence, and so there are two modes—of perception and nonperception—in a single perceptual act.²³⁵

The second Chittamatra tenet pertaining to the bases of mental states is the belief that mind and mental states can be proved to be substantially the same.²³⁶ Given that the primary factor of mind and the attendant mental states are one and the same, when a particular object is perceived in its entirety, there is a primary factor from the point of view of the perception of the essence of the object, and attendant states from the point of view of the perception of its specific features.²³⁷ Although consciousness and its impermanence are substantially the same, consciousness pertains to the aggregate of consciousness, [52a] whereas impermanence pertains to the aggregate of formative factors; similarly, there is no contradiction in the fact that, for a single perceptual act, the perception of the essence of the object pertains to the aggregate of consciousness, whereas the aspect of perceiving its specific features pertains to the aggregate of formative factors. So mind and mental states are substantially the same, yet constitute distinct functions. As *The Journey to Sri Lanka* says:

Mind perceives dualistically;
accordingly, it has feelings such as attachment
and feelings such as faith.

Afflictive states are not positive ones.²³⁸

Therefore, mind and mental states are substantially the same.

Distinct Formative Factors The term “distinct formative factors” refers to contexts involving form, mind, and/or mental states, similar to the hand being open or clenched.²³⁹ Among the factors discussed previously, with regard to the life force faculty, similarity, the four factors of production and so forth, the ordinary state of being, and nine other related factors, the Chittamatrins are in agreement with the position just stated—that these are contexts in which all three categories of form, mind, and mental states are involved. For them, acquisition is not some separate state of consciousness;²⁴⁰ it entails contexts in which habit patterns are established in the basis of all ordinary experience by the other avenues of consciousness. The three states of meditative stability are not physical states; instead, they are contexts in which the six (or seven) avenues of consciousness are arrested in the basis of all ordinary experience. The groups of words and so forth are not cases related to the specific characteristics of sound; rather, they refer to contexts in which sensory appearances manifest as names, phrases, and letters to the conceptual mode of the coordinating mental faculty and its attendant states. [52b]

Uncompounded Phenomena With respect to the group of uncompounded phenomena, the Chittamatrins are in agreement with the Saurantikas. However, to the three phenomena listed previously, they add suchness and the basic space of phenomena, as well as others.²⁴¹

A Refutation of Chittamatrins Who Consider Consciousness to Entail Sense Data Although the sources used by these Chittamatrins are somewhat superior to those of the shravakas, they are still not sound. There are two refutations: a general and a detailed one.²⁴² The general refutation should be understood to comprise three points: it is untenable to assert that sensory appearances are mind; imputation is untenable; and it is infeasible to use the designation “nonexistence of identity.”

The first point has already been addressed in the refutation of the Saurantika approach.

As for the second point, if the image of a double moon, generic ideas, and so forth were real entities of consciousness, they would constitute that which is dependent, so how could they be imputed?²⁴³ Although the obsessive tendency to fixate on a sense of identity takes the two kinds of identity as its objects, it is in fact impossible for there to be anything that could be characterized as having such identity (since it is impossible

for there to actually be these two kinds of identity). Therefore, because it is impossible for such characteristics of imputed things to exist, even imputed things per se—which can be characterized on the basis of distinctions that can be made given that things have dissimilar characteristics—cannot possibly exist.

As for the third point, either consciousness perceives the nonexistence of identity of phenomena or it does not. If consciousness does so, this nonexistence could not be emptiness (since it would be a real entity of consciousness).²⁴⁴ If consciousness does not perceive it, this nonexistence could not be an object of valid cognition, and so one could not determine that it has any characteristics; therefore, it would be infeasible to use the conventional designation “nonexistence of identity.”

The detailed refutation has two points: it is untenable to assert that multiple sense data truly exist in a single consciousness, and it is untenable to assert that multiple sense data truly exist in multiple consciousnesses.

As for the first point, if one says that sensory appearances, manifesting in all their variety, are the expression of a single indivisible consciousness, [53a] how could one refute the position that there are substantial entities with numerous characteristics?²⁴⁵ One might respond that their true existence as single entities is refuted by the fact that they can be seen from numerous points of view. But the very fact that sensory appearances manifest in myriad ways because their multiple aspects are taken as frames of reference is itself a refutation of the contention that something has true existence as a single, indivisible consciousness.

As for the second point, if a multiplicity of indivisible sense objects truly existed in a multiplicity of consciousnesses cognizing sense data, there would be no single consciousness perceiving the multiplicity of particles, and so there could be no case of obvious sensory appearances manifesting.²⁴⁶

CHITTAMATRINS WHO CONSIDER CONSCIOUSNESS TO BE DEVOID OF SENSE DATA

The group of Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to be devoid of sense data hold the following opinions concerning the five bases of the knowable: Such things as word-based and generic ideas, the image of a double moon, and so forth do not exist in essence, either as perceived objects or as consciousness. They are not real entities, but are perceived through imputation. Likewise, all that manifests as the five sense facul-

ties, the five kinds of sense objects, and the inanimate universe are neither real entities of consciousness nor real entities in the external world, for they manifest through imputation, on the basis of habit patterns that result from a lack of recognition that has no beginning. Therefore, the bases of form are false, amounting to nothing more than imputations.

These Chittamatrins hold that the bases of mind and mental states are imputations of sense data that are perceived as objects. They maintain that, because these data are not the same thing as consciousness, there are moments of consciousness that are unsullied by the distorting influences of sense data, pure like a globe of crystal, not divisible into phases or in any other way; they posit that these are ultimately real entities, with former moments giving rise to following moments.²⁴⁷ According to their interpretation, moreover, sense objects are multiple, but sensory appearances and consciousness are not substantially the same entities. So these Chittamatrins do not posit an unlimited number of consciousnesses, [53b] but like the Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data, they hold that there are either six (or eight) avenues of consciousness or just one. As is the case with those who consider consciousness to entail sense data, there are also those who hold that mind and mental states are substantially the same or that they are substantially different.

As for distinct formative factors and uncompounded phenomena, the tenets of this group accord with those held by Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data.

A Refutation of Chittamatrins Who Consider Consciousness to Be Devoid of Sense Data Although the sources used by these Chittamatrins are slightly superior to those of the Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data, they are still not entirely correct. There are two refutations: it is untenable to assert that forms and so forth do not exist as real entities, and it is untenable to assert that irreducible moments of consciousness are ultimately real entities.

As for the first point, if forms and so forth do not exist as real entities, how can happiness and suffering be established to be real entities? If something is a real entity by virtue of performing its function, why then is not fire,²⁴⁸ for example, a real entity, since it performs the function of burning?²⁴⁹ One might object, "The idea that perceived objects in the external world are real entities has already been refuted through analysis of their constituent parts, as was described in the refutation of the Vaibha-

shika system.” In that case, the position that happiness and suffering exist as real entities could also be refuted through analysis of their temporal components. Therefore, although they do not exist as ultimately real entities, happiness and suffering exist as relatively real entities, like reflections. Likewise, it is reasonable that forms and so forth also exist on the relative level as real entities that are perceived as though they were external, like dream images. If these external entities have no nature other than an inner one (given that they are false with respect to consciousness), it would not be reasonable to make any moral choices concerning samsara and nirvana, happiness and suffering.²⁵⁰ [54a]

As for the second point, if there were irreducible moments of consciousness, there would be no connection between earlier and later moments.²⁵¹ If one held that this were the case, things would be without cause and therefore not temporary.²⁵² Because no results could be brought about, things would be unable to perform their functions.

A REFUTATION OF THE CHITTAMATRA POSITION

In this way, the Chittamatrins (both those who consider consciousness to entail sense data and those who do not) accept that nondual consciousness (that is, consciousness that entails no perception of object or subject) is truly existent on the ultimate level and that sense data are either authentic or false. But these opinions are not valid, for the following reason: because there is a fundamental contradiction in there being two factors—something to be conscious of and something conscious of it—in a single moment of a single cognitive act, it is also impossible for consciousness to be reflexive, just as a sword is unable to cut or even make contact with its own tip.²⁵³ *The Journey to Sri Lanka* refers to this:

As a sword, for example, is unable
to touch or cut itself,
so, too, consciousness is unable
in itself to be conscious of itself.

One might raise the objection, “There is reflexive consciousness, because consciousness in the present cognizes consciousness in the past.” But that is not so. When, in the present moment, there is consciousness of a past moment, does that past moment exist as a sense object or not? If it does exist, it would be possible for it to be a permanent real entity, because while the consciousness of the present moment existed, that of the

past would still exist, without having ceased to be.²⁵⁴ If the past moment does not exist, that fact ensures that there could also not be consciousness of it, because there would be no object of consciousness.

One might argue, "There is reflexive consciousness, because consciousness comes about in and of itself."²⁵⁵ But that is not so, either. [54b] Is what occurs as reflexive consciousness reflexive in comparison to consciousness of something else or is it not? If it is, when there is a mental act whereby a single consciousness is cognizant of something else, that consciousness is not reflexive consciousness, and so it would be possible for there to be consciousness that is not reflexive. If reflexive consciousness is not reflexive in comparison to consciousness of something else, there would be no criteria for classifying it as reflexive consciousness, because there would be no consciousness of something else to compare with reflexive consciousness.

One might now object, "Reflexive consciousness and consciousness of something else are different aspects of a single consciousness, so this poses no problem, for they are substantially the same." But again, this is not so. How could one then refute the Samkhya concept of consciousness as a two-sided mirror? That is, if there were consciousness of something else when there is reflexive consciousness, in a single moment of a single cognitive act, a single being's consciousness would be two-sided, which is a concept in no way different from that of the Samkhyas. How would one be able to refute the flawed position here—that reflexive consciousness and consciousness of something else, which are defined in comparison with one another, would be distinct yet congruent in a single moment? Therefore, these positions that sense data are either authentic or false are not valid.

The Madhyamaka System

The second major Mahayana tradition, the Madhyamaka, is the most sublimely profound secret found in the teachings of the Sage.²⁵⁶ This system acknowledges the five bases of the knowable, but these are subsumed within the two levels of truth; therefore, the Madhyamikas say that all phenomena inherently lack any finite essence. There are two major branches: the Svatantrika (Autonomist) and the Prasangika (Consequentialist).²⁵⁷

Svatantrika Madhyamaka

My discussion of the Svatantrika Madhyamaka system has two parts: a classification of those Svatantrikas who accept that ultimate truth is an object of consciousness and a discussion of a particular group that does not accept this.²⁵⁸ [55a]

SVATANTRIKAS WHO ACCEPT THAT ULTIMATE TRUTH IS AN OBJECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

My discussion of this first group has two parts: an analysis of the group and a description of the characteristics it posits.

Analysis My five-part analysis of this group includes the basis of the analysis, the topics, the derivation of the terms, the detailed analysis itself, and the definitive enumeration.

First, the basis for the analysis is anything and everything that can be known.

Second, generally speaking there are four alternative positions concerning what characterizes the two levels of truth:²⁵⁹ (1) “ultimate truth” and “relative truth” are synonymous terms, not separate entities;²⁶⁰ (2) the two levels of truth are essentially separate; (3) they are separate aspects with an essential identity;²⁶¹ or (4) they are separate simply by virtue of their identity being negated.²⁶²

(1) The exalted sutra *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent* refutes this position by pointing out four flaws:

Given that what is relative is cognized through direct experience, the ultimate level of truth would have to be cognized as well, since it would not be some aspect separate from the relative; this would mean, therefore, that beings in samsara would have attained nirvana from the outset.²⁶³

Conversely, in that what is relative would not be some aspect separate from ultimate truth (given that they are not separate), this would mean that forms and so forth would also be in no way distinct from ultimate truth.²⁶⁴

In that ultimate truth would not be some aspect separate from relative truth (which involves the proliferation of afflictive states when some object is taken as a focus), this would mean that afflictive states would increase when ultimate truth was taken as the object.

In that ultimate truth would not be some aspect separate from relative truth—about which nothing is to be done, given that it has already been cognized through valid cognition—this would mean that there would be no further conclusion to reach concerning ultimate truth.²⁶⁵

(2) To hold that the two levels of truth are separate aspects of a single essence is to accept that illusion is ultimate truth.²⁶⁶ [55b] This contradicts the following passage from a sutra of *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing*:

For one who has actually awakened to manifest and complete buddhahood, any given phenomenon is neither true nor false. . . . Timeless awareness of meditative equipoise knows all phenomena to be like the vault of space, whereas timeless awareness of postmeditation knows all phenomena to be like illusions.²⁶⁷

It is not the case that ultimate truth consists of sensory appearances that are devoid of true existence. Taking ultimate truth as the object to be negated, if one applies an unqualified negation—that it is neither one nor many—the negation cannot be verified, any more than can the horns of a hare.²⁶⁸ If one simply applies a qualified negation, the negation cannot be verified, any more than can relative truth.

One might use as one's proof a special kind of qualified negation, stating, "Ultimate truth exists within the scope of one's awareness, perceived as being free of one thing or many."²⁶⁹ Then, however, there is a contradiction between these very facts—that ultimate truth exists within the scope of awareness and yet is free of being one thing or many in essence. Thus, such a proof cannot be established and is therefore not logical. It is neither reasonable nor logically consistent, for it has the following flaws: it would mean that ultimate truth is in no way different from what is valid on the relative level; it would imply that an object to be negated could be examined in similar ways from the viewpoint of both levels of truth; and it would make the Madhyamaka view inferior to that of the Chittamatra system.

(3) As for holding that the two levels of truth are substantially separate entities, we may quote from the sutra *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent*, which undermines this position through five lines of reasoning:

This would mean that even though one had actual realization of ultimate truth, one would not attain nirvana, because what is relative would be conceived of as being apart from the ultimate.

This would mean that ultimate truth—substantially separate from what is relative—would not be the actual nature of relative truth, just as a vase is not the actual nature of a blanket. [56a]

This would mean—because the two levels of truth would be substantially separate—that ultimate truth would not constitute the mere fact that what is relative cannot be established to exist in the slightest, just as the mere fact that a vase cannot be established to exist in the slightest does not constitute a blanket.

This would mean that even at the point that nirvana was attained through realization of ultimate truth in one's direct perception, there would still be all-consuming afflictive states, because what is relative is a frame of reference apart from that of ultimate truth.

This would mean that there would be no contradiction in all-consuming afflictive states and total enlightenment functioning simultaneously in the mind of a single person.

(4) Therefore, ultimate truth (a freedom from all conceptual elaboration) cannot be described either as some real entity other than relative truth or as one and the same as relative truth; their "separateness" is merely a matter of their identity being negated.

Third, as for the derivation of the terms involved, the Sanskrit term *saṃvṛti* means "that which obscures," and the Tibetan equivalent is *kun rdzob* (falsifying everything).²⁷⁰ This refers to confused consciousness that obscures what is authentic. In that there is a validity inherent in the scope of such consciousness, there is "truth"; this truth lies in the very fact that, in essence, all the phenomena that manifest in myriad ways (as forms and so forth) are similar to dream images. The Sanskrit term *paramārtha* means "the goal sought by those who strive for what is truly excellent," and the Tibetan equivalent is *don dam pa* (sacred, or highest, meaning).²⁷¹ This refers to consciousness as the awareness that is in essence an unconfused state of mind; furthermore, it is sacred because it is the most sublime level of magnificence. In that there is validity within the scope of the unconfused state of mind, there is "truth," suchness itself. [56b]

Fourth, as for the definitive enumeration of these levels of truth, one can ascertain a context that involves dualism, owing to the simple negation of anything transcending all of the dualistic frameworks (existence

and nonexistence and so forth) that apply to forms and other objects of knowledge.²⁷² In the absence of a third alternative, the valid cognition that conceives in terms of dualities brings a certainty that there is a definitive enumeration—a pairing of what involves duality with what is beyond duality. This definitive enumeration is achieved by classifying the two aspects of this pairing as the two levels of truth.

Fifth, the detailed analysis focuses on two topics: the ultimate and the relative levels of truth. As the sutra *The Reunion of Father and Son* indicates:

There are two levels of truth for those wise in the ways of the world.

You should not just listen to others talking, but see these for yourself.

They are the relative and ultimate levels; in no way is there a third level of truth.

If we analyze relative truth, we find that it also has two aspects. There is what is erroneous on the relative level (what is apparent yet incapable of performing a function) and what is valid on the relative level (what is apparent and capable of performing a function). *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth* explains:

Although these aspects appear to be similar, because of the ability or inability to perform functions there is what is valid or invalid; this constitutes the analysis of what is relative.²⁷³

That is, what is valid on the relative level comprises phenomena such as forms and so forth that are endowed with four characteristics: they are capable of performing functions according to the way they manifest, they come about from causes, they cannot bear up under mental examination, and they manifest according to their respective types.²⁷⁴ They “exist” in that they have the ability to perform a function. [57a] What is erroneous on the relative level comprises those sensory appearances that manifest but are incapable of performing a function, such as the optical illusion of a hair falling across one’s field of vision or the appearance of a double moon.²⁷⁵ The Svatantrikas hold that these erroneous sensory appearances can be distinguished from valid phenomena on the basis of their inability to perform a function.

As for what is ultimate, this also has two aspects. There is a quan-

tifiable aspect of the ultimate; this aspect entails the simple negation of production and so forth in any true sense, but other than that, it does not entail freedom from the conceptual elaboration of nonproduction. The unquantifiable aspect of the ultimate is a freedom from absolutely all elaboration such as production and nonproduction.²⁷⁶ According to the same source:

The negation of production and so forth
is considered to concur with what is authentic;
the term “ultimate” is applied
to the subsiding of all conceptual elaboration, even that of
nonproduction.²⁷⁷

Characteristics My two-part discussion of the characteristics posited by this group entails the actual characteristics posited and the logic used to distinguish between the two levels of truth in a definitive way. First, for this group of Svatantrikas, the characteristic of truth pure and simple is the absence of an independent nature of any given phenomenon. What characterizes relative truth is the fact that no phenomenon can stand up under mental investigation.²⁷⁸ What characterizes ultimate truth is the fact that something can stand up under such investigation. The fact that something is in essence empty of any true existence constitutes “the absence of an independent nature.” That something “cannot stand up under mental investigation” means that in the final analysis its inherent existence can be refuted by the reasoning power of mind that investigates it critically; conversely, that something “can stand up under mental investigation” means that it cannot be refuted in any way by such reasoning.

On this note, materialists maintain that the ability to perform a function defines the ultimate level of truth, and so they do not accept the concept of validity on the relative level;²⁷⁹ proponents of the Madhyamaka approach, on the other hand, speak in terms of two aspects of what is relative. [57b] For them, what is valid on the relative level can be characterized as any object of knowledge that cannot stand up under investigation but that nevertheless is able to perform a function. What is erroneous on the relative level is characterized as any object of knowledge that cannot stand up under investigation and in addition is unable to perform a function.

Some other materialists say that there are two kinds of ultimate truth: dependent ultimate truth and absolute ultimate truth.²⁸⁰ However, pro-

ponents of the Madhyamaka approach give the following analysis: Using the negation of one part of a conceptual elaboration as their rationale, they apply the term “quantifiable ultimate truth” to what is, in fact, ultimate truth as a particular aspect of relative truth—that is, nonproduction.²⁸¹ They apply the term “unquantifiable ultimate truth” to the simple transcendence, in the ultimate sphere, of all such elaborations, since these cannot in any way be established in light of their fundamentally unconditioned nature. Nevertheless, the Madhyamikas say that given this “freedom from all conceptual elaborations,” nothing can possibly be defined as some ultimate thing in its own right.

Which of the five bases of the knowable (forms and so forth), one may wonder, express one or another of the two levels of truth? The basis that expresses ultimate truth is that of uncompounded phenomena. Of these, space and the two states of cessation cannot stand up under mental investigation (being negations that depend on something specific being negated), and so they do not qualify as things that are ultimately true; it is only suchness that does. One should be aware that the bases that express relative truth are all objects of knowledge other than suchness, which is not something produced. [58a]

Some Madhyamikas who are biased toward relative truth profess views that accord with those of the Vaibhashikas.²⁸² They say that both entities that are perceived objects and the entity that is the perceiving agent are produced simultaneously, as a result of the prior coming together of causes that link them. They say that everything that manifests clearly as the objects perceived by nonconceptual consciousness is true simply in the sense of being illusory as objects in the external world.

Others accept the position of those Madhyamikas who profess Sautrantika tenets.²⁸³ They say that an object in the external world does not actually manifest to consciousness. Rather, the object presents its image to the consciousness concerned, so that consciousness forms an image similar to that of the object. They call this process “being aware of a perceived object.” Thus, they say that objects are experienced comprehensively through a process of visualization, with perceived objects and the perceiving agent abiding on the relative level at separate times.

Still other Madhyamikas profess Yogachara tenets.²⁸⁴ Some of them say that everything that appears clearly in one’s consciousness on the relative level is an entity of consciousness—that is, that it does not exist as an object in the external world. In this, these Madhyamikas are in accord

with those Chittamatrins who hold that consciousness entails sense data. Others of this group say the following: Perceived objects that arise in the dream state, as well as the optical illusion of a hair falling across the field of vision, the appearance of a double moon, and generic ideas experienced in the waking state, are neither objects in themselves nor entities of consciousness. Similarly, things that are familiar to ordinary people in the world (mountains, buildings, men, women, vases, blankets, and so forth) are neither objects in the external world nor entities of consciousness.²⁸⁵ Throughout beginningless time, these have amounted to nothing more than appearances of what is, in fact, nonexistent, manifesting as a result of habit patterns of ignorance. [58b] Thus, they say, entities that exist on the relative level are solely those of mind and mental states (such as happiness) that manifest clearly as subjective aspects of perception.

Although many such interpretations are set forth, there are some dissimilarities between these Svatantrika Madhyamaka groups and other systems. For example, the former do not profess (as do the Vaibhashikas of the shravaka approach) that entities exist in their own right as obvious forms that consist of minute particles, or that mind and mental states can exist without reflexive consciousness. But there are some similarities as well. For example, some proponents of Svatantrika Madhyamaka do not accept that sensory appearances manifesting as objects constitute consciousness, but do accept that things are produced by their own prior causes.²⁸⁶ Other Svatantrika proponents do not accept reflexive consciousness in the sense that the Chittamatrins do, but they do accept pure timeless awareness that cannot be analyzed by any overstatement or understatement (of whether it exists or not) whatsoever.²⁸⁷ As *The Smaller Commentary on "The Ornament of Manifest Realization"* states:

... owing to one's self-knowing timeless awareness . . .

Second, the logic used by these Svatantrikas in their definitive differentiation of the two levels of truth is itself twofold. Their logic in differentiating relative truth is as follows: Forms and so forth are sensory appearances that occur through interdependent connection. Deductive logic can be applied to these, with reasoning that employs the argument, for example, that phenomena are free of being one or many.²⁸⁸ Such logic refutes the claim that these appearances are truly existent entities that can stand up under investigation. On the basis of this refutation, they are ascertained to be objects of knowledge that cannot stand up under such

investigation. This is, for them, the definitive characteristic of relative truth.

Their logic in differentiating ultimate truth is as follows: Through reasoning, one can investigate what stands up under such investigation in the final analysis. Once one has used this logic to ascertain what this is, realization takes place through one's self-knowing, nonconceptual timeless awareness. [59a] Ordinary people, however, can ascertain what is ultimately true only through deductive logic, using lines of reasoning. That is, putting aside specific cases of objects in the phenomenal world, the mere sense of things in general is taken as the basis, and certainty is reached through valid cognition (either direct experience or deductive reasoning) that is concerned with this single aspect of the appearance of things.²⁸⁹ Thus, one uses the critical reasoning by which one refutes that things in general are truly existent entities and investigates emptiness, the final freedom from conceptual elaboration. Once one has used this logic to ascertain what this is, one cuts through any naive assumptions about specific things—that is, particular instances of forms, states of happiness, and so forth.²⁹⁰ This is because one's realization is such that these particular instances do not invalidate the simple fact that things are understood to entail emptiness.

You might ask, "What is it that Svatantrikas refute concerning objects in the phenomenal world?" But the proponents of Svatantrika Madhyamaka do not posit that there is anything to be refuted. Nevertheless, this does not mean that their proofs and deductive arguments are pointless, because (in view of there being nothing to refute) they lead to the realization that there is, in fact, nothing to refute. That is (in view of there being no truly existent entity), these proofs and arguments lead to the understanding that there is, in fact, no such entity. Thus, the situation is akin to the following example: If one sees a mannequin but does not understand what it is, one might take it for a live person. Although it might be proved to be a mannequin (which would refute the misperception of it as a person), such proof would not refute its being an actual person, because the mannequin never was a person and so there was nothing with the necessary characteristics to be refuted. Therefore, although they refute fixation, pure and simple, on the true existence of things, the Svatantrikas do not say, "Such and such alone is to be refuted"—not minute particles, or reflexive consciousness, or primal matter, or some powerful god. [59b] This is because the general refutation automatically takes care of specific cases.

SVATANTRIKAS WHO DO NOT ACCEPT THAT ULTIMATE
TRUTH IS AN OBJECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Those in the second group do not accept that ultimate truth is an object of consciousness. They hold that what manifests on the relative level (that is, sensory appearances that are clearly apparent yet nonexistent) are like dream images and the like. These can be established to be simply appearances that are produced from their respective causes, but on the ultimate level, nothing can be established within the scope of self-knowing timeless awareness—neither the two levels of truth, nor any of the phenomena of samsara and nirvana. In *The Intermediate-Length “Mother,”* we find statements such as the following:

Subhuti, all phenomena are such that on the ultimate level they inherently lack any finite essence, and so even nirvana is not produced and does not exist.

Thus, these Svatantrikas consider the conclusions they reach in analyzing and characterizing the two levels of truth to be the quantifiable aspect of ultimate truth, in light of which these amount to just so many conclusions. In light of the unquantifiable aspect of what is ultimate, on the other hand, how could there possibly be any logic with which to ascertain how truth is to be analyzed or characterized, for this aspect is beyond the scope of what can be imagined or verbalized? This approach amounts to cutting through conceptual elaborations in order to become free of erroneous assumptions about such concepts as existence and non-existence—that is, any classification of the two distinct levels of truth or any lines of reasoning (such as the argument that phenomena are free of being one or many).

Five Major Lines of Reasoning To determine that there is no origination, cessation, and so forth on the ultimate level, Svatantrikas use five major lines of reasoning that they consider to be definitive. These five can be understood to conform to four models. The argument known as “vajra shards” is a refutation that examines the causes of any object to be refuted.²⁹¹ [60a] The argument called “the refutation of the production and cessation of what is existent or nonexistent” is a refutation that examines the results. The argument called “the refutation of production in any of four ways” is a refutation that examines both the causes and results. As for refutations that examine something in its essence, the argument

known as “the supreme principle of interdependent connection” is one of establishing a line of reasoning that involves a qualified negation, and that called “freedom from being unitary or manifold entities” is one of establishing a line of reasoning that involves an unqualified negation.

The first argument, that of vajra shards, is as follows: Something that is not produced from itself, from something else, from both, or without cause is utterly devoid of the status of being a real entity that is actually produced, as is the case, for example, with a generic idea, which is not a real entity. Specifically, the subjects under discussion (that is, any and all things) are in the ultimate sense devoid of the status of being produced, whether from themselves, or other things, or both, or without cause.

The second argument is as follows: Something that is devoid of the status of being a result (whether existent or nonexistent), which comes from causes, is utterly devoid of the status of being a real entity that is actually produced, as is the case, for example, with a generic idea, which is not a real entity. Specifically, the subjects under discussion (that is, sensory appearances that manifest through interdependent connection) are such that, in the ultimate sense, they are devoid of the status of being results that exist, do not exist, or are produced with respect to their causes.

The third argument is as follows: Something that is devoid of the status of being a single result from a single cause, a multiple result from a single cause, a single result from multiple causes, or a multiple result from multiple causes is utterly devoid of the status of being a real entity that is actually produced, as is the case, for example, with a generic idea, which is not a real entity. Specifically, although things manifest as they do, they are devoid of the status of being produced in any of four alternative ways: whether of one thing being produced from another thing, of many things being produced from one thing, of many things being produced from many things, or of one thing being produced from many things.

The fourth argument, that of the supreme principle of interdependent connection, is as follows: Something that occurs through interdependent connection is by nature devoid of true existence, [6ob] as is the case, for example, with a reflection. Specifically, things that appear as they do are interdependently connected.

The fifth argument, that of freedom from anything being a unitary or manifold entity, can be understood through a threefold process: establishing a line of reasoning, proving the properties of the subject under discussion, and examining the validity of the argument by ascertaining

what is entailed.²⁹² The first step in the process is described as follows: Something that is of necessity free of being a unitary or manifold entity is necessarily devoid of any attribute of true existence, as is the case, for example, with a generic idea, which is not a real entity. Specifically, although things manifest as they do, this necessarily entails their freedom from being unitary or manifold entities in the ultimate sense.

The second step, proving the properties of the subject under discussion, is the proof that things are free of being unitary or manifold entities. As the master Nagarjuna writes:

Just as a moment has a finite end,
examine as well its onset and interim.
Because this moment actually embodies three moments,
the world does not abide for a moment.²⁹³

The fact that some middle phase or portion abides necessitates multiple aspects, which can be ascertained on the basis of examining a single twenty-four-hour period. The daytime is the phase that lies between two nighttime periods. It in turn consists of three phases: morning, midday, and afternoon. Leaving aside the morning and afternoon, consider simply the middle phase; of necessity, this too actually involves three further phases. Using the logic that gives one this certainty, one can deduce that even an irreducible moment that is imputed to exist in the ultimate sense, abiding between the preceding moment and the following one, [61a] must entail three further phases, owing to the very fact that it does abide between the preceding and following moments.²⁹⁴ It is thus free of being a single, indivisible entity in any ultimate sense. The refutation of its being a single thing is also a refutation of its being some manifold, indivisible, and ultimately true entity. This proves the property of the subject under discussion, that it is free of being a unitary or manifold entity in any ultimate sense.

The third step, examining the validity of the argument by ascertaining what is entailed, is as follows: Considering vases and other things, put aside their specific features as vases and so forth and simply refute that things that exist *per se* are manifold entities. With this initial refutation, one reaches the point at which they seem, convincingly enough, to exist as unitary entities. Let us ascertain, in direct experience, whether things that exist *per se* are of necessity existent as unitary entities or as manifold entities. Take the case of any given existent thing, perceived to be a specific thing that is necessarily either a unitary entity or a manifold one. If

that thing were some ultimately existent entity, that would preclude any possibility of doubt that it was necessarily either unitary or manifold; for in the case of something being an ultimately existent entity, the fact that it is necessarily either a unitary entity or a manifold one is taken for granted, as a characteristic that is guaranteed under the circumstances.²⁹⁵ After all, as the Lord of Reasoning explains:

Whatever is capable of performing a function,
that is here considered to be what is ultimate.²⁹⁶

A REFUTATION OF THE SVATANTRIKA POSITION

When explanations like the foregoing (involving the subjects under discussion, the points to be refuted, and the lines of reasoning) are used, the point to be proved by establishing authentic lines of reasoning is not a qualified negation, acknowledging one's evident experience of, for example, the illusoriness of things. Rather, what is proved is an unqualified negation, a simple refutation, excluding any other possibility, that there is any truly existent entity at all.²⁹⁷ [61b]

That understanding, however, is not a matter of eliminating conceptual elaboration concerning all phenomena by determining that phenomena do not manifest, only to find that they do in fact manifest in some context that accords with logical reasoning.²⁹⁸ This is because phenomena cannot be ultimately established through reasoning,²⁹⁹ and because it is impossible for them to be perceived by a truly authentic consciousness that employs logical reasoning and not be seen definitively for what they are.³⁰⁰ If reasoning does not bring one that certainty, it is only because the ordinary level of reasoning cannot eliminate one's naive assumption concerning phenomena.³⁰¹ If the ordinary level of authentic understanding that brings certainty about phenomena does not eliminate one's naive assumption, this means only that phenomena cannot ultimately be established, because even if such ordinary reasoning could eliminate something, there is nothing inherent in phenomena to be eliminated. It is in this way that the proponents of Svatantrika Madhyamaka come to the conclusion that "what characterizes ultimate truth is an unborn nature free of elaboration that can stand up to analysis by deductive reasoning."

However, their conclusion is not final.³⁰² It can be undermined by numerous arguments that address such points as the following: First, their alleged proof that things do not exist on the ultimate level but neverthe-

less somehow exist on the relative level demonstrates that they have not transcended the two ideologies of realism and nihilism.³⁰³ Second, it is untenable for them to assert that a merely intellectual form of reasoning (which is, after all, just conceptualization) should be considered authentic. Third, simply by negating one conceptual elaboration, they have not transcended every alternative elaboration.³⁰⁴ In *The Commentary on "Sixty Verses of Reasoning,"* for example, we find the following:

Whenever existence is accepted on the relative level, there is realism; whenever nonexistence is maintained to be the case on the ultimate level, there is nihilism.

Moreover, maintaining that there are separate levels of truth entails numerous contradictions. [62a] In the case of a single thing, for example, its relative aspect would have to be as nonexistent as the ultimate aspect; alternatively, the ultimate aspect of things would have to be as impermanent and so forth as the relative aspect of things existing in the myriad ways they do; or if things could be established to be substantial entities in their own right, they would have to be established simultaneously.

Prasangika Madhyamaka

My three-part discussion of the Prasangika Madhyamaka system focuses on the system's analysis of whether or not a mind is confused, its method of classifying the two levels of truth on that basis, and its method of using syllogisms to cut through conceptual elaboration.

CONFUSION AND ITS ABSENCE

The following is the position held by Chandrakirti (the most excellent student of the master Nagarjuna), who upheld the ultimate and definitive view, and by his followers: In the state of meditative equipoise experienced by one who has attained a spiritual level or on the level of buddhahood, no dualistic manifestation whatsoever of the knowable can be established—no dualism of object and perceiver of the object (that is, what is known and what knows it). Thus, even the involvement of timeless awareness as the perceiver of some object has subsided. In these contexts, all involvement of ordinary mind and mental states has been interrupted. The realization that the true nature of phenomena is timeless awareness, which is indescribable, inconceivable, and inexpressible, is termed by the Prasangikas "the unconfused and authentic state of mind."

The Entrance into the Middle Way explains:

Because the true nature of phenomena is unborn, mind is also free of birth.

Therefore, on the basis of these facts, it is as though the mind cognizes that nature.

Because the mind takes on the qualities of its object, that “object” is thoroughly known, and so it is appropriate to use such conventional expressions.³⁰⁵ [62b]

.

Once the dry tinder of all that is knowable, without exception, has burned up, that state of peace is the dharmakaya of the victorious ones.

At that point, there is no origin and no cessation.

The kaya makes the cessation of ordinary mind fully evident.³⁰⁶

Moreover, *Clear Words* states:

In this context, even the elaborations of mind and mental states have been interrupted.

This state of affairs is referred to by the idiom “the realization of ultimate truth.” The “object” in this case is the fundamentally unconditioned way of abiding, the basic space of phenomena, which is pure by nature.

As for the confused state of mind, that of false perception, the Prasangikas posit the following: **The vision of ordinary beings is distorted** by the habit patterns that result from the nonrecognition of awareness. Those with eye diseases fixate on the perceptual distortions and hallucinations they perceive as though these were actual objects. In a similar way, for **the six classes of beings, there are the expressions of dualistic perception** (a state of confusion that occurs through interdependent connection), which consist of the myriad states of pleasure and pain that manifest in their perceptions in their respective environments, experiences, and so forth.

Alternatively, in the postmeditation experience of those who have attained spiritual levels, there are the universes and other sensory appearances that they perceive in common with others of similar attainment.³⁰⁷ There is also the direct perception of sensory appearances simply manifesting to one’s senses, as well as inference (for example, of a fire).³⁰⁸

Either of two states of mind is experienced, depending on how one evaluates sense data on the relative level; thus, the Prasangikas assign two

aspects to the relative level, depending on whether the sense faculties (of vision and so forth) are accurate or flawed.³⁰⁹ *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

False perception is of two kinds:
that of the faculties being either clear or flawed.
Consciousness based on flawed faculties
is held to be erroneous with respect to that based on excellent
faculties.³¹⁰ [63a]

THE TWO LEVELS OF TRUTH

The Prasangikas classify the two levels of truth in two ways: with respect to the way in which their nature is to be understood and with respect to the way in which this understanding is put into practice.

The Nature of the Two Levels of Truth My six-part discussion entails the basis on which the two levels of truth are characterized, their characteristics, an analysis, the definitive enumeration, the derivation of the terms, and the underlying logic that validates these levels of truth. First, although nothing can be truly characterized as a basis for classifying these levels of truth, from the perspective of an ordinary person's mind there is a sense of some "truth" that is the opposite of what is patently untrue.³¹¹ The classification is based on this sense. According to *The Commentary on "Sixty Verses of Reasoning"*:

The two levels of truth are assigned on the basis of the mind of an ordinary person in the world.

Alternatively, the mere absence of any independent nature is used as the basis for the classification. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

Because neither of the two levels of truth has an independent
nature,
they are neither permanent entities nor nihilistic voids.³¹²

The basis on which relative truth can be characterized consists of the six avenues of consciousness and the data of the objects they perceive. (Here the Madhyamikas are in agreement with the shravaka schools in the way they define these six avenues of consciousness.) As for ultimate truth, the basis on which it is characterized is held to be the basic space of phenomena, which is pure in its very essence.

Second, as for the characteristics of these two levels, relative truth is characterized by the manifestation of dualistic perception and the elaboration it entails. That is, relative truth takes the form of obscurity. According to the same source:

Ignorance obscures the true nature of phenomena and therefore falsifies everything. [63b]
 Any of its fabrications, which seem to be true, were said by the Sage to be “relatively true.”³¹³

All the phenomena of samsara (ordinary mind and mental states, as well as the data of objects that are perceived) are relative. Even for those who have attained spiritual levels, there remains an aspect of ordinary mind and mental states, in that impure objects (visual forms and so forth) are perceived by the six avenues of consciousness. All of these, which are still factors to be eliminated, are included under the rubric of the relative and classified as states of confusion.

As to what characterizes ultimate truth, it is in essence a freedom from dualistic elaboration. In that it cannot truly be realized by means of verbal descriptions and the like, it cannot be understood by means of anything other than itself. It is beyond concepts, for the sully factors of ordinary mind and mental states subside within the basic space of phenomena. It is free of all conceptual elaboration, and it is impervious to any system of tenets. *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing* explains:

Not understood by means of anything else, a state of peace, unembellished by conceptual elaboration, entailing no concepts, without differentiation: these are its characteristics.³¹⁴

That is, such concepts as sameness and difference, being the tenets of materialists, are ignorance pure and simple. However, even “the middle way, free of conceptual elaboration,” is not something that can be established. In brief, nirvana is a state of profundity and peace; it is basic space, completely pure by nature, and it is the mind, free of all obscurity, that realizes this space—the timeless awareness of buddhahood, [64a] to which this completely pure field manifests without change.³¹⁵ And for someone who has attained a spiritual level, there is timeless awareness as the state of meditative equipoise, as well as those postmeditation experiences of profound insight that are essentially identical to that state. All of these constitute what is ultimately true.³¹⁶

Third, as for an analysis of these two levels of truth, *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing* states:

The dharma taught by the buddhas
depends entirely on two levels of truth:
the relative truth of the world
and the truth that has ultimate meaning.³¹⁷

The knowable that manifests in myriad ways to a confused mind constitutes what is relative, whereas that which abides beyond any description, imagination, or expression whatsoever is classified as what is ultimate. According to *The Entrance into the Middle Way*:

Because one sees all entities in a false or a valid way,³¹⁸
there is the apprehension either of as many entities as there are or
of their very essence.³¹⁹

Whatever the object of authentic perception, it is suchness;
false perception is said to be relatively true.³²⁰

Furthermore, the analysis of what is relative is twofold. What is erroneous on the relative level manifests as objects of flawed faculties, and what is valid on the relative level manifests as objects of flawless faculties. The first aspect includes such things as a double image of the moon or a dream image—that is, things that manifest to the minds of ordinary beings but are well known not to be valid. The Madhyamikas do not deny these, but assign them the label “what is erroneous on the relative level,” considering them to be merely conventional designations that convey meaning.³²¹ The manifestation of a single moon and so forth (that is, things that manifest to the minds of ordinary beings and are well known to be valid) are labeled by the proponents of this system “what is valid on the relative level.” [64b] The same source explains:

With respect to the world,
whatever becomes an object of the six unimpaired faculties
is true enough in that world.
The rest is erroneous with respect to the same world and is so
classified.³²²

Therefore, those whose minds are confused are analogous to those who perceive a hair floating across their field of vision, whereas those with clear vision do not perceive anything whatsoever. Neither spiritually advanced beings in states of meditative equipoise nor buddhas (for whom

confusion has come to an end) experience in any way whatsoever that which is perceived in myriad ways by those with confused minds. Thus, the Prasangikas maintain that spiritually advanced beings and buddhas do not experience the usual perceptions based on confusion that we experience at present. We read in the same source:

Under the influence of an eye disease, one erroneously discerns
all kinds of things,
such as a hair floating across one's field of vision.
But someone with perfect vision sees things just as they are;
in this context, you should understand this to be suchness.³²³

Nirmanakaya emanations, who manifest as a result of the merit of those to be guided and the blessings of buddhahood, ensure benefit for beings. Without falling asleep oneself, one might send into another's dream an emanation who teaches the dharma and so forth, performing those functions according to the dreamer's own perceptions. All the while, one knows that this emanation manifests to that other being as though real, arising without hindrance in the dream state perceived by the one to be guided. At the same time, one is not dreaming oneself, because one has not fallen asleep. In the same way, although aware of the perceptions that ordinary beings experience, based on confusion, and nevertheless ensuring benefit for these beings, buddhas do not experience such perceptions based on confusion to the slightest degree.

The foregoing analysis is based on the characteristics of these levels of truth; the Prasangikas hold that the nature of the levels themselves, being emptiness, is beyond analysis. [65a] Emptiness is the basic space in which things manifest. *The Commentary on Awakening Mind* states:

What is relative is explained to be emptiness;
emptiness is nothing but what is relative.
This is because, just as something being produced means
it is impermanent,
it is certain that without the one, the other cannot be the case.³²⁴

If an analysis were to lead one to conclude that these levels are separate from one another, it would be mistaken. The sutra *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent* explains:

The characteristics of the ultimate and of the domain of
formative patterning³²⁵

are such that they are free of being identical or different. Those who think of them as being identical or different have embraced an unacceptable opinion.

Fourth, as for the definitive enumeration of the two levels of truth, it is obvious that freedom from conceptual elaboration and the lack of such freedom are in direct opposition to one another. There is only what can be established and what can be refuted;³²⁶ any third alternative can be eliminated, and so the definitive enumeration is that of two levels of truth.

From another point of view, if objects are classified on the basis of the perceivers of those objects, the imperfect perceiver is the confused mind, whereas the perfect one is the unconfused mind; there is no alternative other than these two. That is, the phenomena of samsara are the objects of a state of confusion, whereas the true nature of phenomena is an unconfused state, and so these two levels can be assigned on the basis of the minds involved. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

Because one sees all entities in a false or a valid way,
there is the apprehension either of as many entities as there are or
of their very essence.³²⁷

Whatever the object of authentic perception, it is suchness;
false perception is said to be relatively true.³²⁸

Fifth, as for the derivation of the terms, in Sanskrit relative truth is termed *samvṛti-satya*. *Sam* (from which *samyak* derives) means “authentic,” while the root *vṛ* (from which *vāvara* derives) gives the sense of “obscuration.” *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth* states:

Anything by which or anywhere in which [65b]
the authentic is obscured is held to be relative.³²⁹

Satya, which means “truth,” is used here in the sense that so long as one does not investigate something, it has a semblance of validity.

As for ultimate truth, in Sanskrit this is termed *paramārtha-satya*. *Parama* means “sacred,” and *ārtha* carries the sense of “meaning”; *paramārtha* signifies “all that is sacred.” Again, *satya* means “truth,” used here to indicate that which remains unassailable when investigated.

Sixth, these levels of truth can be validated by means of logic. It is logical that the ultimate level (the basic space of phenomena), as the subject under discussion, is freedom from conceptual elaboration, because it is not the province of ordinary consciousness, which entails conceptual

frameworks. Furthermore, it is realized through timeless awareness, in a way that involves no such elaboration.

It is logical that the relative level (objects in the phenomenal world), as the subject under discussion, entails conceptual elaboration, because these objects are the province of ordinary consciousness, which entails conceptual frameworks. The reverse statement is also necessarily the case: that ordinary consciousness, which entails such frameworks, and its objects constitute the relative level. Therefore, the underlying basis of what is characterized as ultimately real is validated through awareness of its characteristics, whereas the underlying basis of what is characterized as relatively real is validated through more conventional consciousness that fixates on both characteristics and what is characterized.³³⁰

Putting This Understanding into Practice My discussion now turns to the method of putting this understanding into practice. Having aroused the awakening mind, or bodhichitta, as the preparatory phase, one comes to a decision on the basis of the view that no phenomenon can be established to exist in any way whatsoever. In that context, one cultivates a mind that is free of the proliferation and resolution of concepts. *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva* states:

When the tangible and the intangible
are not experienced in light of ordinary consciousness,
there being no other alternatives at this point
there is utter peace without any frame of reference.³³¹

Moreover, the great master Nagarjuna writes: [66a]

Those whose minds are completely beyond the alternatives
of existence and nonexistence
do not abide in any fixed way.
They meditate intensively on the significance of this condition,
the profound state that has no frame of reference.³³²

Having rested in that state for as long as one can, one performs the dedication. This is the way to incorporate the ultimate level of truth into spiritual practice.

The way to incorporate the relative level is to do so during the post-meditation phase. Having arisen from meditative equipoise, one gathers merit by understanding all phenomena from the point of view of the eight analogies concerning illusoriness.

Thus, with the integration of meditative equipoise and the postmeditation phase, of sublime knowing and skillful means, and of the development of one's merit and experience of timeless awareness, one will finally attain the two sacred kayas of buddhahood: dharmakaya and rupakaya. According to *The Precious Garland*:

The rupakaya of the buddhas
comes about from the gathering of merit;
as for the dharmakaya, to summarize concisely,
it is born of the deepening of the majestic experience of timeless
awareness.

Therefore, the two aspects of spiritual development
are the causes of accomplishing buddhahood itself.
This being the case, in brief, please rely always
on merit and timeless awareness.³³³

That is, the ground aspect of Madhyamaka is subsumed within the two levels of truth; the path aspect, within twofold spiritual development; and the fruition aspect, within the two kayas.

CUTTING THROUGH CONCEPTUAL ELABORATION WITH SYLLOGISMS

The Prasangikas use syllogisms to cut through conceptual elaboration. They employ the five arguments of formal logic, which were discussed previously, to determine that all phenomena lack independent nature. However, unlike the Svatantrikas, the Prasangikas do not deny relative truth and establish it to be false, nor do they refute conceptual elaboration concerning the ultimate level and establish the latter to be an absence of such elaboration. [66b] Rather, although they directly refute anything on which the mind fixates, they do not establish anything whatsoever in its stead. In this way, they invalidate any incorrect opinion that an opponent might put forth. Thus, to cut through conceptual elaboration, the Prasangikas rely solely on syllogisms that point out the internal contradictions of any assertion involving such elaboration.

A Refutation of the Production of Something from Itself When the Samkhyas hold that something is produced from itself (that what is produced is inherent in the cause), the Prasangikas point out the logical conclusion,

that the production of what already exists is fraught with absurdity. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

If something came about from itself, there would be no point to that;
it is patently unreasonable for what has been born to be born again.³³⁴

It might be countered that something nonmanifest abides as the cause, already existing in the inner fields of experience, such as that of vision, and that the result is simply one of circumstances making it clearly manifest. The Prasangikas respond to this with an argument that exposes the inherent contradiction; the logical conclusion is that such production is absurd, because the subject under discussion already exists.

The objection might then be raised that this is not necessarily the case, for the fact that the result is inherent in the cause does not contradict the position that production is valid. The Prasangikas retort that this position would mean that even though things already exist in some nonmanifest state, the production of all things that are produced in their clearly manifest state would still be necessary, even though they already exist. The Prasangikas point out, however, that their production is not necessary and reiterate the obvious: the fact that things already exist even in their nonmanifest state means that their production is not necessary.

The point might be made that although this means that the production of what exists in its manifest state is not necessary, it does not mean that the production of what exists in its nonmanifest state is not necessary. But that distinction accords with the original proposition—that the result is inherent in the cause—which the Prasangikas contend cannot be proved, [67a] and so they say that this distinction does not apply. They thus refute the production of something from itself.

A Refutation of the Production of Something from Something Else
Furthermore, the following objection might be raised to expose a seeming contradiction: “Buddhists hold that smoke is produced by something other than smoke (that is, fire), and so accept that things come from other things (also believing that something can function to produce something else). But they do not hold that darkness produces flames, for example. If things are produced from other things, surely the logical conclusion is that flames can produce darkness. If flames do not produce darkness,

the logical conclusion is that something (fire) cannot produce some other thing (smoke), because these two cases are parallel, involving things that are other than what is produced.”

When *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states,

If something is produced by a reliance on something else,
pitch-black darkness could come about from tongues of flame,³³⁵

the objection might be raised that the one case does not entail the other. The Prasangikas reply that another kind of entailment should then be proved by a parallel line of reasoning: Either the fact that something other than darkness (that is, flames) does not produce darkness should mean that it is unreasonable for something other than smoke (fire) to produce smoke, or the fact that something other than smoke (that is, fire) does produce smoke should mean that something other than darkness (flames) does produce darkness. To put it simply, the statement would be, “It follows that from the subject under discussion (flames), darkness is produced because it is other than darkness and darkness is other than it.”

Now since flames (which are something other than smoke) have the ability to produce smoke, they produce smoke, but since flames (which are something other than darkness) do not have the ability to produce darkness, they do not produce darkness. That distinction accords with the original proposition. [67b] The Prasangikas say that although it cannot be established that things are produced by something other than themselves, what also cannot be ultimately established is the notion that fire has the ability to produce smoke but flames do not have the ability to produce darkness. They thus refute the production of something from something else.

A Refutation of the Production of Something from Both Itself and Something Else Similarly, because of the flaws in both of the foregoing positions, the Prasangikas refute the production of something from both itself and something else.

A Refutation of the Production of Something from Neither Itself nor Something Else Finally, the Charvakas maintain that things are produced without causes, but they hold that the fragrance and color of a lotus in the sky are not produced, because they cannot be perceived.³³⁶ The Prasangika refutation of this position uses parallel logic. According to the same source:

Suppose that beings were devoid of any cause; then, like the
 fragrance and color
 of a lotus in the sky, they could not be perceived.
 But the world is perceived in all its extraordinary splendor.
 Therefore, understand that, like one's mind, the world comes
 from causes.³³⁷

If one thus accepts that things are produced without causes, the Prasangikas reply with an argument that exposes the contradiction inherent in the Charvakas' position, saying that the logical conclusion is that the world, being uncaused, could not be perceived in all its variegated splendor.

The objection might be raised that the one condition does not entail the other.³³⁸ The Prasangikas reply that another kind of entailment should then be proved by a parallel line of reasoning: the fact that the world is perceived in its splendor, even though it is uncaused, should mean that the fragrance and color of a lotus in the sky, even though they are uncaused, could be directly perceived.

The following distinction might be made by the Charvakas: "Although they are alike in being uncaused, the world is perceived because it has an essence, whereas the lotus in the sky is not perceived, because it has no essence." But that distinction is in the same vein as the Charvakas' original proposition: [68a] the Prasangikas say that, although it cannot be established that things are produced without causes, what can also not be ultimately established is the distinction that the world has an essence whereas a lotus in the sky does not. They thus refute the production of something from nothing.

Having refuted all such belief systems through syllogistic reasoning, the Prasangikas do not propose their own set of tenets based on conceptual elaboration. *The Refutation of Arguments* states:

Suppose I held some formal position;
 then I would be guilty of a flaw;
 but because I hold no such position,
 I alone am without such a flaw.³³⁹

According to *Four Hundred Verses*:

Against someone who has no bias
 concerning existence, nonexistence, or existence and
 nonexistence.

one cannot engage in debate,
no matter how long one tries.³⁴⁰

Moreover, *Sixty Verses of Reasoning* explains:

If one accepts real entities,
this leads to unsupportable and insidious views
based on desire and aversion,
which in turn lead to controversies.

This is the cause of all ignoble views;³⁴¹
without it, afflictive states do not arise.
Therefore, having come to thoroughly understand this,
one has completely refined away opinionatedness and afflictive
states.³⁴²

In *The Lamp of the Middle Way*, Nagarjuna is quoted as follows:

If one posits some real entity,
one runs the risk of denial and other errors.
But how can there be the risk of denial and the like
for those who do not posit any real entity?

If some real entity existed,
the world would be either finite
or infinite and so forth.

If some real entity existed, [68b]
and if one were therefore required to take a position
concerning it,
how could one then posit
the unborn state of entities?

.

There does not exist even the most subtle real entity
that one could posit.

Because all things are forever unborn,
they are like a barren woman's child.

For example, one might ask a barren woman,
"How is your child?"

She would be unable to reply,
because no such thing existed.³⁴³

One might respond, "How, then, do the Prasangikas deal with classifications like the two levels of truth?" They consider such classifications to be simply conventions observed by ordinary people, but the Prasangika

system itself does not seize on them as truly existent. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* states:

Whereas you hold that dependence is a real entity,
I do not make any assertions concerning the relative level.³⁴⁴

The way in which imputation takes place is explained in the sutra *The Most Majestic State of Meditative Absorption*:

Even though phenomena cannot be reduced to words,³⁴⁵
those who teach about them or listen to such teachings
falsely assume that the words refer to things that are unchanging,
and teach or listen accordingly.³⁴⁶

Thus, because the phenomena of the world of appearances and possibilities, whether samsara or nirvana, do not exist as real entities (in that their nature is that of an illusion), the Prasangikas do not refute the fact that they do manifest in the world (merely appearing to be produced and to cease and so forth). *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing* states:

Like a dream image, like a magical illusion,
like a mirage of a castle in the sky:
thus, it is said, are things born, thus do they endure,
and thus are they destroyed.³⁴⁷ [69a]

If one does not understand this way of distinguishing between and evaluating the two levels of truth, enlightenment will not be accomplished. According to *The Refutation of Arguments*:

Without relying on conventional designations,
one will not comprehend the meaning of ultimate reality.
If one does not comprehend the meaning of ultimate reality,³⁴⁸
one will not attain nirvana.³⁴⁹

Moreover, *The Heart Essence of the Middle Way* admonishes:

It is not appropriate for the wise
to try to ascend to the top
of the great mansion of suchness
without the stairway of what is valid on the relative level.

In addition, as *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing* indicates:

Those who do not completely understand the distinction
between these two levels of truth

do not understand the profound state of suchness³⁵⁰
taught by the Buddha.³⁵¹

If one understands this distinction well, the value is immeasurable.
Delineating the Two Levels of Truth states:

Those who understand the distinction between the two levels of
truth
are undeluded about the Sage's words.
All of them, without exception, having pursued their spiritual
development,
arrive at the far, excellent shore.³⁵²

The Prasangika system expounds the very highest view of all the cause-based dialectical approaches.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the third chapter, a presentation of the main tenets of various spiritual approaches.

4

The Paths of the Cause-Based Approaches

Now that we have an appreciation of the fundamental principles of the spiritual approaches discussed in the preceding chapter, I shall explain in detail how the path is followed in these approaches. Because the paths of non-Buddhist systems provide no final freedom (falling as they do into the philosophical extreme of realism or nihilism), I will not analyze them in this section; they have been sufficiently treated already. [69b]

The Buddhist path can be divided into three approaches; these are known as the path of the shravaka, that of the pratyekabuddha, and that of the bodhisattva.

I. THE SHRAVAKA APPROACH

The first of these, the path of the shravaka, is a search for freedom for one's own sake, undertaken out of disgust with the suffering of samsara. How one follows this path is described in *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

Maintaining discipline, and having heard and contemplated teachings,
one applies oneself intensively to meditation.¹

Initially, one controls one's mind through the discipline of any of the seven kinds of ordination for individual liberation, whichever is appropriate.² Of these seven, five pertain to a monastic situation—that of a fully ordained monk or nun, a novice monk or nun, or a female aspirant—and two pertain to the householder situation—the ordination of a male or female lay practitioner.³ The twenty-four-hour vow of abstinence, being temporary, is not considered a support for developing spiritual qualities.⁴

Someone who maintains discipline in one of these ways then becomes learned by studying the following topics: the mind-body aggregates, the

fields of experience, the components of perception, the twelve links of interdependent connection, the principles of cause and effect, and the controlling factors.⁵

The practitioner next engages in spiritual development through the practice of meditation. This is primarily a process of accepting some things and rejecting others on the basis of the four noble truths. To elaborate, the truth of suffering concerns what is analogous to illness—that is, unwanted pain (caused by disease, injury, and so forth) that affects one’s body, speech, and mind and is exacerbated by external or internal conditions—as well as what all of this derives from—that is, the five mind-body aggregates that constitute one’s experience of, and perpetuate, samsara. In order to eliminate this, [70a] one sets out to understand the nature of one’s relentless involvement in it. The truth of the universal origin of suffering concerns what is analogous to the causes of illness—that is, karmic patterning, the functioning of which is like an artist drawing a picture. One sets out to eliminate the three mental poisons and other causes of suffering. The truth of the cessation of suffering concerns what is analogous to the well-being of one cured of an illness. One strives to attain the sacred fruition imbued with the joy that comes from being free of the pit, or pestilence, that is samsara. The truth of the spiritual path concerns what is analogous to medicine. One engages in meditation to be cured of the illness of suffering. This development is identical to that described in *The Highest Continuum*:

Just as an illness is to be understood, the cause of the illness eliminated,
a state of well-being attained, and medicine relied on,
so too suffering, its causes, its cessation, and likewise the path
are to be understood, eliminated, experienced, and relied on.⁶

Furthermore, regarding the first four paths, one develops one’s meditation in a sevenfold progression, as *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:⁷

There are seven parts to this progression,
which are analyzed in detail as the beginning phase,
the phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough,⁸
the path of meditation, and the path of seeing.⁹

To elaborate, in the initial phase of the path of accumulation, one develops the four applications of mindfulness; in the intermediate phase, the

four aspects of correct renunciation; and in the final phase, the four bases of supernormal powers. On the path of linkage, during the anticipatory phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience, one develops the five governing powers, and during the phases of patient acceptance and the highest state of mundane experience, one develops the five strengths.¹⁰ On the path of seeing, one develops the seven aids to enlightenment, and on the path of meditation, the noble eightfold path.¹¹ [70b]

A. The Path of Accumulation in the Shravaka Approach

I. INITIAL PHASE: THE FOUR APPLICATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The first step on all the paths is the initial phase of the path of accumulation. Beginners who have entered this phase develop the application of mindfulness on the basis of the body, as an antidote to attachment to their own and others' bodies. That is, to counteract patterns of desire in general, one neutralizes this attachment by meditating on one's own and others' bodies, and all that one perceives, as skeletons. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

... skeletons in all situations that involve attachment.¹²

As specific antidotes, one meditates on eight mental images, such as a decomposing corpse, a swollen corpse, and a maggot-ridden corpse.¹³ Once free of attachment, one develops the application of mindfulness by closely examining one's body, occasionally using methods such as meditating on it as if it were a hollow reed.

Then one develops the application of mindfulness on the basis of sensations. One meditates on one's perception of the three kinds of sensations—pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral—being painful and without pith or essence, like a hollow reed. As a sutra says:

Whatever sensations you may feel, you should know all of these to be painful.

Next, one develops the application of mindfulness on the basis of mind. That is, one focuses on one's inhalation and exhalation using the techniques of calm abiding and profound insight. For shravakas, the relative level of truth entails the continuum of ordinary mind and the calm-

ing of thoughts, whereas the ultimate level of truth entails irreducible moments of consciousness (when the continuum of ordinary mind is further examined). In that context, [71a] one meditates on the fact that none of this constitutes personal identity.¹⁴

Next, one develops the application of mindfulness on the basis of phenomena. Regarding the phenomena included in the aggregates of formative factors and consciousness, one meditates on the nature of all external and internal entities being such that they lack any identity, are impermanent, are like illusions, and so forth.

Then, using the aggregates of form, sensation, and discernment, one meditates by applying mindfulness to the three aspects of body, sensations, and mind, experiencing these to be without finite essence and so forth. Using the two aggregates of discernment and consciousness, one meditates by applying mindfulness to those phenomena. Thus, in various ways, one removes the afflictive states that entail overt fixation on all phenomena included in the five mind-body aggregates. Then, having suppressed the coarser factors to be eliminated, one advances on the path. The following verse is found in *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

Regarding the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena,
thoroughly investigate these with respect to both kinds of
characteristics.¹⁵

That is, one should meditate on each of these with respect to both their general and specific characteristics, experiencing the body as unclean by nature, sensations as painful by nature, the mind as impermanent by nature, and mental phenomena as lacking identity by nature.

2. INTERMEDIATE PHASE: THE FOUR ASPECTS OF CORRECT RENUNCIATION

Next, when the intermediate phase of the path of accumulation commences, having aroused one's diligence one meditates to prevent negative tendencies that have not developed from doing so, to control those that have developed, to cause positive tendencies that have not developed to do so, and to cause those that have developed to increase. Because this results in the correct renunciation of all that is negative, [71b] these are termed "the aspects of correct renunciation."

3. FINAL PHASE: THE FOUR BASES OF SUPERNORMAL POWERS

Next, when the final phase of the path of accumulation commences, one cultivates four kinds of meditative absorption: those of intention, diligence, attention, and analysis. In succession, then, one meditates by giving rise to one-pointed intention, using some positive frame of reference (on either the relative or ultimate level); in the same context, with intense diligence one sustains one's meditation; through attention one focuses on it one-pointedly; and through analysis one thoroughly investigates the object of one's meditation. These are called "bases of supernormal powers" because they bring about any and all states of meditative stability and so constitute skillful means for, or aids to, gaining supernormal powers.

B. The Path of Linkage in the Shravaka Approach

I. MEDITATIVE WARMTH AND THE PEAK EXPERIENCE: THE FIVE GOVERNING POWERS

Next, one experiences the onset of the path of linkage. During the two anticipatory phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience, one cultivates the five governing powers. These are the five powers of confidence, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime knowing. One meditates with conviction based on one's confidence in the sixteen topics pertaining to the four truths. One's meditation is such that diligence ensures enthusiasm, mindfulness ensures that these topics of meditation are not forgotten, meditative absorption ensures that the mind pays one-pointed attention to them, and sublime knowing ensures that they are analyzed. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

That phase embraces the four truths within its scope.
It involves sixteen topics. From the phase of meditative warmth comes that of the peak experience, which has a similar structure.¹⁶

What are these sixteen topics? Four concern the truth of suffering: impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and the lack of identity. [72a] Four concern the universal origin of suffering: the fact that all things in essence have causes, that these causes are the universal origin of suffering, that

they are produced relentlessly, and that they are perpetuated by conditions. Four concern the cessation of suffering: cessation,¹⁷ peace, the ideal situation, and disengagement. Four concern the path: the path itself, the logic of this process, the proven attainment to which it leads, and the certainty of release.

2. PATIENT ACCEPTANCE AND THE HIGHEST STATE OF MUNDANE EXPERIENCE: THE FIVE STRENGTHS

During the two anticipatory phases of patient acceptance and the highest state of mundane experience, one cultivates the five “strengths.” These are strengths in the sense that they confer a unique ability to overcome afflictive states. The way they are cultivated in meditation is parallel to the way the governing powers are cultivated.¹⁸

As to how one meditates on the topics pertaining to the four truths, the same source states:

From that, furthermore, patient acceptance comes about;
the two degrees are similar.¹⁹

Four considerations pertain to suffering in the realm of desire and four to suffering in the two higher realms (which are counted as one realm), for a total of eight. Similarly, there are eight considerations for each of the three remaining truths—the universal origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path—giving a method of meditating on thirty-two considerations. As well, seven degrees are counted, three for the phase of meditative warmth and three for the phase of the peak experience, plus the weak degree of patient acceptance.²⁰ Multiplying the thirty-two sub-topics by this figure of seven gives a total of 224 considerations.

With the moderate degree of patient acceptance, one meditates on twenty-eight considerations—that is, the thirty-two minus four pertaining to the path.²¹ Next, one meditates on twenty-four considerations, having omitted the four pertaining to the path in the realm of desire. Further, one meditates on twenty considerations, having omitted the four pertaining to the cessation of suffering in the higher realms; [72b] then on sixteen considerations, having omitted the four pertaining to the cessation of suffering in the realm of desire. Further, one meditates on twelve considerations, having omitted the four pertaining to the universal origin of suffering in the higher realms; then on eight considerations, having omit-

ted the four pertaining to the universal origin of suffering in the realm of desire. Further, one meditates on four considerations, having omitted the four pertaining to suffering in the higher realms.

In the context of meditating on the four remaining considerations—pertaining to suffering in the realm of desire—there are two types of individuals, those of a predominantly sensual disposition and those of a predominantly intellectual disposition.

The first type of individual meditates on three truths, having omitted either that of the cessation of suffering or that of the path (whichever the individual feels is appropriate) from the four truths as they apply to the realm of desire. These individuals can then omit the latter two truths and meditate on the two remaining truths, suffering and its universal origin.

At this point, these individuals fall into two subcategories: those hampered by the pride of egotism and those hampered by laziness (a predisposition toward indolence). Those in the first subcategory perfect the moderate degree of patient acceptance by meditating twice on the topic of impermanence. Thus, in the context of the moderate degree of patient acceptance, by omitting those considerations that are no longer necessary and counting the remaining considerations on which one progressively meditates, one arrives at a total of 119 considerations.²² *The Schemata* refers to the following:

One hundred and nineteen steps . . .

Then, by meditating once on the topic of impermanence, such prideful individuals perfect the strong degree of patient acceptance. Subsequently, by meditating on this once more, they perfect the phase of the highest state of mundane experience. They then perceive impermanence directly, and there dawns the patient acceptance born of the understanding of suffering.²³ Alternatively, those who are hampered by laziness perfect the moderate degree of patient acceptance by meditating twice on the topic of suffering; they then follow a process similar to the foregoing. [73a]

Individuals of a predominantly intellectual disposition can omit either one of the first two truths and meditate on the remaining three. Then, omitting the first two truths, they meditate on the last two.

Again, these individuals fall into two subcategories at this point. If they are dominated by the belief that the phenomena they perceive have identity, they perfect the moderate degree of patient acceptance by meditating twice on the topic of emptiness. If they are dominated by the belief

in a self that has identity, they perfect this moderate degree of patient acceptance by meditating twice on the topic of the lack of such identity. A process similar to that described above applies to the strong degree of patient acceptance and the phase of the highest state of mundane experience.

C. The Path of Seeing in the Shravaka Approach

After the completion of the path of linkage, the sixteen steps of the path of seeing dawn in succession. In actuality, it is the first fifteen of these that constitute the path of seeing, as *The Treasury of Abhidharma* indicates:

In this regard, fifteen steps
make up the path of seeing, so called because what was not
formerly seen is seen.²⁴

The sixteenth step is applying the antidote that ensures the continuity of the process of elimination on the path of seeing;²⁵ it also constitutes the onset of the path of meditation.

Regarding the process of elimination on the path of seeing, conceptual imputation is the factor to be eliminated. If we analyze this process with respect to its essence, we find that there are in fact six factors to be eliminated, as listed in *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

The development from subtler origins of six afflictive states—
desire and similarly anger,
pride, ignorance, opinionatedness,
and doubt—is the root of conditioned existence. These six,
moreover, . . .²⁶

I. THE VAIBHASHIKA POSITION

If we analyze the process of elimination on the path of seeing with respect to its focus of meditation, the various realms of existence, and the negative impact of the factors to be eliminated, we find that the Vaibhashika system of the shravaka approach uses the four truths as the focus of meditation, stating that within the three realms of existence the negative impact of the factors to be eliminated involves ten such factors, five of which are belief systems and five of which are not. [73b] The five belief systems are belief in the reality of the perishable mind-body aggregates, belief in some ideological extreme, belief in erroneous ideas, belief in philosophical views as absolutes, and belief in discipline and deportment as abso-

lutes. The five factors that are not belief systems are desire, anger, pride, ignorance, and doubt. How these function is referred to in *The Treasury of Abhidharma*:

There are ten factors, then seven, seven, and eight, omitting the three and the two belief systems.²⁷

Here “omitting the three . . . belief systems” refers to not engaging in the first two and the last of the above-mentioned five belief systems, while “omitting the . . . two belief systems” refers to not engaging in the first two of the five, although one does engage in the rest of the ten factors. Thus, there are thirty-two factors to be eliminated in the realm of desire.²⁸ Since anger is absent in the two higher realms, there are in each of these realms twenty-eight factors focusing on the four truths.²⁹ These are added together, and so it is held that there are a total of eighty-eight factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing.³⁰

With regard to the negative impact of the ten factors to be eliminated by focusing on the truth of suffering as it pertains to the realm of desire, five factors constitute the actual impact and five factors function as a result of this negative impact having taken place.

As for the first group of five, out of a belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates, one experiences the truth of suffering in terms of the self and what it perceives. Out of a belief in some ideological extreme, one experiences things in terms of existence or nonexistence (that is, realism or nihilism). Out of a belief in erroneous ideas, one experiences things in terms of nonexistence. Out of ignorance, one relates to the characteristics of things without understanding them for what they are. And out of doubt, one experiences uncertainty as to whether or not the five mind-body aggregates constitute the truth of suffering.

The second group of five factors to be eliminated functions on the basis of the five belief systems. [74a] Desire causes attachment to and fixation on these five beliefs. Pride makes one conceited and arrogant. Out of a belief in philosophical views as absolutes, one takes them to be sacrosanct. Out of a belief in discipline and deportment as absolutes, one takes them to be states of purity and freedom. Out of anger, one is disturbed upon hearing the view of the nonexistence of identity, a view that is at odds with the foregoing five belief systems.

In considering the two truths of the universal origin of suffering and its cessation as these pertain to the realm of desire, Vaibhashika propo-

nents maintain that three factors can be omitted: the belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates, the belief in some ideological extreme, and the belief in discipline and deportment as absolutes. However, in the case of each of these two truths, the remaining seven factors have the same negative impact as that explained in the preceding section on the truth of suffering.

Regarding the truth of the path, two factors can be omitted—the belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates and the belief in some ideological extreme—but the remaining eight factors have the same negative impact explained above.

Thus, the total number of factors to be eliminated by focusing on the four truths as these pertain to the realm of desire is thirty-two. In the two higher realms, anger is absent, but when the remaining factors are counted as before, we could rephrase the earlier citation as follows: “There are nine factors, then six, six, and seven, . . .” This makes twenty-eight factors in each of these realms, for a total of fifty-six. When this figure is added to the thirty-two already obtained, there are eighty-eight factors.³¹

2. THE SAUTRANTIKA POSITION

According to the Sautrantika system, there are ten factors to be eliminated by focusing on the truth of suffering as it pertains to the realm of desire. For each of the three remaining truths, two belief systems—the belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates and the belief in some ideological extreme—can be omitted, while the remaining eight factors are functioning in each case, giving a total of thirty-four factors.

In the two higher realms, the four factors of anger associated with the four truths can be omitted, [74b] giving a total of thirty factors to be eliminated for each realm. The final number of factors is considered to be ninety-four.³² *The Concise Definitive Conclusion* states:

With respect to the truth of the universal origin of suffering, the belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates and the belief in some ideological extreme can be omitted; the eight remaining factors still have a negative impact. The same is the case for the truth of the cessation of suffering and that of the path.

3. THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION ON THE PATH OF SEEING

There are two ways of removing the factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing. Those who progress developmentally remove these factors eight times through the fifteen steps that constitute the path of seeing. Through the patient acceptance of the understanding of the truth of suffering,³³ all ten negative factors associated with the truth of suffering as it pertains to the realm of desire are actually eliminated; this is a process by which new influences come into being. Through the understanding of suffering, the process of eliminating these ten factors continues. Through the patient acceptance that brings a subsequent understanding of suffering, the eighteen negative factors associated with the truth of suffering as it pertains to the two higher realms are actually eliminated. Through the subsequent understanding of suffering, their elimination continues. The foregoing process of elimination is similar for the remaining three truths.³⁴

For those who progress more rapidly,³⁵ the process of elimination is similar to that of the bodhisattva approach, in that it involves removing those factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing four times through the fifteen steps that constitute the path of seeing.

4. THE SEVEN AIDS TO ENLIGHTENMENT

There are seven aids to enlightenment on the path of seeing. These aids to the authentic state of enlightened being are mindfulness, a thorough analysis of phenomena, diligence, joy, total pliancy, meditative absorption, and impartiality. [75a]

D. The Path of Meditation in the Shravaka Approach

Next, the path of meditation commences. Its three main phases (initial, intermediate, and final) are divided into nine degrees of applying antidotes: the weak degree of the initial phase, the moderate degree of the initial phase, and the strong degree of the initial phase; the weak degree of the intermediate phase, the moderate degree of the intermediate phase, and the strong degree of the intermediate phase; the weak degree of the final phase, the moderate degree of the final phase, and the strong degree of the final phase. The factors to be eliminated are also classified as nine-

fold, but as nine degrees of strength in the reverse order, from the obvious to the moderate to the subtle—that is, the most obvious degree of the obvious and so forth. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* explains:

These phases address nine degrees of flaws,
and so there are similar degrees of positive qualities,
because the initial and other phases
are divided into weak, moderate, and strong degrees.³⁶

In essence, the nine degrees are defined by the antidotes that come into play as one applies oneself to the noble eightfold path through the nine levels that define the path of meditation. The eight branches of this correct and noble path are correct view, thought, speech, activities, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption. In conjunction with this, one cultivates the following nine successive degrees of meditative equipoise: the first, second, third, and fourth states of meditative stability; the four states associated with the realm of formlessness (infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither existence nor nonexistence); and the state of cessation.³⁷ In certain situations, one meditates within a general framework to attain what has not yet been attained; [75b] in other situations, one does so specifically to perfect the attainment that has taken place.

The distortions to be eliminated in these states are those that are by nature innate.³⁸ According to *The Concise Definitive Conclusion*:

That which is innate affects ordinary beings who are spiritually undeveloped, even wild animals and birds.

If we examine what these distortions are in essence, we find that there are four: desire, anger, pride, and ignorance. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

There are four distortions to be eliminated through meditation.³⁹

If we analyze them in terms of the realms of existence, we find that all four distortions apply to the realm of desire, whereas three of the four apply to each of the two higher realms,⁴⁰ making a total of ten factors. Alternatively, if we analyze them in terms of the states of ordinary being, we find that all four distortions apply to the realm of desire, whereas three of the four apply to each of eight states—the four states of meditative stability and the four states of the realm of formlessness—making a total of twenty-eight factors.

If we analyze them in terms of both the states of ordinary being and the degree of strength (obvious, moderate, and so forth), we find that there are nine states—the realm of desire, the four states of meditative stability, and the four formless states—and in each of these there are three degrees of desire (obvious, moderate, and subtle), which are divided into groups of three,⁴¹ so there are nine groups of nine degrees. Similarly, there are nine groups of nine degrees of pride, nine groups of nine degrees of ignorance, and one group of nine degrees of anger in the realm of desire.⁴² When these are totaled, there are 252 factors to be eliminated. *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

There are four distortions to be eliminated through meditation.
Excluding anger, the same distortions
likewise occur in the realms of form and formlessness.⁴³

The factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation are removed at the same time that the corresponding states of ordinary being cease, and so their elimination amounts to a cessation of their functioning. [76a] The same source explains:

When the mind that requires no more learning dawns,
there is total freedom from obscurations.
Through the path that causes them to cease,
the obscurations pertaining to that path are utterly eliminated.⁴⁴

People who progress more rapidly remove, all together, those factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation, factors that apply to the three realms. The cessation of factors during the weak degree of the initial phase of the path of meditation is simultaneous with the cessation of the most obvious degree of the obvious factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation (since their causes have been eliminated). Someone who progresses developmentally removes, in succession, the nine degrees of factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation that are found in the nine states of ordinary being.

E. The Fruition of the Shravaka Arhat

Upon the completion of the path of meditation in the foregoing way, the fruition becomes evident as two aspects of pristine cognition:⁴⁵ the knowledge that distortions have come to an end and the knowledge that one will no longer experience suffering. According to the same source:

The knowledge that distortions have come to an end and that one will no longer experience suffering: this is enlightenment.⁴⁶

It is said that “suffering is to be understood, its universal origin is to be eliminated, its cessation is to be made evident, and the path is to be applied to one’s experience.” The knowledge that all of this, which was to be done, has been done comes about from the knowledge that distortions have come to an end. As the same source indicates:

The knowledge that distortions have come to an end entails the certainty that there is thorough understanding and so forth concerning the truths.⁴⁷

Once suffering is understood, there is nothing more to understand; that is, one understands that suffering will no longer be experienced. The same principle holds for the other truths:⁴⁸

With thorough understanding, there is nothing more to understand; the same principle holds for the other truths. This is held to be the state in which one no longer experiences suffering.⁴⁹

Thus, one endowed with these two aspects of pristine cognition is an arhat.

Arhats are of two kinds: those who experience residual traces of the mind-body aggregates and those who do not.

I. ARHATS WHO EXPERIENCE RESIDUAL TRACES

For arhats who experience residual traces, [76b] there remains a slight residue of the truth of suffering (since they have not yet eliminated the mind-body aggregates that perpetuate samsara), and so they must guard their senses closely with respect to sense objects. These arhats fall into two categories. All of them realize that the residual traces that are the basis of their existence do not constitute any personal identity, and thus they remove all of the factors to be eliminated that apply to the three realms. However, some do not attain the “adornments” of supernormal powers and so forth through their meditative stability, and so are called “unadorned arhats,” whereas those who attain these qualities are called “adorned.”

There are two other ways in which such arhats are classified: on the basis of what they have eliminated and their level of acumen. In the first

case, arhats may experience complete freedom as a result of both sublime knowing and meditative absorption or sublime knowing alone. And so, respectively, arhats may either be free (through the power of sublime knowing and meditative absorption) of both the obscurations of the afflictive states in the three realms and the obscurations that impede meditative equipoise or be free of the afflictive obscurations but not the obscurations that impede meditative equipoise. The afflictive obscurations include the three mental poisons and other factors that make the mind thoroughly subject to afflictive states; the obscurations that impede meditative equipoise include laxity, agitation, and other factors that create obstacles to meditative absorption. There are meditative obscurations that create obstacles on the causal level (that is, obscurations that function prior to the onset of meditative absorption) and those that create obstacles to abiding in the resultant state of meditation (that is, that prevent the mind from abiding in the present moment). Although these terms are the same as those found in the Mahayana teachings, the implications are different.

If arhats who experience residual traces are classified on the basis of their personal acumen, there are six kinds: those whose meditation is undermined, those prone to committing suicide, [77a] those who need to guard their senses closely, those with a tendency toward stagnation, those with the potential for realization, and those with a quality of immovability. Arhats of the first kind are of dull acumen, and the phenomena they perceive undermine their blissful repose; that is, they experience a weakening of the bliss of their meditative stability. Arhats of the second kind are of dull acumen and believe that if they commit suicide they will no longer be hindered in attaining their goal, but will be if they do not; that is, they have a predilection for replacing their enjoyment of life with the intention to die. Those of the third kind are of dull acumen and experience a weakening of their blissful repose if they become disoriented, but will not if they do not; this disorientation depends on whether their minds are distracted by sense pleasures. Those of the fourth kind are of dull acumen and, although there is no weakening of their blissful repose, lack the potential to improve their level of acumen. Those of the fifth kind are of dull acumen, do not experience any weakening of their blissful repose, and have the potential to improve their level of acumen; they also have the potential to attain the states of realization associated with the higher realms. Those of the sixth kind are of sharp acumen, and their

blissful repose is not weakened even by phenomena in their immediate perception.

All six kinds are found in the realm of desire; two are found in the two higher realms: those with a tendency toward stagnation and those with a quality of immovability. The foregoing points pertain to the situations of arhats who experience residual traces of mind-body aggregates.

2. ARHATS WHO EXPERIENCE NO RESIDUAL TRACES

As for arhats who experience no such residual traces, it is held that like a fire once its fuel is exhausted, they no longer have physical bodies when they attain nirvana,⁵⁰ but their minds enter a realm of cessation, a state of pristine cognition in which ordinary mind has ceased. [77b] *Didactic Aphorisms* states:

Where there is no body, perception ceases,
one is free of all sensations,
formative factors are thoroughly pacified,
and consciousness subsides.⁵¹

This concludes my discussion of the shravaka approach.

II. THE PRATYEKABUDDHA APPROACH

As for the second path, there are three kinds of pratyekabuddhas: those who are solitary like a rhinoceros, those who participate a great deal in groups, and those who participate to a lesser extent in groups.

A. Solitary Pratyekabuddhas

Those of the first kind can be described in five ways. First, the specific character type of solitary pratyekabuddhas is such that, of the three kinds of pratyekabuddhas, they have the highest acumen, have a great deal of pride and dissatisfaction with samsara, and have little compassion for the welfare of others. They delight in living completely alone, like a rhinoceros.

Second, as to the particular way in which they develop spiritually, they spend some one hundred great eons developing those qualities associated with the path of accumulation, as *The Treasury of Abhidharma* indicates:

The “rhinoceroses,” owing to one hundred eons . . .⁵²

Furthermore, understanding that within that framework of spiritual development they lack the good fortune to attain enlightenment, they become learned by hearing and contemplating the scriptures of the shravakas that are found in this world and in that way hope to realize their aspirations. They formulate three such aspirations: “May I be reborn in a realm where no buddha is present, where there are not even shravakas. In that rebirth, may the realization of the path awaken naturally in my experience. May I give spiritual teachings to those I am to guide by means of physical gestures, and not need to teach verbally.”⁵³ [78a]

Third, the particular way in which they bring their path to completion is described in *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing*:

When no completely enlightened buddhas have appeared
and shravakas are also absent,
the pristine cognition of pratyekabuddhas
fully awakens, without any support.⁵⁴

Accordingly, in the lifetime after they have made their aspirations, they are reborn in worlds in which there are no buddhas or shravakas. Upon going to a cemetery and seeing the bones there, they immediately experience revulsion toward samsara. They think, “Alas! Where did these bones come from? They came from aging and death. Where did aging and death come from? They came from birth . . .” and so forth, examining in succession the twelve links in the process of interdependent connection. Wondering, “How can I be liberated from this?” they then cut through the root of those twelve links, undermining the process of interdependent connection by arresting ignorance, karmic patterning, and so on through the arresting of aging and death. Once they understand that all phenomena occur merely through a process of interdependent connection, the path of linkage comes about simply from their meditation on these twelve links and on the sixteen topics (impermanence and so forth) related to the four truths.

They cultivate the four phases of the path of linkage in the same way as shravakas. However, the sixteen steps of the path of seeing (the actual realization of the truths) and the path of meditation take place for pratyekabuddhas as they do for bodhisattvas. After that, two aspects of pristine cognition—the knowledge that all of their negativity has been exhausted and the knowledge that suffering will no longer occur for them—become fully evident.

The way in which the five paths can culminate for them in a single session parallels the way it does for bodhisattvas. [78b] As *The Treasury of Abhidharma* states:

For the Teacher and those who are like a rhinoceros, when they
become enlightened
everything is attained in a single, final state of meditative
stability.⁵⁵

Fourth, their particular situation has two aspects. The physical aspect is such that they dwell alone, like a rhinoceros. The mental aspect is such that they continually reflect on the twelve links of interdependent connection, the thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment, and the three avenues to complete liberation.

The twelve links of interdependent connection are as follows:

Ignorance, karmic patterning, consciousness, the mind-body
complex,
the six fields of experience, contact, sensation,
compulsion, perpetuation, becoming, birth,
and aging and death: these are the twelve links of interdependent
connection.

Here ignorance means a fundamental lack of understanding. Because of it, beings continually fall into samsara, whereby karmic patterning occurs. This leads to consciousness, in that overt consciousness emerges from the basis of each being's ordinary experience. From consciousness arises the mind-body complex, consisting of the five mind-body aggregates—that is, the four aggregates of mind (which include each individual being's aggregates of sensation, perception, and formative factors)⁵⁶ and the physical form on which these depend. On that basis, the six fields of experience—visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and conceptual—develop. This leads to contact, which is the coming together of three factors: objects, faculties, and mental focus. This leads to sensation, in that it produces sensations that are pleasant, painful, or neutral. This leads to compulsion, in that the mind takes objects to be its own, rejecting or accepting them according to various responses of attraction, aversion, and so forth. This leads to perpetuation, in that yearning arises for what is desired and one takes this as a goal. [79a] This leads to becoming, with conception taking place in a womb in the next lifetime. This leads to birth—the birth of the physical body. This leads to aging as youth fades,

and then to death as one's life force comes to an end. As a result of karma, ordinary beings continually cycle thus in samsara. For a more detailed discussion of this process, consult *The Supreme Chariot of Definitive Meaning*.

The thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment are as follows:

Four applications of mindfulness, four aspects of correct renunciation,
four bases of supernormal powers, five governing powers,
five strengths, seven aids to the path to enlightenment, and the
noble eightfold path:
these are the thirty-seven factors that contribute to
enlightenment.

The three avenues to complete liberation are as follows:

The avenues to complete liberation from all obscuration are
three:
emptiness, the absence of characteristics, and the absence
of speculation.

Of the three avenues to complete liberation that concern the knowable, emptiness is the nonexistence of a self; the absence of characteristics is the nonexistence of anything the self takes to be its own; and the absence of speculation is a nonreferential state. In terms of the path, of the three avenues to complete liberation, emptiness is the truth of cessation; the absence of characteristics is the truth of the path; and the absence of speculation constitutes the truths of suffering and its universal origin. In terms of the fruition, of the three avenues to liberation, emptiness and the absence of characteristics pertain to the state in which there are no residual traces, whereas the absence of speculation pertains to the state that still involves residual traces.

Fifth, as to the particular manner in which pratyekabuddhas teach the dharma, they are inhabitants of the realm of desire and so must rely on solid food. When they enter a town to beg for alms, [79b] they teach the dharma through symbolic physical gestures. With the display of a single symbolic gesture, those to be guided individually understand the topics that interest them: the ten kinds of positive actions, the four truths, or the twelve links of interdependent connection. The section of *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* that discusses pratyekabuddhas states:

Whichever person wishes to hear
 whichever topic in whatever way,
 for that person that very topic
 is perceived in that way, even though no language is employed.⁵⁷

B. Pratyekabuddhas Who Participate a Great Deal in Groups

Pratyekabuddhas of the second kind, those who participate a great deal in groups, can be described in five ways. First, their specific character type is such that they are of average acumen, have a great deal of pride and dissatisfaction with samsara, and have little compassion. They delight in large groups of people; they are said to live together in groups of up to five hundred in a single place.

Second, as to the particular way in which they develop spiritually, they spend about one hundred human lifetimes developing all positive qualities up to and including those of the moderate degree of patient acceptance. The aspirations they formulate are similar to those of solitary pratyekabuddhas.

Third, the way in which they bring their path to completion is the same as that of solitary pratyekabuddhas.

Fourth, their particular situation has two aspects. The physical aspect is such that they live in communities with many other pratyekabuddhas, flocking together like parrots. The mental aspect is identical to that of solitary pratyekabuddhas.

Fifth, the particular way in which they teach the dharma is also identical to that of solitary pratyekabuddhas.

C. Pratyekabuddhas Who Participate to a Lesser Extent in Groups

Pratyekabuddhas of the third kind, those who participate to a lesser extent in groups, can also be described in five ways. First, their character type is such that they are of dull acumen, have a great deal of pride and dissatisfaction with samsara, and have little compassion. Second, as to the particular way in which they develop spiritually, they spend thirteen human lifetimes developing all positive qualities up to and including the fifteen steps of the path of seeing. With respect to the remaining aspects,

these pratyekabuddhas resemble those who participate a great deal in groups. [80a]

The foregoing classification of pratyekabuddhas according to their level of acumen is based on whether five, four, or three paths culminate in a single session, which is in turn related to the length of time spent in spiritual development, whether extended, intermediate, or short.

The arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches who have passed into the state of cessation in which there are no residual traces are considered by the respective traditions of the shravakas and pratyekabuddhas never to waver from that quiescent state. From the higher perspective of the Mahayana, all functioning of ordinary consciousness dissolves into that state of quiescence for as long a time as the arhat previously spent in spiritual development. Then the arhat is reborn within a lotus bud in a pure realm such as Sukhavati, Abhirati, or Padmaka; having taken rebirth by the force of subtle cognitive obscurations and the habit patterns of ignorance, the arhat remains in the closed bud for seven years. At the end of that time, by the power of the sunlike compassion of the buddha in that realm, waves of enlightened speech resound with verses that cause the lotus to begin to bloom and rouse the arhat from the intoxicating stupor induced by meditative absorption. Verses such as the following are found in *The White Lotus of the Sacred Dharma*:

How could such a state be described as nirvana?
 Though you have escaped from the suffering of samsara,
 you have not yet passed into final nirvana.
 Seek out this spiritual approach to buddhahood!

Immediately upon hearing this, the arhat experiences an enthusiasm for entering the Mahayana path and the lotus blossom opens. [80b] Coming into the presence of the tathagata, the arhat arouses the awakening mind of bodhichitta for the first time and by meditating according to the Mahayana path becomes a buddha in that very lifetime. *The Journey to Sri Lanka* states:

By gaining control over rebirth through the blessings of the tathagatas, they develop all positive qualities in their entirety. Thus, they attain buddhahood itself.

Furthermore, arhats can enter the path only at the beginning—the

lowest level of the path of accumulation—and then complete the five paths of the Mahayana. Some might raise the objection, “This means that by having to begin at the path of accumulation, a spiritually advanced individual reverts to the level of an ordinary being.” This objection, however, is a sign of their lack of understanding. If a beginning practitioner who is an ordinary being enters the path of accumulation, that being still has not attained a spiritually advanced state, and so it is appropriate to term this “the level of an ordinary being.” But when shravakas and pratyekabuddhas enter the Mahayana path of accumulation, they are spiritually advanced, and so have already developed the qualities of the initial phase—that is, the applications of mindfulness. The suggestion that someone could revert to being an ordinary person after having already cultivated the applications of mindfulness is flawed. If this were the case, then even on the tenth spiritual level one could revert to being an ordinary being, and on the level of pratyekabuddhas (which also entails these applications of mindfulness) one could also revert to an ordinary state.

A further objection might be raised: “Then it follows logically that those shravakas and pratyekabuddhas who are in the process of cultivating the applications of mindfulness are already spiritually advanced individuals in the Mahayana sense, since whoever is a spiritually advanced being has cultivated the Mahayana version of these applications of mindfulness.” But this is not proof that they are spiritually advanced beings in the true sense of the term, as used in the context of the Mahayana. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are not the equals of spiritually advanced beings of the Mahayana approach in terms of what they have eliminated or realized. Therefore, since this primary criterion has not been met, they are not spiritually advanced from the Mahayana perspective, but are spiritually advanced beings of the Hinayana type. [81a] As well, the fact that one is not a spiritually advanced being of the Mahayana approach, even though one is cultivating the Mahayana version of the applications of mindfulness, means that the foregoing objection is not valid.

The issue here is similar to that found in other cases of flawed reasoning. For example, when the teachings speak of bodhisattvas refining the qualities that cause buddha realms to manifest, it might seem to follow logically that the subjects under discussion—bodhisattvas—must therefore be perfect buddhas. Therefore, when arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches enter the path of the Mahayana, they must do so at the lowest level of the path of accumulation, for buddhahood (in

the Mahayana sense of the term) requires that one traverse the five paths of the Mahayana.

III. THE BODHISATTVA APPROACH

My discussion of the third path, that of the bodhisattva, has three parts: the nature of the spiritual potential that is the basis of this path;⁵⁸ the method by which someone with this spiritual potential arouses bodhi-chitta, or awakening mind; and how the stages of the path are traversed according to that method.

A. Spiritual Potential

The sutra *The Cluster of Stems* states:

O heirs of the victorious ones, what is termed “spiritual potential” for those of the bodhisattva family refers to their firm intention to realize the basic space of phenomena, spacious like the sky, utterly lucid by nature. Bodhisattvas who abide in full awareness of that potential take birth in the family of buddhas—transcendent and accomplished conquerors—of the past, present, and future.

According to *The Highest Continuum*:

That which is the utterly lucid nature of mind
is unchanging, like space.⁵⁹

Basic space, completely pure by nature, is ultimate truth—naturally occurring timeless awareness. [81b] Its nature is such that when it is associated with distortions, it is called “spiritual potential,” “fundamental being,” or “buddha nature,”⁶⁰ whereas when it is free of distortions, it is called “enlightenment” or “the state of having gone to suchness.” To come to a definitive understanding of this, there are four points to consider: the nature of this spiritual potential, its omnipresence, a detailed analysis of it, and the rationale for relying on it.

I. THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

In *The Highest Continuum*, we read the following:

There is nothing whatsoever to remove from this,
nor anything in the slightest to add.

Look truly to what is true in itself;
if what is true is seen, there is total freedom.⁶¹

Essentially, basic space, the heart essence of being, has never had any distortions to be removed, because it is by nature utterly lucid and without distortions. The qualities of enlightenment are spontaneously present, and so it is not that these qualities never existed previously and are attained as something new. The same source states:

Because it is pure yet associated with afflictive states,⁶²
because it is pure and entirely without afflictive states,
because it is indivisible,
because it is spontaneously present and completely
nonconceptual, . . .⁶³

The authentic view lies in the essence of what has ultimate meaning. Once one has perceived it, one is free of the adventitious distortions of afflictive states, which are like an enveloping caul. Asanga explains this in his *Commentary on "The Highest Continuum"*:

With respect to the qualities of buddhahood, which are without distortions, there is no difference whatsoever between the true nature of phenomena in some earlier state and that nature in any later one, as timeless awareness is inseparable from the state of an ordinary being who is subject to all-consuming afflictive states. These qualities are thus inconceivable to the ordinary mind.

Enlightenment can be described as the state in which previously existent qualities, not newly created ones, have become fully evident. [82a] Therefore, from the standpoint of what basic space—the heart essence of being—is in essence, it is devoid of anything that could characterize it as a real entity that stands up under analysis, for that would involve distortions and flaws; it is not, however, devoid of the qualities of enlightenment, for these are timelessly present as its natural attributes. *The Highest Continuum* states:

Although one's fundamental being is devoid of adventitious
factors
that are characterized as separate from it,
it is not devoid of unsurpassable factors
that are characterized as inseparable from it.⁶⁴

Moreover, the commentary on this source explains:

What does this demonstrate, you ask? There is no reason whatsoever for regarding all-consuming afflictive states as things to be removed from the fundamental being of the tathagatas, which is innately and totally pure, because its nature is such that it is free of adventitious distortions. There is nothing in the slightest to add to it, nothing that is the result of any process of complete refinement, because its nature is the pure nature of phenomena, which is indivisible.

Thus, the source text is stating that buddha nature is devoid of all the enshrouding overlays of afflictive states, which entail division and can be separated from it. But it is not devoid of the inconceivable attributes of buddhahood, which entail no division and cannot be separated from it, and which are more numerous than the grains of sand in the bed of the river Ganges.

In this way, we understand that where *Y* is absent from *X*, we can say, “*X* is devoid of *Y*,” for *Y* cannot be perceived to be in accordance with what is actually so. Where *Y* continues to be present, [82b] we can say, “*Y* is constantly present in *X*,” for it is understood to be actually so, just as it is.

These two stanzas demonstrate the characteristics of emptiness, which is impeccable in that there is freedom from the extremes of exaggeration and denigration.⁶⁵

If you wonder how a spiritual potential such as this is associated with the phenomena of samsara or nirvana, you should understand the following: Its relationship to the phenomena of samsara is that of something obscured to what obscures it, like that of the sun to clouds. Its relationship to the phenomena of nirvana is one of essential identity, like that of the sun to its rays. Once the phenomena of samsara and their attendant distortions—which are supported within the “support” of basic space—are eliminated at a certain point by means of antidotes, this process results in the phenomena of nirvana becoming fully evident. *The Highest Continuum* indicates that the phenomena of samsara are adventitious, whereas the qualities of enlightenment are present such that they are timelessly uncompounded:

Because it is associated with adventitious faults
yet is innately imbued with the qualities of enlightenment,
as it was before, so is it afterward—
the unchanging nature of phenomena.⁶⁶

In the context of this spiritual potential—the basic space of phenomena, which like space is without transition or change—there is a process whereby, for countless lifetimes, physical bodies are left behind and taken up again on the basis of karma and habit patterns that perpetuate *samsara* endlessly. The same source describes this process:

Just as all universes
originate and disintegrate in space,
so the components of experience
originate and disintegrate in uncompounded basic space.⁶⁷ [83a]

Moreover, although the components of experience seem to originate and disintegrate as a result of karma and incidental circumstances, one's fundamental being is without origination or cessation, just as space is not incinerated even though the fire at the end of an eon incinerates the universe. The same source states:

Just as space has never
been incinerated by flames,
similarly this is not incinerated
by the flames of death, illness, or aging.⁶⁸

All birth and death, all happiness and suffering come about as a result of karma and afflictive states. These in turn come about as a result of the nonrecognition of awareness, which is the cause of the all-consuming and fallacious thought processes of the ordinary mind. That nonrecognition, moreover, is sustained within the mind's utterly lucid nature, just as the universe is sustained within space. As this source states:

Earth is based firmly on water,
water on air, and air on space.
Space is not based on wind, water,
or the element of earth.

Similarly, the mind-body aggregates, components of perception,
and faculties
are based on karma and afflictive states.
Karma and afflictive states are always based
on the fallacious functioning of mind.

Whereas the fallacious functioning of mind
is based entirely on the purity of mind,
the true nature of mind
is not based on any of these factors.⁶⁹

The qualities of nirvana are innate and abide timelessly, like the sun's rays with the sun. They include both manifest aspects (such as the kayas, light rays, pure realms, and immeasurable mansions) and qualities of awareness (such as strengths and states of fearlessness).⁷⁰ There is an extensive discussion of these in the sutra *The Garlands of Buddhas*, [83b] but they are summarized concisely in *The Commentary on "The Highest Continuum"*:

With respect to the qualities of buddhahood, which are without distortions, there is no difference whatsoever between the true nature of phenomena in some earlier state and that nature in any later one, as timeless awareness is inseparable from the state of an ordinary being who is subject to all-consuming afflictive states. These qualities are thus inconceivable to the ordinary mind. Why is this so? Because among all the classes of ordinary beings, there is no being who is not imbued with the boundless timeless awareness of the tathagatas.

However, because of the reification involved in ordinary perception, the timeless awareness of the tathagatas is not evident. Once there is freedom from reification in ordinary perception, omniscient timeless awareness—naturally occurring timeless awareness—is experienced fully, without obstruction.

"O heirs of the victorious ones, it is thus: Suppose, for example, that there were an enormous piece of silk cloth, equal in size to the immense universe of the three-thousand-fold world system, and that the whole universe of the three-thousand-fold world system were drawn on that enormous silk cloth in its entirety. It would be thus: The vast surrounding horizon would be drawn to the size of the vast surrounding horizon; the vast foundation would be drawn to the size of the vast foundation; the intermediate universes of two-thousand-fold world systems would be drawn to the size of the universes of two-thousand-fold world systems; the universes of one-thousand-fold world systems would be drawn to the size of the universes of one-thousand-fold world systems; the world systems of four continents would be drawn to the size of the world systems of four continents; the great ocean would be drawn to the size of the great ocean; the continent of Jambudvīpa would be drawn to the size of Jambudvīpa; the eastern continent of Videha would be drawn to the size of the eastern continent of Videha; the western continent of Godāniya would be drawn to the size of the western continent of Godāniya; [84a]

the northern continent of Kuru would be drawn to the size of the northern continent of Kuru; Sumeru would be drawn to the size of Sumeru; the mansions of the gods dwelling on its slopes would be drawn to the size of the mansions of the gods dwelling on its slopes; the mansions of the gods dwelling in the realm of desire would be drawn to the size of the mansions of the gods dwelling in the realm of desire; and the mansions of the gods dwelling in the realm of form would be drawn to the size of the mansions of the gods dwelling in the realm of form.

“Suppose that, although this enormous piece of silk cloth was, in length and breadth, the size of the entire universe—the three-thousand-fold universe—this enormous piece of silk cloth was inserted into an atom. And suppose that, just as this enormous piece of silk cloth was inserted into one atom, enormous pieces of silk cloth of the same size were inserted into every atom without exception.

“Then suppose that there appeared some who were learned, wise, clear-minded, and insightful, and whose conduct showed them to be imbued with these qualities. They would be clairvoyant, their vision like that of the gods, so that everything was utterly clear, totally pure in every way. They would scrutinize things with that divine vision and see an enormous piece of silk cloth contained within an atom, where it did not come into contact with any beings at all.

“They would think, ‘Ah! What if someone were to split this atom open by the strength and force of mighty effort, and use this enormous piece of silk cloth to provide support for all beings!’ [84b] With this thought, they would generate the strong force of mighty effort, split the atom open using a tiny vajra, and, just as they had wished, provide support for unlimited beings with that enormous piece of silk cloth. They would do just the same in the case of every atom without exception as they had done in this one case.

“O heirs of the victorious ones, in a similar way, the timeless awareness of tathagatas—immeasurable timeless awareness, the timeless awareness that sustains all beings—fully imbues the minds of all beings. Moreover, the minds of beings, like the timeless awareness of tathagatas, are immeasurable.”⁷¹

Therefore, with respect to the essence of one’s being, the qualities of enlightenment are spontaneously present, and it has never known any

sully as a result of flaws. With respect to its expression, it seems to be associated with afflictive states and then purified at a later time. There is no contradiction between its purity, on the one hand, and impurity, on the other; it is inconceivable to the ordinary mind. The same commentary continues:

As for suchness that is still associated with distortions, at one and the same time it is both completely pure and associated with all-consuming afflictive states, and so this state is inconceivable to the ordinary mind. . . . As for suchness without distortions, it is not that distortions have made it an all-consuming afflictive state at some prior point and that it later becomes totally pure, [85a] and so this state is inconceivable to the ordinary mind.

2. THE OMNIPRESENCE OF SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

My discussion of the omnipresence of spiritual potential has three aspects: how spiritual potential is omnipresent by nature, its indications, and its qualities. With regard to its omnipresent nature, the sutra *Queen Shrimala* states:

Buddha nature permeates absolutely every being.

According to *The Highest Continuum*:

Because the kaya of perfect buddhahood is pervasive,
because the state of suchness is indivisible,
and because all beings possess spiritual potential,
beings are forever endowed with buddha nature.⁷²

The indications of spiritual potential are twofold. The same source describes the signs of those who have not yet awakened to this potential, even though they possess it:

If one lacks sensitivity to one's fundamental being, one's buddha nature,
one will never be sufficiently dissatisfied with suffering,
or desire nirvana,
or strive for it, or even aspire to it.⁷³

Some very ordinary people are like that. The signs of those who have awakened to this potential are given in the same source:

This perception of the respective flaws and advantages of the suffering of samsara and the happiness of nirvana is a result of one's sensitivity to this spiritual potential. Why is this?

Because these flaws and advantages are not perceived by those who lack such sensitivity.⁷⁴

These two types of people are mentioned in *The Ornament of the Sutras*. Those who have not awakened, or are temporarily cut off, are described as follows:

Some lack the virtue conducive to liberation;
deficient in positive factors, they are divorced from its cause.⁷⁵

Those who have awakened are referred to in the following way:

Even before one undertakes training,
to have compassion, devoted interest, and patience,
and to pursue virtue authentically,
are explained to be true indications of spiritual potential.⁷⁶ [85b]

The qualities of enlightenment cultivated in the bodhisattva approach can be shown to be most excellent, for they are far superior to those of the Hinayana approach. The same source states:

Because it causes the tree of enlightenment to grow with
abundant qualities,
because it brings about the attainment of happiness and the
subsiding of great suffering,
and because its fruition ensures benefit and happiness for oneself
and others,
that most excellent spiritual potential is like a fine taproot.⁷⁷

The word *gotra* in the Sanskrit language of India can be broken down into *go*, which if interpreted to be cognate to *guṇa* implies "qualities," and *tra*, which if interpreted to be cognate to *tara* implies "to liberate." This means that spiritual potential acts as a support for the qualities of enlightenment and so brings liberation, leading one beyond samsara. According to the same source:

... as for the qualities,
these are to be understood as the ultimate meaning of
liberation.⁷⁸

3. A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

My detailed analysis of spiritual potential is based on three considerations: the supporting and supported factors, specific situations, and analogies and their meaning.

a. The Supporting and Supported Factors

The Ornament of the Sutras states:

It has naturally abiding and increasingly evident aspects, which are the supporting and supported factors—both existent and nonexistent—and their qualities.⁷⁹

These should be understood to be the ultimate meaning of liberation.⁸⁰

This verse signifies that the omnipresent and utterly lucid nature referred to previously can be explained to be twofold, in that a distinction can be made between its manifestation and its emptiness. Empty basic space is the supporting factor, the cause of disengagement that leads to dharmakaya as the essence of being itself.⁸¹ Manifest timeless awareness, naturally radiant and entailing the major and minor marks of perfect form, is the supported factor, abiding as the two rupakayas that ensue from this disengagement. According to *The Highest Continuum*:

Like a treasure trove and a fruit-bearing tree, respectively, this spiritual potential should be understood to have two aspects: the beginningless aspect, which is naturally abiding, and the sublime aspect, which is perfectly developed. [86a]

It is held that the three kayas of buddhahood are attained through this twofold potential, the first kaya through the first aspect and the remaining two through the second.

The magnificent svabhavikakaya⁸² is understood to be like an image made of a precious substance that is by nature uncreated and a treasure trove of invaluable qualities.

In that it has supreme dominion over the preeminent state of being, sambhogakaya is like a universal monarch.

In that they are by nature reflections,
 nirmanakaya emanations are like images reflected on a surface
 of gold.⁸³

That is, one can analyze the naturally abiding aspect of this spiritual potential and its perfectly developed aspect by distinguishing one as the ground and the other as the path.

Basic space is, by nature, the ground of being, abiding such that it permeates everything. In that context, the aspect of basic space that serves as the ground for the arising of things is analogous to a treasure trove of precious gems, in that it abides as the basis for all that could be desired, yet cannot itself be determined to be anything at all. Given that this is so, basic space—dharmakaya as the essence of being itself—can be considered from the standpoint of providing an open avenue for the arising of the kayas and timeless awareness.

The arising, manifest aspect of timeless awareness is that of pure awareness and the kayas. It can be described as being analogous to a flourishing fruit-bearing tree, simply in that the qualities of enlightenment inherent within one are certain to become evident on the strength of one's being freed from circumstantial obscurations. This is a matter of using the name of what results from purification to label what causes purification, as *The Ornament of the Sutras* explains by means of analogies to gold and the finest jewel.⁸⁴ [86b]

Let me digress briefly and explain these aspects in the context of training on the path. Both aspects of spiritual potential as basic space,⁸⁵ being spontaneously present by nature, are implied by what is called “naturally abiding spiritual potential,” in that they abide as the supporting factor. On that basis, all of the fundamentally positive factors included in the two kinds of spiritual development—those of merit and the experience of timeless awareness—from the first moment that one arouses bodhichitta up to the very threshold of enlightenment on the tenth spiritual level are termed “the perfectly developed aspect,” or “the increasingly evident aspect,” of this potential.⁸⁶ The latter two terms signify that the qualities of enlightenment, which are in fact inherent, seem to come into being as something new because the above-mentioned positive factors are newly applied as antidotes and, on the strength of this, the distortions that overlie one's natural spiritual potential are eliminated.

These days there is a failure to take the two foregoing aspects of spiritual potential into account in considering the ground of being;⁸⁷ instead,

the ground is classified as suchness itself and the path as the increasingly evident aspect. This seems to me indicative of a failure to understand basic space, because such a classification fails to appreciate the unity—of what is manifest and its emptiness—that is spontaneously present within the ground of being. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

Although there is no difference between some earlier state and any later one, suchness . . . has “become pure.”⁸⁸

According to *The Highest Continuum*:

Uncompounded and spontaneously present, it is not realized through the agency of anyone or anything else and is endowed with wisdom, love, and energy. This is buddhahood itself, which embodies the two kinds of benefit.⁸⁹

These quotations indicate that because buddhahood is timelessly and spontaneously present, it is not achieved through a causal process that involves something being developed and something developing it, but through a causal process that involves disengagement.⁹⁰

Given these two aspects of spiritual potential, buddhahood should be understood to be the timeless endowment of the three kayas. [87a] That is, on the level of buddhahood, the increasingly evident, or manifest, aspect of that potential corresponds to sambhogakaya, whereas the naturally abiding, or empty, aspect corresponds to dharmakaya. The blessings that result from the inseparability of these two aspects bring about the appearance of nirmanakaya manifestations in the perceptions of ordinary beings according to those beings' individual good fortune. This is analogous to the form of a universal monarch appearing in the sky and being reflected on the slopes of a mountain of gold.

b. Specific Situations

Spiritual potential can be analyzed in light of three specific situations: the impure situation (spiritual potential with respect to ordinary beings), the transitional situation from impure to pure (spiritual potential with respect to bodhisattvas), and the utterly pure situation (spiritual potential, or fundamental being, with respect to tathagatas). The fact that on the level of buddhahood there is freedom from distortions is antithetical

to its entailing any spiritual potential, or fundamental being (in the true sense of these terms), but there is nothing wrong with applying these labels. *The Highest Continuum* states:

The fundamental being that is buddhahood, the enlightenment of buddhahood, . . .⁹¹

With respect to these three situations, the same source explains:

These situations—impure, transitional from impure to pure, and utterly pure—are respectively described as those of ordinary beings, bodhisattvas, and tathagatas.⁹²

According to the commentary on this source:

Thus it is. In the impure situation, the term “fundamental being of ordinary individuals” is used; in the transitional situation from impure to pure, the term “bodhisattva” is used; in the utterly and completely pure situation, the term “tathagata” is used.

Alternatively, [87b] spiritual potential is threefold with respect to the three spiritual approaches;⁹³ it can also be classified in thirteen ways with respect to specific stages of spiritual development, as well as in other ways. The single basic space that is mind itself—spiritual potential in the ultimate sense—is pervasive, for it is omnipresent, without any gradation of better or worse. Nevertheless, spiritual potential can be expediently referred to by different terms, according to the categories of different spiritual approaches, as well as to those of the range of higher and lower spiritual levels and paths. In the same way, the name of a single container may change depending on what is poured into it. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

It is because of the specific factors it supports that it can be analyzed so thoroughly.⁹⁴

Spiritual potential as utterly lucid basic space abides in all who manifest as ordinary beings, high or low, or as spiritually advanced beings, both high and low—shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and so forth. In this context, it is present without any gradation of its essence into better or worse, without any diminishment or augmentation. This is, for example, similar to the fact that although clay pots, wooden bowls, and vessels

of precious metals and stones appear to have different qualities, there is no difference in the quality of the space within these containers. As *The Highest Continuum* indicates:

Just as space, which epitomizes a nonconceptual state,
extends everywhere,
so the true nature of mind—basic space without distortions—
is omnipresent.

Its general characteristic is that it permeates
things, including both faults and positive qualities, to the utmost
extent,
which is similar to space permeating specific forms,
whether inferior, mediocre, or sublime.⁹⁵

The seeming distinction between better and worse is based on whether or not there is freedom from distortions. [88a] Blinded by the sheer density of their obscurations, ordinary beings display no more than the merest hint of the qualities of enlightenment. Arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches, for whom these distortions have diminished, are more advanced with respect to such qualities. Bodhisattvas, who have progressed further and attained the spiritual levels, manifest these qualities in a more advanced way than arhats, who have not yet left all states of ignorance behind. Buddhas, free of all obscuration, manifest them in the most advanced way. According to this paradigm, it can be posited that there is no nirvana (in the true sense of the word) for arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches, only a mere respite from the suffering of samsara. The same source states:

Why is this so? Because there is dharmakaya, arrival at the state
of suchness,
truth for those who are spiritually advanced, ultimate nirvana.
Therefore, since the qualities of enlightenment are as inseparable
from it as rays are from the sun,
there is no nirvana other than buddhahood itself.

.....

Therefore, until buddhahood is attained,
nirvana is not attained,
just as one cannot see the sun
separate from its light and its rays.⁹⁶

c. Analogies and Their Meaning

My analysis of spiritual potential based on analogies and their meaning has three steps: presenting these analogies and their meaning in detail, correlating them, and demonstrating the nature of the heart essence of being.

i. A Detailed Presentation

One of the treatises concerned with correctly interpreting the definitive meaning of the final series of teachings spoken by the Buddha, *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena*, states:

Just as the essence of butter is not evident [88b]
when it is still mixed with milk,
so the basic space of phenomena is not perceived
when mixed with afflictive states.

Just as the essence of butter becomes flawless
through the refining away of the other ingredients of milk,
so the basic space of phenomena becomes utterly undistorted
through the refining away of afflictive states.

Just as a lamp inside a vase
is not visible in the slightest,
so the basic space of phenomena is not perceived
inside the vase of afflictive states.

When an opening in the vase [containing the lamp] is oriented
toward the place where one sits,
the radiance, the nature of the lamp, will be cast
in that specific direction.

Similarly, when the vajra of meditative absorption
shatters the vase [of afflictive states],
at that point the light will illuminate
all of space to its furthest limits.⁹⁷

Just as when a rare jewel
(while remaining utterly clear at all times)
is embedded in rock
its utter clarity is not evident,

so when obscured by afflictive states
even the basic space of phenomena, completely free of distortions,

of precious metals and stones appear to have different qualities, there is no difference in the quality of the space within these containers. As *The Highest Continuum* indicates:

Just as space, which epitomizes a nonconceptual state,
extends everywhere,
so the true nature of mind—basic space without distortions—
is omnipresent.

Its general characteristic is that it permeates
things, including both faults and positive qualities, to the utmost
extent,
which is similar to space permeating specific forms,
whether inferior, mediocre, or sublime.⁹⁵

The seeming distinction between better and worse is based on whether or not there is freedom from distortions. [88a] Blinded by the sheer density of their obscurations, ordinary beings display no more than the merest hint of the qualities of enlightenment. Arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches, for whom these distortions have diminished, are more advanced with respect to such qualities. Bodhisattvas, who have progressed further and attained the spiritual levels, manifest these qualities in a more advanced way than arhats, who have not yet left all states of ignorance behind. Buddhas, free of all obscuration, manifest them in the most advanced way. According to this paradigm, it can be posited that there is no nirvana (in the true sense of the word) for arhats of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches, only a mere respite from the suffering of samsara. The same source states:

Why is this so? Because there is dharmakaya, arrival at the state
of suchness,
truth for those who are spiritually advanced, ultimate nirvana.
Therefore, since the qualities of enlightenment are as inseparable
from it as rays are from the sun,
there is no nirvana other than buddhahood itself.

.
Therefore, until buddhahood is attained,
nirvana is not attained,
just as one cannot see the sun
separate from its light and its rays.⁹⁶

The second analogy is that of bees' honey:

When honey is surrounded by swarming bees,
 a wise person who, having seen it, is motivated to obtain it
 uses skillful means [89b]
 to remove it entirely from the swarm.
 Similarly, with omniscient vision, the great seers
 perceive this spiritual potential, fundamental being, which is like
 the honey,
 and cause what obscures it, which is like the bees,
 to be forever and utterly left behind.¹⁰⁰

The third analogy is that of ripened grains still in their husks:

People cannot enjoy
 ripened grains encased in husks,¹⁰¹
 but anyone who wants to eat or otherwise use them
 can remove them from their husks.
 Similarly, so long as what is victorious—mixed with the
 distortions¹⁰²
 of the afflictive states of ordinary beings—¹⁰³
 is not freed from this association with the distortions of afflictive
 states,
 the enlightened deeds of victorious ones will not affect those in
 the three realms of conditioned existence.¹⁰⁴

The fourth analogy is that of gold buried in a swamp:

When people are hurrying along,
 their gold may fall into a rotting mire
 and, with its property of indestructibility,
 remain there for many centuries.
 A god endowed with clairvoyance¹⁰⁵
 might perceive it and say to people, "Gold can be found here.
 Clean this sublime precious metal
 and use it for the purpose such metal serves."
 Similarly, the Sage perceives the potential for enlightenment
 in ordinary beings mired in the filth of afflictive states¹⁰⁶
 and, to purify that emotional swamp,
 causes a rain of sacred teachings to fall on all beings.¹⁰⁷

The fifth analogy is that of an underground treasure: [90a]

There might be an inexhaustible treasure
 in the earth under a poor man's house,

but he does not know of it, nor can the treasure
say to him, "I am here!"

Similarly, the precious buried treasure of the mind
is its flawless nature, with nothing to add or remove.

But failing to realize this, all beings experience
the suffering of deprivation constantly and in many ways.¹⁰⁸

The sixth analogy is that of the seed of a tree within its hull:

The fruit of a mango or some other tree
has a seed with an indestructible nature;
with cultivation, watering, and so forth,
a majestic, verdant tree eventually results.

Similarly, the positive state of fundamental being is concealed
within

an enveloping fruit—the ignorance and so forth of ordinary
beings—

and in like manner, owing to various positive conditions,
a majestic sage eventually appears.¹⁰⁹

The seventh analogy is that of a jeweled statue wrapped in rags:

A statue of the Victorious One, made of precious things
but wrapped in vile-smelling, tattered rags and lying by the
roadside,

might be seen by a god who tells someone of it lying by the
roadside

so that it may be recovered.

Similarly, those with unhindered vision perceive the nature of the
Sugata—

albeit cloaked in a plethora of afflictive states—
even in animals, and consequently

they demonstrate the means to gain liberation.¹¹⁰ [90b]

The eighth analogy is that of a future ruler gestating in the womb of a
low-born woman:

Some deformed, helpless woman

languishing in a house for the destitute
may carry a glorious future monarch in her womb,
yet not know of the ruler who is in her own belly.

Birth in conditioned existence is like the house for the destitute,
and impure beings are like this pregnant woman.

The one she bears will be her protector;¹¹¹

the flawless state of fundamental being is like the one in her womb.¹¹²

The ninth analogy is that of a golden statue still in its clay mold:

A splendid statue cast of molten gold but still in a mold could bring peace of mind, but is covered with clay.

Those who see and understand this remove the covering to reveal the gold within.

Similarly, sublime enlightened ones accurately see that distortions¹¹³

of the utterly lucid nature are adventitious

and ensure that those beings who are like a source of riches are purified of their obscurations.¹¹⁴

These nine analogies describe the heart essence of being from the standpoint of nine ways in which its nature can be obscured. Generally speaking, these analogies refer to fundamental being as it is present in unenlightened individuals.

More specifically, the distortions present in the minds of ordinary beings who have not yet entered the path are karmic patterns—meritorious and otherwise—that serve only to perpetuate samsara. [91A] The four analogies employing the images of a lotus, bees, a grain husk, and a swamp, respectively, illustrate four deeply ingrained and powerful patterns: desire, aversion, delusion, and a combination of these three in equal measure. The single analogy of a poor man's treasure buried in the earth illustrates the heart essence of being whose nature is obscured by the habit patterns of ignorance present in the minds of shravaka and pratyekabuddha arhats. The two analogies employing the images of a hull and rags, respectively, illustrate two kinds of distortions, those that are present in the minds of ordinary beings training on the path and that are to be eliminated through the path of seeing, and those that are present in the minds of spiritually advanced beings and that are to be eliminated through the path of meditation. The two analogies of a ruler gestating in a womb and a clay mold encasing gold illustrate distortions affecting those on the ten spiritual levels—on the first seven (or “impure”) levels and the last three (or “pure”) levels, respectively. As is said:

The deeply ingrained, powerful habit patterns caused by attachment, aversion, and delusion,

as well as the factors to be eliminated on the paths of seeing and meditation, and those pertaining to the impure and pure spiritual levels:

nine kinds of distortions are illustrated by the analogies of the lotus bud and so forth.

The shell of derivative afflictive states can be analyzed as countless millions of variations.¹¹⁵

Having been summarized, these nine kinds of distortions—¹¹⁶ attachment and so forth—are accurately illustrated in their respective order by the nine analogies of the lotus bud and so forth.

As a result of these distortions, spiritually immature individuals, arhats, those still learning, and those at the stage of further learning¹¹⁷

can be respectively illustrated [91b]

by four, one, two, and two analogies to be in states of impurity.¹¹⁸

ii. Correlating the Analogies with Their Meaning

Next, I will explain the meaning of these nine analogies. By illustrating flaws, they are meant to help one understand that the veils of the nine kinds of distortions are factors to be eliminated. As is said:

A lotus growing from the mud
is pleasing to one's mind when it first appears,
but later, when it withers, it no longer pleases;
the pleasure deriving from desire and attachment is like this.

Insects such as bees
attack and sting when they are disturbed;
similarly, when aversion arises,
its brings pain to the heart.

Kernels of rice and other grains
are covered by husks;
similarly, one's perception of the significance of the heart essence
of being
is obscured by a shell of ignorance.

Filth is disagreeable;
 similarly, in that deeply ingrained patterns
 cause those caught up in attachment to depend on their desires,
 these patterns resemble filth.

When riches are concealed,
 one who lacks knowledge of them cannot see the treasure;
 similarly, what lies naturally within ordinary beings
 is obscured by habit patterns of ignorance.

The gradual growth of a seedling
 splits its enveloping hull;
 similarly, the perception of suchness
 removes the factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing.

For those who are engaged in the path of the spiritually advanced
 and have overcome their fundamental belief in the reality of the
 perishable aggregates,
 there are factors to be eliminated through timeless awareness on
 the path of meditation;
 these are shown to be analogous to tattered rags.

The distortions affecting those on the seven spiritual levels
 are analogous to the defects of confinement in a womb.
 Similar to deliverance from the confines of the womb [92a]
 is the full maturation of nonconceptual timeless awareness.

The distortions associated with the three spiritual levels
 are understood to be like a covering of clay.
 They are the factors to be conquered by the truly great state
 of vajra-like meditative absorption.¹¹⁹

iii. Demonstrating the Nature of the Heart Essence of Being

Now I will demonstrate the nature of the heart essence of being. Fundamental being—the very heart of enlightenment—which is spontaneously present in individuals, is called “the nature as dharmakaya” in that it is pure by nature and a perfect embodiment of the qualities of enlightenment; this is illustrated by three analogies: a statue of the Buddha in the center of a lotus, honey covered by bees, and a kernel of grain in its hull. It is called “the nature as suchness” from the perspective of the unchanging,

uncompounded quality that indicates its presence within one; this is illustrated by the fourth analogy of gold in a swamp. It is called “the nature of being as spiritual potential” in that the freeing of this heart essence from distortions through the training one undergoes on the path makes it seem as though the three kayas are created; this is illustrated by five analogies employing the images of a treasure, a tree, a jeweled statue, a universal monarch, and a golden statue. Again, *The Highest Continuum* states:

The nature as dharmakaya,
as suchness, and as spiritual potential
is to be understood through three, one,
and five analogies.¹²⁰

In one’s present situation, in which distortions are still involved, the significance of one’s fundamental being cannot be fully expressed by an analogy, and so any analogy would have to apply to dharmakaya itself. However, as is said:

Since [dharmakaya] transcends the transitory world,
it cannot be portrayed by a mundane analogy,
and so the fundamental being of the tathagatas [92b]
can only be pointed out by means of some approximation.¹²¹

Two aspects of dharmakaya can be pointed out through approximation: fundamental being, which is the cause of a process of disengagement, and self-knowing timeless awareness, the very essence of buddhahood, which is the result of that disengagement. Along with these are two related aspects of the sacred dharma: the scriptural and the experiential. As is said:

Dharmakaya is understood to have two aspects:
the utterly flawless basic space of phenomena
and, in accordance with that,
the causal aspect, demonstrated by means of profound and
myriad methods.¹²²

The causal aspect of dharmakaya is omnipresent, as *The Commentary on “The Highest Continuum”* states:

The dharmakaya of the tathagatas permeates the realms of all beings without exception. From this standpoint, all of these beings are endowed with buddha nature. In the realms of ordinary be-

ings, there is no one, no single being, who falls outside the dharma-kaya of the tathagatas. This is similar to the realm of forms being permeated by the realm of space.

Concerning this nature, which is without transition or change, it is said:

Because the nature of being is unchanging,
positive, and completely pure,
this suchness is described
as being like an image of gold.¹²³

To speak of the nature of being as “spiritual potential” is to refer to that nature from the standpoint of the qualities of enlightenment developing. The analogies of a treasure and a tree have already been discussed.

While one is on the paths of accumulation and linkage, one has the firm conviction, based on intellectual evaluation, that fundamental being—the essence of ultimate reality—is definitely present within one; [93a] other than that, one has no direct experience of it. From the first spiritual level onward, one has a partial perception of it, but on the level of buddhahood, the nature of being is seen directly, having become fully evident, just as it is. To give an analogy, although the sun is shining, those without eyes do not see it while those with eyes do. As is said:

The ultimate reality of naturally occurring beings¹²⁴
is that which can be realized through faith.¹²⁵
Although the orb of the sun blazes with light,
those without eyes do not see it.¹²⁶

Therefore, the three kinds of spiritually advanced beings of lesser development—shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas—do not perceive this nature just as it is.¹²⁷ Even spiritually advanced bodhisattvas are similar to small infants who see the sun only through a skylight, without seeing how it shines throughout the countryside. As is said:

Even the spiritually advanced are similar to small infants
who see the sun from their nursery.¹²⁸

The Commentary on “The Highest Continuum” refers to a buddha perceiving everything:

Like one who sees the sun through a skylight, those whose insight
is limited—
even spiritually advanced beings with the pure vision of the
intelligent—do not perceive everything.

But transcendent and accomplished conquerors, with the unlimited intelligence of completely pure dharmakaya, see all limitless objects of knowledge pervading the reaches of space.

Given that ultimate truth is basic space, when one directly perceives the nature of basic space, it is said that one “perceives ultimate truth.” [93b] Ultimate truth is not emptiness in the sense of a void! Concepts such as the nonexistence of identity are taught as antidotes to the fixation on identity experienced by ordinary beings, who are spiritually immature, and by beginning practitioners. But in actuality, one should understand basic space to be utterly lucid, uncompounded, and spontaneously present. The same commentary states:

To summarize briefly, four kinds of individuals are considered to lack the vision to perceive buddha nature. Who are these four, you ask? They are ordinary beings, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and those bodhisattvas who have only recently begun their training. As is said, “This buddha nature of the transcendent and accomplished conquerors is not within the scope of those who err by regarding the perishable aggregates as real, who take great delight in erroneous ideas, or whose minds are completely distracted by emptiness.”¹²⁹

4. THE RATIONALE FOR RELYING ON SPIRITUAL POTENTIAL

This discussion has two parts: an objection that calls into question the necessity for this potential and my response to this objection. As is said:

Making comparisons to clouds, dreams, and illusions, they say, “All that is knowable is empty in every respect”; how is it, then, that in this case victorious ones say that the very essence of buddhahood exists in ordinary beings?¹³⁰

To elaborate, in the intermediate series of his teachings, the Buddha speaks of all phenomena as impermanent (like clouds), untrue (like dream images), lacking any independent nature even though they result from the interaction of causes and conditions (like illusions), and so forth. [94a] This being so, people of inferior intellect might object, “How is it that there are statements asserting that the heart essence of being is permanent (in that it exists timelessly and without change), true (in that it

is naturally indwelling), and uncompounded (in that it is not created by causes and conditions)? This seems to be contradictory.” This objection can be countered by the argument that this heart essence is empty insofar as it is devoid of flaws, anything of a compounded nature, and so forth, but it is not empty in the sense that its qualities are discounted. As cited previously:

Although one’s fundamental being is devoid of adventitious factors
that are characterized as separate from it,
it is not devoid of unsurpassable factors
that are characterized as inseparable from it.¹³¹

My response to this objection can be delineated as follows: The ultimate authentic state—that is, fundamental being, which is completely pure by nature—is like space in that it is uncompounded. Nevertheless, karma, afflictive states, and factors that foster experiences of pleasure and pain in samsara manifest within it like cloud formations. It can be shown that suffering is as ephemeral as clouds, for it results from afflictive states—from the fallacious functioning of ordinary mind. It can be shown that karma is like dream images, for it is manifest yet lacks any independent nature. It can be shown that the mind-body aggregates, which are created by afflictive states and karma, are like illusions and phantoms. Teachings that convey these points serve as antidotes to overt fixation on identity as something absolute.

Five further faults may arise, such as a fixation on affirming or denying that emptiness is absolute. To avert these faults, one’s fundamental being is shown to be buddha nature, ultimate reality. [94b] This is indicated by the following:

Everything that is compounded
is absent from the ultimate authentic state.
Afflictive states, karma, and their inevitable consequences
are described as being like clouds and so forth.

Afflictive states can be said to be like clouds.
Karma is like the experiences in a dream.
The inevitable consequences of afflictive states and karma—
the mind-body aggregates—are like illusions or phantoms.

Once that has been established,
in order to avert five faults

this treatise, *The Highest Continuum*, also teaches the presence of one's fundamental being.¹³²

What are these five faults, you wonder? As is said:

Faintheartedness, belittling lesser beings,
failing to perceive what is authentic, disparaging what is
authentic,¹³³
and egocentric attachment: the Buddha spoke of these five
specific faults
so that those who had them could eliminate them.¹³⁴

To elaborate, one might not perceive that the very heart of enlightenment is present within one and so would become fainthearted, thinking, "Someone such as I cannot attain buddhahood!"; one, therefore, would not arouse bodhichitta. Even if one aroused bodhichitta, one might belittle beings, thinking, "I am a bodhisattva, while others are very ordinary"; this would hinder one's attainment of higher stages on the path. If one regarded emptiness as something absolute, one would not experience the basic space of phenomena, the nature of ultimate reality, and so would fail to perceive what is authentic. By falling into naive affirmation or denial, one would disparage whatever is authentic. In not seeing oneself and other beings as equals, one would perceive things egocentrically in terms of self and other. As is said: [95a]

Not having heard of their fundamental being,
owing to the flaw of belittling themselves
some who are faint of heart
might not arouse bodhichitta.

If those who have aroused bodhichitta
become arrogant, thinking, "I am great,"
they fall under the sway of the idea
that those who have not aroused bodhichitta are inferior.

Knowledge of what is authentic will not awaken
in those with such an attitude.
Therefore, they will not perceive what is authentic¹³⁵
and so will be unaware of the significance of what is authentic.

Because they are unnatural and adventitious,
the flaws of beings are not true:

what is true is their lack of identity.¹³⁶

The qualities of enlightenment are pure by nature.

Fixating on flaws that are not true,
one disparages what is authentic;¹³⁷

someone with this attitude will not find the love
that sees the equalness of oneself and other beings.¹³⁸

If one understands that fundamental being is spontaneously present in oneself and others, one will feel enthusiasm, understanding that there is nothing to prevent one's mind from achieving liberation. One can develop respect for all beings as though they were buddhas, so that in addition to not harming or injuring them, one can benefit them. One can ensure the welfare of others by expanding the scope of sublime knowing (by understanding the basic space of ultimate reality), timeless awareness (by perceiving the way in which things abide), and immeasurable love. As is said:

Having heard of fundamental being,
one arouses enthusiasm, respect for others as though for the
Teacher,
sublime knowing, timeless awareness, and great love.
Because these five qualities are born, [95b]
one incurs no censure, but experiences one's equalness to others,
is without flaws, is endowed with the qualities of enlightenment,
and loves beings for their equalness to oneself.
Buddhahood itself is swiftly attained.¹³⁹

It should be understood that the foregoing discussion of spiritual potential is based entirely on the definitive meaning of the teachings; it does not rely on the provisional meaning at all. Because this theme is pivotal to the Mahayana and is difficult to realize, I have explained it in detail here.

B. Arousing Bodhichitta

My discussion of how someone with this spiritual potential arouses bodhichitta has three parts: coming to an understanding of the nature of the attitude aroused, how the attitude is aroused in light of this understanding, and the stages of training to be observed.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF BODHICHITTA

The first part has two aspects: the foundation and the nature.

a. The Foundation of Bodhichitta

According to the interpretation of the Chittamatra system, the physical foundation of bodhichitta is someone who holds one of the seven kinds of ordination for individual liberation. *The Lamp on the Path* states:

Those who permanently uphold one or another
of the seven kinds of ordination for individual liberation
have the opportunity to receive
the bodhisattva ordination; this is not so for others.¹⁴⁰

According to the interpretation of the Madhyamaka system, bodhichitta can be aroused even by gods, nagas, and others who have a dedicated interest in the Mahayana and who wish to attain buddhahood. We read in *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Eight Thousand Stanzas*:

On that occasion, twenty thousand children of the gods aroused
the motivation to attain unsurpassable enlightenment.

Moreover, there are statements such as the following from the sutra *The Request of Sagara*:

Twenty-two thousand nagas aroused the motivation to attain enlightenment. [96a]

The Intermediate-Length "Mother" indicates:

On that occasion, countless gods, nagas, demigods, garudas, kinaras, and dragons aroused the motivation to attain unsurpassable enlightenment.

As to the foundation for maintaining the attitude once it has been aroused, the circumstances of beings in any of the five classes can provide such support. According to *The Fortunate Eon*:

In the lifetime in which the victorious one Hitaishin was a village chieftain,
in the presence of the tathagata Punyabha,
he accepted the vow to take no life for one day

and for the first time aroused the motivation to attain sublime enlightenment.

You might wonder, “Does this mean that ordination for individual liberation is not required as a foundation for arousing bodhichitta?” Even in the case of the Madhyamaka system’s interpretation of arousing bodhichitta, a twenty-four-hour vow not to take life does not constitute ordination for individual liberation. Therefore, although Hitaishin aroused bodhichitta by relying on that fundamental goodness as a cause, it was not considered the actual foundation.

As to the mental foundation, this entails specific meritorious attitudes such as faith.

b. The Nature of Bodhichitta

The nature of bodhichitta is discussed in relation to three things: what it is in essence, its causes, and the results.

i. Essence

What bodhichitta is in essence has three aspects: its characteristics, its classification, and the significance of the individual topics of classification. What is characterized is the spirit of the Mahayana path, which can be appropriately designated “bodhichitta.” It includes whatever is subsumed within the attitudes of aspiration and involvement, which are expressions of one’s desire to attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of others—that is, the essence of the six transcendent perfections. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

By arousing bodhichitta, for the sake of others [96b]
one attains complete and perfect enlightenment.¹⁴¹

There are seven classifications of bodhichitta. A twofold classification is given in *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*:

Bodhichitta, in brief,
is understood to have two aspects:
an attitude of aspiring to enlightenment
and involvement in the pursuit of enlightenment.¹⁴²

Alternatively, the sutra *Passing into Nirvana* states:

Classified into its relative and ultimate aspects,
 bodhichitta has two connotations,
 like the term *sendhapa*.¹⁴³

A threefold classification of bodhichitta is based on three aspects that correspond to the progression of the three kinds of discipline: purification (corresponding to the exalted training in discipline), stabilization (the exalted training in mind), and gaining freedom (the exalted training in sublime knowing).¹⁴⁴

A fourfold classification of bodhichitta is as follows: Those on the paths of accumulation and linkage arouse bodhichitta with dedicated intent. Those on the first to the seventh spiritual levels arouse bodhichitta with a completely pure, altruistic motivation. Those on the three pure spiritual levels arouse bodhichitta that is fully mature. For those on the level of buddhahood, the presence of bodhichitta is based on the fact that all obscurations have been eliminated. As *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

The arousal of bodhichitta on various levels
 takes place out of dedicated intent, with pure altruistic
 motivation,
 and as a fully mature state; these are held to be distinct levels,
 as is that of the elimination of obscurations.¹⁴⁵

In a fivefold classification of bodhichitta, the arousal of bodhichitta is described according to the five paths.

If the classification is sixfold, the aspects correspond to the six transcendent perfections. As we read in *The Intermediate-Length "Mother"*:

Whoever is endowed with the six ways of arousing bodhichitta,
 which embody the six transcendent perfections, . . . [97a]

Finally, there is a classification of bodhichitta according to the delimitation of the various spiritual levels, as illustrated by twenty-two analogies. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* explains:

In this regard, earth, gold, the moon, fire,
 a treasure, a jewel mine, the ocean,
 a vajra, a mountain, medicine, a spiritual mentor,
 a wish-fulfilling gem, the sun, a song,
 a king, a treasury, a highway,
 a vehicle, a reservoir,

an echo, a river, and a cloud:
these are the twenty-two aspects.¹⁴⁶

The significance of what these analogies illustrate is given in the commentary on this source:

. . . identified with intention, attention, altruistic motivation, application, the transcendent perfection of generosity, the transcendent perfection of discipline, the transcendent perfection of patience, the transcendent perfection of diligence, the transcendent perfection of meditative stability, the transcendent perfection of sublime knowing, the transcendent perfection of skillful means, the transcendent perfection of aspiration, the transcendent perfection of spiritual strength, the transcendent perfection of timeless awareness, sublime states of perception, merit and timeless awareness, factors conducive to enlightenment, compassion and profound insight, the powers of complete recall and self-confidence, a feast of the dharma, a path that can be followed in one direction only, and dharmakaya.¹⁴⁷

Specifically, the first three correspond to the three phases of the path of accumulation. Application corresponds to the path of linkage. The ten transcendent perfections (from generosity up to and including timeless awareness) correspond to the ten spiritual levels. The next five (from sublime states of perception up to and including the powers of complete recall and self-confidence) correspond to the three pure spiritual levels. The last three, respectively, correspond to the preparatory phase of the tenth spiritual level, the level itself, and the aftermath. [97b]

The arousal of bodhichitta during the ceremony in which a formal vow is taken pertains only to the paths involving learning; it does not pertain to the level of buddhahood. It is to be understood that supreme, innate compassion is the presence of bodhichitta free of all obscuration, ensuring the welfare of beings on the level of buddhahood.

In terms of the significance of these seven classifications, that of the attitudes of aspiration and involvement is as follows: When one is inspired to apply oneself for the sake of others, this is the arousal of bodhichitta as aspiration, which is analogous to wanting to go somewhere. When one becomes involved in this pursuit, this is the arousal of bodhichitta as involvement, which is analogous to actually making the journey. *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva* states:

Just as one knows the difference
 between wanting to go and going,
 so the wise should know the difference
 between these two and their proper order.¹⁴⁸

The significance of the three exalted trainings is as follows:¹⁴⁹ The exalted training in discipline is to restrain one's mind from developing non-virtuous tendencies; the training in mind is to encourage the growth of what is positive, for example, meditative absorption; and the training in sublime knowing is to ensure benefit for oneself and others and discernment concerning the knowable.

The significance of the four graduated levels is as follows: When one's general framework is the dedicated intent to develop one's spiritual potential, this is "the arousal of bodhichitta out of dedicated intent." When one has actually glimpsed one's spiritual potential to some degree, this is "the arousal of bodhichitta with pure altruistic motivation." When one has gained the power to experience pure realms and so forth, this is "the arousal of bodhichitta that is fully mature." And when there is suchness itself, free of all obscuration, the presence of bodhichitta is based on the fact that "all obscurations have been eliminated."

The significance of the five paths is as follows: Given that, as a beginning practitioner, one is involved primarily in hearing and contemplating teachings, as well as developing merit, there is "the path of accumulation." Given that one is provided a link to the path of seeing—that is, the experience of nonconceptual timeless awareness—there is "the path of linkage." [98a] Given that one perceives the true nature of phenomena, there is "the path of seeing." Given that one cultivates in meditation what one has already seen, there is "the path of meditation." And given that there is nothing to cultivate in meditation once one's training has been consummated, there is "the path of no more learning."

The significance of the six transcendent perfections is as follows: Generosity is the positive attitude of giving to others without hoarding material possessions. Discipline consists of guarding the mind against harmful forms of behavior. Patience is forbearance in the face of injury. Diligence is enthusiasm for what is positive. Meditative stability entails resting one-pointedly on a single focus. Finally, sublime knowing means understanding the true nature of phenomena.

As for the significance of the levels delineated by the above-mentioned

analogies, the master Damshttrasena and others maintain that while one is still of this world, the entire spiritual path consists of the arousal of bodhichitta as aspiration, whereas once one has perceived what is true, it consists of the arousal of bodhichitta as involvement.¹⁵⁰ Abhayakara and several other commentators hold that the three phases (initial, intermediate, and final) of the arousal of bodhichitta on the path of accumulation constitute bodhichitta as aspiration, whereas all of the other nineteen analogies taken together, from the path of linkage onward, illustrate bodhichitta as involvement.¹⁵¹ As is said:

Given the distinctions between three aspects—intention and so forth—
the attitude of aspiration is threefold;
it is explained that “the attitude of involvement”
has nineteen aspects.

Sagaramegha and others contend that bodhichitta is aspiration when it is not aroused with the intention to attain enlightenment and that it is involvement when it is so aroused.¹⁵² There are many other interpretations, but mine is that bodhichitta is aspiration when one wishes to attain enlightenment for the sake of others, and involvement when one maintains that aspiration through application.¹⁵³ [98b] I hold these two to be distinct facets of one and the same thing.

ii. Causes

The arousal of bodhichitta has three causes: faith as yearning that focuses on buddhahood, compassion that focuses on ordinary beings, and hearing about the benefits and advantages of bodhichitta. *The Ornament of the Sutras* explains the arousal of bodhichitta in the following way:

The power of spiritual companionship, the power of cause, the power of fundamental goodness,
and the power of hearing teachings: through familiarity with these positive influences,
although at first unstable, one’s bodhichitta becomes stable.
This is explained to be the arousal of bodhichitta as taught by others.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, the sutra *The Rare and Sublime Meteor* states:

If they have faith in the Victorious One and the Victorious One's teachings,
 have faith in unsurpassable enlightenment,
 and have faith in the conduct of the Victorious One's heirs,
 those who are intelligent will arouse bodhichitta.

iii. Results

The arousal of bodhichitta has two kinds of results: short term and far reaching. There are five short-term results. The first is the vast scope of one's conduct, which is referred to in *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

As soon as intelligent individuals arouse this most excellent attitude,
 their minds are thoroughly protected from innumerable harmful influences;
 they are always involved in what is positive, for their twofold spiritual development is enhanced;
 they are loving; and they take joy in both happiness and pain.¹⁵⁵

When one undertakes hardship for the sake of others, one takes joy in the happiness others feel and in the suffering required by one's own sacrifices.

The second is the attainment of a meaningful role, as mentioned in *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*:

In the instant they have aroused bodhichitta,¹⁵⁶ [99a]
 wretched creatures bound in the prison of samsara
 will be called heirs of the sugatas
 and honored by the gods and humans of this world.¹⁵⁷

The third is the accomplishment of all one's aims, which is spoken of in passages such as the following from the sutra *The Cluster of Stems*:

O heirs of the victorious ones, whatever any of you may wish for, arouse unsurpassable bodhichitta and you will attain it. . . .
 Bodhichitta, because it accomplishes all aims, is like a wish-fulfilling gem.

The fourth is the exhaustion of the effects of all harmful actions, as explained in *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*:

The effects of harmful actions are very powerful and extremely unbearable.

Other than perfect bodhichitta,
what positive factor could overwhelm them?¹⁵⁸

The fifth is the enormous increase of what is positive, which is referred to in the sutra *The Inconceivable Secrets*:

If whatever merit there is in bodhichitta
were to take visible form,
it would fill the entire realm of space;
in fact, it would be greater than that.

As we read in *Advice*:

For any person to meditate on bodhichitta,
even for an instant,
the amassed merit
cannot be calculated even by the Victorious One.

The far-reaching result is the swift attainment of buddhahood. According to *The Cluster of Stems*:

If you wish to awaken swiftly to the unsurpassable enlightenment of buddhahood, you should arouse bodhichitta, the resolve to attain unsurpassable enlightenment. [99b]

Moreover, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva* states:

As though through the sublime effect of the philosopher's stone, this impure body that one has taken up becomes the enlightened form of a victorious one.

Because it brings about this transformation into something precious, something priceless,
hold firmly to what is called bodhichitta.¹⁵⁹

The Commentary on Awakening Mind maintains that buddhahood will not be accomplished if bodhichitta is not aroused, but will be if it is:

Without arousing bodhichitta,
one will never attain buddhahood,
for there exists no other means
of ensuring benefit for oneself and others in samsara.

2. FORMALLY AROUSING BODHICHITTA

With the foregoing as a background, one arouses bodhichitta in three stages: the preparation, the main ceremony, and the conclusion. The preparatory stage involves arranging offerings on a shrine in front of representations of the Three Jewels. The student then pays homage with prostrations and presents the symbolic offering of the entire universe. The preceptor directs the student's intention by explaining the benefits and advantages of arousing awakening mind. According to the Chittamatra system, the preceptor imparts the formal arousal of bodhichitta after taking such steps as questioning the student about anything that could impede the transmission and having the student make a commitment to the training. However, my interpretation, consistent with the Madhyamaka system, is that the preparation consists of performing the seven branches of worship, in either an extensive or an abridged format—that is, rendering homage, making offerings, confessing the effects of harmful actions, rejoicing in the virtue of others, praying for the wheel of dharma to be turned, entreating enlightened beings not to pass into final nirvana, and dedicating one's virtue to all beings.

During the main ceremony, the student recites the following words three times:

O buddhas, transcendent and accomplished conquerors dwelling
in the ten directions, [100a] and gurus, who are supreme vajra
holders, and great bodhisattvas dwelling on the spiritual levels,
heed me, I pray!

Just as the sugatas of the past
aroused bodhichitta
and just as they continued to progress
in the training of a bodhisattva,
so too, in order to benefit beings,
do I arouse bodhichitta;
so too will I apply myself
in order to progress in the training.¹⁶⁰

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the preceptor instills a sense of enthusiasm by describing the benefits and advantages of arousing bodhichitta. The student recites lines like the following from *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*:

At this point, my life has become fruitful;
 I have attained a genuine human rebirth.
 This day, I am born into the family of buddhas.
 Now I have become an heir to the buddhas.
 Now I will, come what may,
 embark on activity befitting my family;¹⁶¹
 I will act in such a way as not to bring disgrace
 on this flawless, venerable family.¹⁶²

In addition, the methods of observing the vow are discussed at this point in the ceremony.

3. THE TRAINING TO BE OBSERVED

My two-part discussion of the nature of the training includes a detailed analysis of the training and an explanation of the way in which the training is observed.

a. A Detailed Analysis of the Training

This analysis has two parts. First, followers of the Chittamatra system hold that there are four fundamental downfalls, as listed in *The Twenty Vows*:

As for the four fundamental downfalls,¹⁶³
 the Buddha intended that they be considered similar to the
 actions that violate monastic ordination.
 They are: out of attachment to gain and honors,
 praising oneself and belittling others;
 out of avarice, withholding the dharma or material possessions
 from those who are in pain and helpless;
 out of anger, punishing others [100b]
 without paying heed to their apologies;
 and, after having abandoned the Mahayana,
 pretending to be a practitioner of the sacred dharma.¹⁶⁴

Second, followers of the Madhyamaka system hold that there are either nineteen or twenty vows. *The Compendium of Training* lists five acts that for a ruler definitely violate the ordination, five that for a ruler's adviser definitely violate the ordination, eight that for ordinary people definitely violate the ordination, and two (or one) that are common to all of these individuals.

The first group of five includes stealing the property of the Three Jew-

els; imposing a sentence on a fully ordained person who is maintaining his or her vows; causing an ordained person to renounce his or her ordination; committing the five acts that entail immediate karmic retribution; and holding wrong views.

The second group of five includes subjugating hamlets, villages, towns, cities, or nations.

The third group of eight includes teaching emptiness to those whose minds are not prepared; causing those who have entered the Mahayana to renounce it; professing adherence to the Mahayana while dismissing the discipline of individual liberation; following the spiritual approaches of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas or causing others to follow them;¹⁶⁵ praising oneself and belittling others for the sake of obtaining honors; professing that one has gained a patient acceptance of the profound nature of reality; misdirecting or misappropriating the property of the Three Jewels; and giving the possessions of a meditator with calm abiding to one whose practice consists of recitation.¹⁶⁶

The fault that is common to all people is relinquishing one's attitude of aspiration. When relinquishing one's attitude of involvement is included, the number of vows is twenty.

b. Observing the Training

How the training is observed is referred to in *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*:

To those who wish to guard their minds,
I say, folding my hands, [101A]
“Even if it were to cost your life,¹⁶⁷
guard your mindfulness and alertness!”¹⁶⁸

This indicates that one should train with unimpaired mindfulness and alertness, avoiding four defects and cultivating four positive qualities. The four defects are enumerated in *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime*:

If bodhisattvas have any of four defects, they will forget bodhi-chitta. What are these four, you ask? Deceiving gurus and others worthy of honor; causing others to regret something they should not; uttering improper or unpleasant words, and thus showing disrespect toward bodhisattvas, who have aroused bodhichitta; and behaving toward others with pretense and deception rather than with altruism.

The four positive qualities are given in the same source:

O Kashyapa, if bodhisattvas possess four qualities, bodhichitta will manifest for them in all lifetimes immediately upon rebirth and will not be forgotten, but will continue uninterrupted until they reach the very heart of enlightenment. What are these four, you ask? Not telling a lie even for the sake of saving one's life (much less in jest); maintaining altruism toward all beings, without pretense or deception; thinking of bodhisattvas as the Teacher and praising their true qualities in the four directions; [101b] and ensuring that all those beings who aspire to reach total spiritual maturity will authentically embrace unsurpassable and completely perfect enlightenment (because a more limited spiritual approach would be undesirable).¹⁶⁹

Similarly, *The Most Majestic State of Meditative Absorption* states:

O young man, if you have four ways of thinking, your bodhichitta will become stable. What are these four, you ask? Thinking of authentic spiritual mentors as buddhas; thinking of their teachings as your path; thinking of those who practice these teachings as your companions on the path; and thinking of all ordinary beings as you would your only child.

If and when an infraction occurs, one can restore one's vow by retaking it after having confessed the fault with regret. This is so because of statements in *The Twenty Vows* such as the following:

The vow is to be taken over again.¹⁷⁰

In brief, one should train constantly, day and night, to remove those factors that are to be eliminated and to develop those that are to be accomplished, never being separate from the attitude of desiring buddhahood for the sake of others. A more extensive treatment of these topics can be found in my work *The Supreme Chariot of Definitive Meaning*. This concludes my discussion of arousing bodhichitta.

C. Traversing the Path

My discussion of how the path is traversed is based on explanations of the five paths of accumulation, linkage, seeing, meditation, and no more learning.

I. THE PATH OF ACCUMULATION

The explanation of the first path has two aspects: the foundation of the path and its nature. [102a] The foundation is any framework in which an individual first gives rise to the Mahayana attitude of bodhichitta; having successfully aroused this attitude, one is capable of undertaking the initial phase of the path of accumulation.

The nature of this path is discussed in relation to three things: its cause, its result, and what it is in essence. Its cause is the spiritual potential that abides inherently, which is awakened when one receives and contemplates the teachings of the Mahayana. Its result is the four subsequent paths: the three paths of linkage, seeing, and meditation and that of no more learning. What it is in essence can be examined from four points of view, which will be discussed in turn: its characteristics, what is characterized, an analysis, and its distinctive features.

a. Characteristics

The positive factor of constantly arousing the Mahayana attitude—from the point when one enters the Mahayana until the phase of meditative warmth (as this is understood in the Mahayana) comes about—is the basis for what can be characterized as, and appropriately designated, “the Mahayana path of accumulation.” Its characteristics are any positive factors pertaining to the level of a beginning practitioner that contribute to the attainment of buddhahood. These factors are what cause the phase of meditative warmth (in the Mahayana sense) and the other anticipatory phases to arise for the first time in the practitioner’s experience. *The Smaller Commentary* states:

... for one whose enthusiasm lies in giving rise to what is conducive to liberation, these phases anticipate a decisive breakthrough.

b. What Is Characterized

What is being characterized, then, are these positive factors, from the point when one enters the Mahayana until the Mahayana path of linkage comes into effect. One is motivated wholly by the desire for perfect enlightenment. These factors include ethical discipline, control of the senses, moderation in eating, diligence in undertaking intensive spiritual practice rather than indulgence in sleep in the late evening and early morn-

ing, [102b] delight in consciously and continuously engaging in ethical discernment of what to accept or reject, an absence of regret concerning one's positive actions, enthusiasm, faith, dedicated intent, and any other positive factors that contribute to liberation. Positive factors also derive from the sublime knowing that results from receiving, contemplating, and meditating on teachings. All of these positive factors are required for the path of linkage to come into effect.

c. Analysis

If we analyze the path of accumulation, we find that there are three phases: initial, intermediate, and final. During the initial phase—the initial cause of the attainment of buddhahood—one embarks on a process that takes three immensely long eons. At this point, while one is cultivating the four applications of mindfulness, it is uncertain when the path of linkage will come into effect. *The Compendium of the Supreme Spiritual Approach* states:

Those who have strength of character and aspiration,
as well as a mind that is particularly stable,
are described as exerting themselves in every way
for the three immensely long eons of a bodhisattva's pursuit.

During the intermediate phase, while one is cultivating the four aspects of correct renunciation, it becomes certain that the path of linkage will come into effect in one's next lifetime and thereafter. During the final phase, while one is cultivating the four bases of supernormal powers, it becomes certain that the path of linkage will come into effect in the present lifetime.

d. Distinctive Features

This path has five distinctive features.

The distinctive antidote employed is complete disenchantment; that is, one considers the shortcomings of anything compounded and thus corruptible.

The distinctive process of elimination is the elimination of overt fixation, as one perceives that anything compounded, and thus corruptible, is flawed.

The distinctive realization is realization that is predominantly theoretical, as sublime knowing arises from hearing about and contemplat-

ing the nonexistence of both kinds of identity, [103a] although there is also some realization that arises from meditation.¹⁷¹ *The Compendium of Abhidharma* states:

There may also be sublime knowing arising from meditation.

The distinctive qualities of this path are such that one is able to take the first steps on the path to enlightenment, because one's mind has become pliable and can, for example, rest in the meditative absorption of calm abiding and profound insight. It is explained that through the power of this absorption, one will attain deep levels of insight, sublime states of perception, and so forth, and will receive spiritual advice from nirmanakaya buddhas. According to *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Then, because they receive from buddhas
ongoing teachings concerning calm abiding
and spacious timeless awareness,
beings throughout the realms of the universe
complete their development,
receiving spiritual advice on a vast scale.¹⁷²

The distinctive instructions on meditation fall into two categories: the general and the specific. In the first case, according to the general instructions, all three phases of the path of accumulation involve the following: discipline that focuses on the proper use (or misuse) of the body and speech; sublime knowing that arises from hearing, contemplating, and meditating on the words of the Buddha's sublime speech and their underlying meaning; the four axioms of the dharma; the five factors conducive to liberation; and the recollection of buddha, dharma, sangha, discipline, disencumberment, the body, death, birth, and inhalation and exhalation.¹⁷³

The method of meditating on the four axioms is to arouse bodhichitta [103b] and then to meditate on the impermanence of all that is compounded, on the nature of all that is corruptible as the suffering of samsara, on the lack of identity of all phenomena, and on nirvana as a state of peace. One concludes by dedicating the practice to others.

In a similar way, one cultivates the recollection of death (given that one's own and others' lives are by nature impermanent), as well as the nine perceptions of the body's uncleanness, the eight contemplations of a great spiritual practitioner, and the purification of one's entire range of perception. In the last case, one applies, as general antidotes to the three

mental poisons, the methods that refine away one's behavior patterns. These antidotes are given in *The Request of Subahu*:

One can completely erode a predominance of desire and attachment
by regarding the impurity of the flesh, fat, skin, and skeleton.
One can apply the moisture of love and compassion in the case of aversion.
For ignorance, there is the path of interdependent connection.

As for the nine perceptions of impurity, one meditates as if perceiving corpses decomposing, ridden with maggots, mottled with dark blotches, rotting, putrefying, devoured by wild animals, scattered in pieces, being cremated, and disintegrating.

According to explanations in the commentaries on the main scriptural sources, the eight contemplations of a great spiritual practitioner are the following:

- “At some point, may I be able to relieve the suffering of beings.”
- “At some point, may I be able to provide great wealth to beings oppressed by poverty.”
- “At some point, may I be able to achieve benefit for beings with this flesh-and-blood body.”
- “At some point, [104a] may I be able to ensure benefit for beings, even if it means remaining for a long time in a hell realm.”
- “At some point, with great wealth, both worldly and spiritual, may I be able to fulfill the hopes of beings.”
- “At some point, having become a buddha, may I be able to conclusively eliminate the suffering of beings.”
- “In all my lifetimes, may I never take a rebirth that is not beneficial to beings; or savor only the taste of ultimate truth;¹⁷⁴ or use words that do not satisfy all beings; or have a livelihood, a body, sublime knowing, possessions, power, or influence that do not benefit others; or take delight in harm inflicted on others.”
- “May the fruits of the harmful actions that beings commit ripen for me, while the fruits of my positive actions ripen for them.”

Regarding the purification of one's entire range of perception, *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

When heirs of the victorious ones act in any way whatsoever, their perceptual faculties functioning in a variety of ways,

they are aware of things as they are and, with appropriate words, make this evident in order to benefit beings.¹⁷⁵

This means that one should understand what *The Garlands of Buddhas* says about the purification of the entire range of perception:

Bodhisattvas entering a building should give rise to the attitude, “May all beings attain the citadel of liberation!” By extension, [104b] they should give rise to the following attitudes: when lying down, “May beings attain the kaya of buddhahood”; when dreaming, “May beings realize that all phenomena are like dream images”; when waking from sleep, “May beings awaken from their ignorance”; on arising, “May beings attain the rupakaya of buddhahood”; when dressing, “May beings be clad in self-respect and modesty”; when fastening a sash or belt, “May beings be united with fundamentally positive qualities”; and when taking a seat, “May beings attain a vajra seat.”

One practices according to passages such as this.

Attention to the breath as one inhales and exhales can be used skillfully as a precursor to the accomplishment of meditative absorption, for it is a method of taming thought. One tames the thinking process by paying attention to the cycles of respiration, following the exhalation about a yard from the mouth or nose and then the returning inhalation. Subsequently, one can cultivate the relative aspect of bodhichitta (the four immeasurable attitudes of love and so forth) and its ultimate aspect (meditation in the context of emptiness, without any of the usual proliferation and subsiding of thoughts). *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva* states:

One should pacify thoughts
and cultivate bodhichitta.¹⁷⁶

In the second case, the distinctive instructions on meditation refer to three phases. During the initial phase of the path of accumulation, one cultivates the four applications of mindfulness. For the first application, that of mindfulness based on the body, during meditative equipoise one meditates on the body as being like space, and during the postmeditation phase one meditates on it as being impure or like an illusion and so forth. For the application based on sensations, during meditative equipoise one meditates on sensations as having no origin, and during the postmedita-

tion phase one regards any sensation at all as painful yet without any pith or essence, like a hollow reed. [105a] For the application based on mind, during meditative equipoise one meditates on mind as empty by nature, and during the postmeditation phase one meditates on mind as unimpeded and not abiding in any fixed way. For the application based on phenomena, during meditative equipoise one meditates on the equalness of phenomena, and during the postmeditation phase one meditates on the eight analogies concerning the illusoriness of things and other topics.

In this way, the cultivation of the four applications of mindfulness during the initial phase of the path of accumulation leads one to the four noble truths as they are experienced on the path of seeing. The first application results in an understanding that the body produces suffering, which in turn leads one to an understanding of suffering. The second application, understanding that sensations produce suffering, leads one toward the elimination of the universal origin of suffering. Meditation on the mind as impermanent leads one toward the full experience of the cessation of suffering—that is, the cessation of the belief that things are permanent. Meditation on phenomena lacking any identity leads one to the cultivation of the path, by undermining one's fixation on identity. *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes* states:

Because they reveal the perpetuation of ignoble states, the causes
of craving,
the ground of being, and the absence of delusion,
they lead one to the four truths.
Meditate on the applications of mindfulness.¹⁷⁷

During the intermediate phase of the path of accumulation, one makes an effort to prevent negative factors that have not yet occurred from occurring, to halt the flow of those that have occurred, to cause positive factors that have not yet occurred to occur, and to cause those that have occurred to increase. To these ends, one uses antidotes such as meditating on the nonexistence of identity and on the experience of the dream state or illusions. The same source explains:

With a thorough understanding of counterproductive factors
and their antidotes in every detail, [105b]
one is diligent in eliminating what is negative.
The four aspects occur in the most excellent way.¹⁷⁸

The final phase of the path of accumulation consists of cultivating the

four bases of supernormal powers. This involves accomplishing desirable goals such as achieving deep levels of insight, sublime states of perception, and supernormal powers through an inner process of meditative absorption that focuses the mind one-pointedly, integrating calm abiding and profound insight. In *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes*, we read the following:

Remaining in that state brings pliancy.
One fulfills all one's goals.¹⁷⁹

In this context, the bases of supernormal powers referred to are the strengths of a mind rendered pliant through meditative stability, by means of which these supernormal powers and so forth are accomplished. There are four aspects: the meditative absorption of intention, that of diligence, that of attention, and that of analysis.

Thus, initially one's mind focuses on a single object of attention. If thoughts proliferate when one's mind is resting in this very stable manner, without indulging in them one immediately focuses one-pointedly on the object of attention, repeatedly meditating in that way. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

Focusing on the object of attention itself,
one should not become distracted.
Swiftly realizing when there is distraction,
one should return repeatedly to that object.¹⁸⁰

2. THE PATH OF LINKAGE

The explanation of the second path, that of linkage, also has two aspects: the foundation of the path and its nature. The foundation is twofold. The physical foundation can be the circumstances of beings in any of the five classes, and the mental foundation can be any one of six stages of meditative stability.¹⁸¹

The nature of this path is discussed in relation to three things: its cause, its result, and what it is in essence. [106a] Its cause is the Mahayana path of accumulation. *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes* states:

Having given rise to what is conducive to liberation, . . .¹⁸²

Its result is the three subsequent paths of seeing, meditation, and no more

learning. What it is in essence can be examined from four points of view, which will be discussed in turn: its characteristics, what is characterized, an analysis, and its distinctive features.

a. Its Characteristics and What Is Characterized

As to its characteristics, those positive factors included in the Mahayana that occur once the Mahayana path of accumulation has been completed and before the onset of the path of seeing are the basis for what can be characterized as, and appropriately designated, “the Mahayana path of linkage.” These factors constitute anything included in the Mahayana that occurs after the Mahayana path of accumulation is completed and contribute to the first instant of the Mahayana path of seeing arising in one’s experience.

b. Analysis

If we analyze this path, we find that there are four phases: meditative warmth, the peak experience, patient acceptance, and the highest mundane experience. One cultivates five governing powers during the two phases of meditative warmth and the peak experience, and five strengths during the two phases of patient acceptance and the highest mundane experience. *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes* refers to these:

The governing powers, the five strengths,¹⁸³
and the two pairs of anticipatory phases . . .¹⁸⁴

To be specific, the five governing powers are those of confidence, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime knowing. How one cultivates these in meditation is as follows: Having aroused bodhi-chitta, one meditates with conviction, for one has confidence in one’s understanding of impermanence and the other aspects of the four truths or in one’s understanding of all phenomena of samsara and nirvana from the perspective of the two levels of truth. [106b] With diligence, one meditates enthusiastically. With mindfulness, one does not forget what has been realized. With meditative absorption, one focuses one-pointedly. Finally, with sublime knowing, one understands the true nature of things. The term “governing power” refers to what encourages complete refinement. The same source states:

Having given rise to what is conducive to liberation,
 one gains control through intention and application;
 the object of attention is not forgotten,
 and although there is no proliferation of thoughts, there is
 thorough discernment.¹⁸⁵

The five strengths are those of confidence and so forth, as discussed earlier. How one cultivates them is similar to the way in which one cultivates the governing powers. They are called “strengths” because they overcome counterproductive factors. *The Ornament of the Sutras* explains:

Because they render counterproductive factors weak,
 they are termed “strengths.”¹⁸⁶

When one is thus cultivating the four phases of the path of linkage, the timeless awareness that comes about has in essence both an aspect of meditative equipoise, which is completely nonconceptual timeless awareness, and, when one arises from that state, a postmeditation aspect, which may be either conceptual or nonconceptual.

One might ask, “Doesn’t the quotation ‘Relying on what is involved with four kinds of concepts’ indicate a conceptual process?”¹⁸⁷ But if “involved with concepts” meant the same as “being conceptual,” that would mean that someone wearing a hat was the hat by virtue of being involved with the hat. Because the source does not simply say, “Relying on the four kinds of concepts,” the situation is one of like results proceeding from like causes.¹⁸⁸ Otherwise, the situation would be at odds with the following passage from *Drops of Nectar*, a commentary on *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*:

Just as seedlings of fine wild rice do not grow
 from grains of coarse buckwheat,
 so the nonconceptual does not come about
 from conceptual thought. [107a]

For a detailed and organized treatment of the foregoing topics, one can consult my *Jeweled Staircase*.¹⁸⁹

With regard to the development of these aspects of timeless awareness, by dividing each anticipatory phase into three degrees—weak, moderate, and strong—we obtain what are called “the twelve anticipatory phases.” *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

Thus, the anticipatory phases
entail weak, moderate, and strong degrees.¹⁹⁰

Of these four phases, that of meditative warmth is also termed “the attainment of manifestation,” for it is an aspect of timeless awareness that arises from a mundane state of meditation and that perceives all phenomena to be merely manifestations of consciousness.¹⁹¹ Some slight attainment of manifestation acts as an antidote to the tendency to invest one’s perceptions of objects with ultimate meaning.¹⁹² According to *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

Next, having developed in such a way,
a bodhisattva resting in meditative equipoise
perceives all objects as mental labels
and is absolutely unable to perceive them as having ultimate
meaning.¹⁹³

The peak experience is also termed “the increase of manifestation.” In order for the foregoing experience of the manifestation of phenomena to increase, one exerts oneself in meditating on their lack of identity, and so attains a moderate degree of manifestation that arises from a mundane state of meditation. The same source states:

In order for the manifestation of phenomena to increase,
one makes efforts in all ways with steady diligence.¹⁹⁴

The phase of patient acceptance is also termed “having a partial glimpse of suchness.” It serves as an antidote to fixation on external sense objects as though they had ultimate meaning, for it constitutes the utmost attainment of the manifestation that arises from a mundane state of meditation, that of abiding in the experience of mind only. The same source explains:

The manifestation of phenomena having increased, [107b]
one abides in the experience of mind only;
then the appearances of all seemingly meaningful objects
manifest entirely as mind.
At that point, the distraction
of perceiving these as objects is eliminated.
Then everything is subsumed under the sole distraction
of consciousness reifying a subject.¹⁹⁵

The highest mundane experience is also termed “immediately preceding,” for there is no longer anything intervening between this and the Mahayana path of seeing. Rather, there is the culmination of the manifestation of phenomena that arises from a mundane state of meditation in which there is no distraction caused by the tendency to invest the mind’s perception of a subject with ultimate meaning.¹⁹⁶ According to the same source:

At that point, without any obstacle,
one swiftly reaches a state of meditative absorption.¹⁹⁷

Two phases—meditative warmth and the peak experience—constitute the initial phase of the path of linkage, at which point it is still uncertain when the path of seeing will arise. The phase of patient acceptance is the intermediate phase of the path of linkage, at which point it becomes certain that the path of seeing will arise in the next lifetime. The highest mundane experience is the final phase of the path of linkage, at which point it becomes certain that the path of seeing will arise in the present lifetime.

c. Distinctive Features

This path has five distinctive features. The distinctive antidote employed, among the antidotes that involve a process of elimination, is suppression.¹⁹⁸ (In fact, there are four general categories of antidotes: those that involve confrontation, elimination, providing support, and distancing.)¹⁹⁹ The distinctive process of elimination involves the potential for, and actual manifestation of, the weakening of obscurations and freedom from the kinds of want and deterioration that affect ordinary beings.²⁰⁰ The distinctive realization, through the timeless awareness that arises from meditation, is that of the nonexistence of both aspects of identity. As for the distinctive qualities, one comes to experience many states of meditative absorption, deep levels of insight, sublime states of perception, supernormal powers, and the like. [108a] As for the distinctive superiority of this path over the path of accumulation, although this path may seem similar to the final phase of the path of accumulation (given that both paths arise from meditation), there are differences. This path is closer to the path of seeing, and the meditative warmth of timeless awareness is more stable, whereas that of the path of accumulation is unstable.²⁰¹ *The Major Commentary on “The Eight Thousand Stanzas”* states:

Once there are no more obstacles, this phase is known as “the imminence of the path of seeing.” One should know that its distinctive features derive from the fact that it anticipates liberation.

3. THE PATH OF SEEING

The explanation of the third path, that of seeing, also has two aspects: the foundation of the path and its nature. The foundation is twofold. The physical foundation can be the circumstances of beings in any of the five classes, as indicated in passages such as the following from the sutra *The Request of Susthitamati*:

Among the children of the gods living in the realms of desire and form, 960,000 saw phenomena with unclouded vision, free of distortion, completely pure.

(In this context, “unclouded vision” refers to the attainment of the path of seeing; “completely pure” refers to the timeless awareness of the eighth spiritual level.) The mental foundation is the fourth state of meditative stability.

The nature of this path is discussed in relation to three things: its causes, its result, and what it is in essence. Its causes are the Mahayana paths of accumulation and linkage. Its result is the two subsequent paths of meditation and no more learning. What it is in essence can be examined from four points of view, which will be discussed in turn: its characteristics, what is characterized, an analysis, and its distinctive features.

a. Characteristics

The characteristics of this path are a Mahayana practitioner’s experiences of patient acceptance that brings an understanding of the four truths, the understanding itself of the truths, patient acceptance that brings a subsequent understanding, and the subsequent understanding itself.²⁰² These can be appropriately designated “the Mahayana path of seeing.” [108b] This path follows the completion of the Mahayana path of linkage and entails those positive factors included in the Mahayana that cause the first step of the transcendent Mahayana path of seeing to arise in one’s experience.

b. What Is Characterized

What is being characterized consists of sixteen steps with their attendant factors: four steps for each of the four truths (of suffering, its universal origin, its cessation, and the path). These four steps are patient acceptance that brings an understanding of the truth in question, the understanding itself of the truth, patient acceptance that brings a subsequent understanding, and the subsequent understanding itself. From the standpoint of the spiritual levels, this path corresponds to the first level, that of “the intensely joyful one.” *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states:

Concerning suffering and the other truths,
the understanding itself of these phenomena, the subsequent
understanding itself, and so forth
make sixteen steps of patient acceptance and understanding.²⁰³

Furthermore, with the initial attainment of a transcendent state of timeless awareness, one experiences enormous joy more exalted than any previously experienced, and so the term “the intensely joyful one” is used. *The Ornament of the Sutras* explains:

With the perception that enlightenment is close at hand
and benefit for beings is ensured,
intense joy is aroused.
Therefore, the term “the intensely joyful one” is used.²⁰⁴

c. Analysis

If we analyze this path, we find that it has, by nature, sixteen steps, following the progression of the four truths.

d. Distinctive Features

This path has five distinctive features. As to its distinctive antidotes, the four steps of patient acceptance that brings an understanding of the truths constitute “the process without obstacles”—that is, the antidote that entirely removes even the potential for the functioning of factors that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing. The four steps of the understanding itself of the truths constitute “the process of complete freedom”—that is, the antidote that addresses the possible reoccurrence of

the potential for the functioning of these factors. The four steps of patient acceptance that brings subsequent understanding and the four steps of the subsequent understanding itself constitute “the process of distinctive features”—that is, the antidote that distances one from this potential. [109a]

The four steps of understanding the truths (of suffering, its universal origin, its cessation, and the path) constitute essentially a single state of mind, but can be categorized as fourfold from the standpoint of the truths. A similar situation applies to the states of patient acceptance that brings subsequent understanding and the subsequent understanding itself of the truths.

The distinctive process of elimination can be discussed in relation to two things: its essence and a classification of the factors being eliminated. The essence of this process is that one becomes free of one’s personal share of those factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing—that is, aspects of both afflictive and cognitive obscurations. *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes* states:

It is shown that there are two: afflictive obscurations
and cognitive obscurations.
In these lie all the obscurations;
when they are exhausted, this is held to be freedom.²⁰⁵

The essence of these obscurations is described in *The Highest Continuum*:

Any concepts of avarice and so forth
are considered to be afflictive obscurations.
Any concepts that involve the three focal points
are considered to be cognitive obscurations.²⁰⁶

To elaborate, avarice and other afflictive states are essentially either negative (causing great disturbance to one’s mind) or neutral (merely obscuring); these are afflictive obscurations. Dualistic thought patterns, which involve objects and the subjective agent perceiving them, are essentially either positive yet corruptible (that is, never free of investing the three focal points with true existence) or unobscuring yet neutral; these are cognitive obscurations. With respect to these obscurations, conceptual afflictive states are factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing, whereas instinctive states are factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation.²⁰⁷ Of the cognitive obscurations, obvious thought patterns based on dualistic per-

ception are factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing, whereas subtler patterns are factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation. [109b]

The classification of factors involved in the distinctive process of elimination has three aspects: the characteristics of the factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing, an analysis of them, and the way in which they are eliminated. To begin with, these factors are whatever involves conceptual labeling and is antithetical to the path of seeing.

The analysis is threefold. If these factors are analyzed from the perspective of what they are in essence, there are six: biased views, desire, anger, pride, ignorance, and doubt.

If they are analyzed from the perspective of their counterproductive functions, there are ten. Five are biased views: belief in the reality of the perishable mind-body aggregates, belief in some ideological extreme, belief in erroneous ideas, belief in philosophical views as absolutes, and belief in discipline and deportment as absolutes. The other five factors—desire, anger, pride, ignorance, and doubt—are not views.

If these factors are analyzed from the perspective of their scope, the realm of ordinary existence to which they pertain, and their counterproductive functions, there are 112 factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing. Given that the five kinds of biased views apply to the four truths (the truth of suffering and so forth) as these pertain to the realm of desire, the five factors that are not views apply as well, following in the wake of the other five. Thus, there are ten factors for each of the truths, giving a total of forty. Concerning the four truths in the two higher realms, nine factors apply to each of the truths—anger being absent—giving a total of thirty-six factors for the four truths in the states of meditative stability²⁰⁸ and thirty-six factors for the four truths in the realm of formlessness. When these are added together, the total is 112. As *The Compendium of Abhidharma* indicates:

The 112 afflictive states constitute the group of afflictive states to be eliminated on the path of seeing.

As to the way in which these are eliminated, the potential for the functioning of the factors that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing is removed through a process of suppression during the anticipatory phases [110a] and through a process of being uprooted as the states of understanding and patient acceptance develop with respect to the four truths.

To elaborate, the patient acceptance that brings an understanding

of the four truths serves as the direct cause that initiates this process of elimination. At the same time, the potential for the functioning of the factors that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing is still serving as the cause contributing to the perpetuation of these factors.²⁰⁹ But with the direct cause then serving as a cooperative condition, the continuity of this potential, which was present at the same time as patient acceptance, is now interrupted.²¹⁰ Without any other nullifying influence being necessary, this potential is eliminated in the first step of the path of seeing. In the second step, owing to an understanding of the four noble truths, a transformation is achieved in that one is free of the potential for the functioning of the factors that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing.²¹¹

As for the four steps of patient acceptance that brings subsequent understanding and the four steps of the subsequent understanding itself, these are the antidotes to the corresponding factors to be eliminated (which are much more subtle than the foregoing factors), and they come about in the wake of the two preceding states of timeless awareness connected with the path of seeing.²¹² They ensure freedom from the potential for the functioning of the factors that are to be eliminated and make their possible reoccurrence increasingly remote.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the steps associated with each of the four noble truths and their respective factors to be eliminated, these steps of patient acceptance and understanding function as antidotes to these distorting factors in succession. From the perspective of one's experience of timeless awareness, this path is classified as "the path of seeing" because one sees what one has not previously seen, doing so during the two phases when the patient acceptance of the four truths occurs—the process without obstacles and the process of complete freedom.²¹³

When the factors to be eliminated during these steps are still potent forces, they are suppressed in the presence of the indirect cause, timeless awareness.²¹⁴ When they have thus been rendered less powerful, they are further weakened in the presence of the direct cause.²¹⁵ When timeless awareness is actually experienced, the factors to be eliminated are simultaneously arrested, along with any potential for their reoccurrence.²¹⁶ The experience of timeless awareness further serves as the antidote that ushers in the process of complete freedom, which makes the possible reoccurrence of the factors to be eliminated increasingly remote.

As for the distinctive time frame involved, [110b] initially the four steps of patient acceptance that brings an understanding of the four

truths take place simultaneously. Subsequently, the four steps of the understanding itself take place simultaneously. After this, the four steps of patient acceptance that brings subsequent understanding take place simultaneously. Then, the four steps of the subsequent understanding itself take place simultaneously. The four steps involved in accomplishing the goal take place as essentially four steps with sixteen aspects, because the four steps each of acceptance and understanding take place in succession, resulting in a thorough and simultaneous understanding of the four truths.

The distinctive realization, through direct experience, is that of the nonexistence of both kinds of identity and comes about as a result of sublime knowing that transcends any mundane context. Furthermore, the basic space of phenomena is omnipresent; it permeates everyone—one self and others. With this distinctive realization, one's understanding of bodhichitta is based on the equalness of oneself and others.

The distinctive qualities, which are quite inconceivable to the ordinary mind, include the twelve capabilities that involve one hundred functions manifesting in a single instant, as well as deep levels of insight, sublime states of perception, and supernormal powers. Through the twelve capabilities, one is able, in a single instant, to encounter one hundred buddhas directly, to be aware of being blessed by one hundred buddhas, to send forth one hundred emanations, to extend an instant for one hundred eons, to extend one's timeless awareness over one hundred previous and one hundred future lifetimes, to enter into and arise out of one hundred states of meditative absorption, to bring one hundred ordinary beings to spiritual maturity, to cause one hundred realms to quake, to fill one hundred pure realms with light, to gain access to one hundred avenues of spiritual teachings, to multiply one's own body a hundredfold, [111a] and to gather a magnificent retinue one hundred strong around each of these bodies. One who dwells on this level is able to take rebirth as a ruler over the human realm.

4. THE PATH OF MEDITATION

The explanation of the fourth path, that of meditation, also has two aspects: the foundation of the path and its nature. As for the physical foundation, it is primarily that of rebirth as a man or woman in one of three continents in the human realm or as a god in the realms of desire or

form.²¹⁷ However, other states are possible alternatives, as indicated by the following line from *The Ornament of the Sutras*:

One consciously takes rebirth in a state of conditioned existence.²¹⁸

The mental foundation is the fourth state of meditative stability.

The nature of this path is discussed in relation to three things: its causes, its result, and what it is in essence. Its causes are the three preceding paths of the Mahayana. Its result is the subsequent path of no more learning. What it is in essence can be examined from four points of view, which will be discussed in turn: its characteristics, what is characterized, an analysis, and its distinctive features.

a. Characteristics

As to its characteristics, the Mahayana path from the second spiritual level up to the very threshold of enlightenment is the basis for what can be characterized as, and appropriately designated, “the Mahayana path of meditation.” Its characteristics are any positive factors included in the Mahayana that occur after the Mahayana path of seeing is completed and contribute to the first instant in which the Mahayana path of no more learning arises in one’s experience.

b. What Is Characterized

What is being characterized consists of the positive factors that are considered auxiliary to what the ten spiritual levels are by nature.

c. Analysis

If we analyze this path, we find that it has nine degrees: three in each of the three phases (initial, intermediate, and final). To elaborate, the weak degree of the initial phase of this path is the second spiritual level, that of “the flawless one.” [IIIb] The transcendent perfection is discipline.²¹⁹ As *The Ornament of the Sutras* indicates:

Because there is freedom from the flaws of immoral behavior, it is called the spiritual level of “the flawless one.”²²⁰

The moderate degree of the initial phase is the third spiritual level, that of “the illuminating one.” The transcendent perfection is patience. According to the same source:

Because it causes a great manifestation,
it is the spiritual level of “the illuminating one.”²²¹

The strong degree of the initial phase is the fourth spiritual level, that of “the radiant one.” The transcendent perfection is diligence. The same source explains:

Thus, the factors conducive to enlightenment
are like the light of a blazing fire.
Because it is endowed with these, this spiritual level
consumes the two kinds of obscurations, and so is called the level
of “the radiant one.”²²²

The weak degree of the intermediate phase is the fifth spiritual level, that of “one who has trained in what is difficult.”²²³ The same source further states:

Because beings are brought to complete spiritual maturity
and one’s own mind, moreover, is protected,
it is difficult for even intelligent people to attain.
Therefore, it is described as the spiritual level of “one who has
trained in what is difficult.”²²⁴

The moderate degree of the intermediate phase is the sixth spiritual level, that of “one who makes evident.” The transcendent perfection is sublime knowing. According to the same source:

By one’s reliance on the transcendent perfection of sublime
knowing,
the nature of both samsara and nirvana
is made evident on this spiritual level,
and so it is called the level of “one who makes evident.”²²⁵

The strong degree of the intermediate phase is the seventh spiritual level, that of “the far-reaching one.” The transcendent perfection is skillful means. The same source continues:

Because it is connected with a path that has a single destination,
it is held to be the spiritual level of “the far-reaching one.”²²⁶

Moreover, *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena* states:

Because it passes beyond the mire of samsara, [112a]
it is called the spiritual level of “the far-reaching one.”²²⁷

The weak degree of the final phase is the eighth spiritual level, that of “the immovable one.” The transcendent perfection is spiritual strength. As *The Ornament of the Sutras* indicates:

Because it is not moved by the two kinds of conceptualization,
it is held to be the spiritual level of “the immovable one.”²²⁸

The moderate degree of the final phase, which is the transcendent perfection of aspiration in its entirety, is termed that of “the highly intelligent one.”²²⁹ The same source states:

The noble intellect is one of authentic discerning awareness;
this spiritual level is that of “the highly intelligent one.”²³⁰

The strong degree of the final phase is the tenth spiritual level, that of “the clouds of dharma.” The transcendent perfection is timeless awareness. According to the same source:

Because the realm of space is pervaded
by two aspects that are like clouds, this is the spiritual level of
“the clouds of dharma.”²³¹

The two “clouds” (meditative absorption and complete recall) pervade the “sky” (those to be guided) and ensure benefit by letting fall a rain of spiritual teachings. This state is similar to that of a tathagata. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

The conduct of these bodhisattvas
in the postmeditation phase
is equal to that of tathagatas
in terms of truly freeing beings in the world.²³²

A statement like this can be made because of the similarity in the ways buddhas and bodhisattvas carry out enlightened activity; however, what is done, and how it is done, by buddhas is superior. According to the same source:

Although this is indeed so, whatever disparity exists
between the earth and a grain of sand,

or the ocean and the water in an ox's hoof print,
the same disparity exists between buddhas and bodhisattvas.²³³

Thus, the nine levels of the path of meditation are differentiated by the nine ways in which their qualities arise, [112b] which are related to the nine degrees—weak, moderate, and strong for each of the three phases—to which antidotes are applied to remove the obscurations specific to each level.

d. Distinctive Features

This path has five distinctive features.²³⁴ As to the distinctive antidotes employed, with respect to the process whereby distortions are eliminated on these nine spiritual levels, “the process of preparation” and “the process without obstacles” are the antidotes that involve elimination, “the process of complete freedom” is the antidote that provides support, and “the process of distinctive features” is the antidote that distances one from distortions.²³⁵ In this context, the term “process of preparation” refers to the specific causes that precede the removal on a given level of the factors to be eliminated—the obvious hindrances—on that level.²³⁶ Once a given level has been initiated,²³⁷ the term “process without obstacles” refers to the actual elimination of the potential for distortion specific to that level. The term “process of complete freedom” refers to the main experiences of the levels, which begin with the second step of each level. The term “process of distinctive features” refers to the progress to the next level, once one has acquired distinctive qualities in the wake of having attained the preceding level.

The distinctive elimination that takes place after the complete removal of the factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing is the removal of the obvious factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation that are specific to its levels and the initiation of the removal of subtler factors.

Essentially, two things are eliminated: instinctive afflictive obscurations and cognitive obscurations.²³⁸ These obscurations can be categorized in four ways. If they are analyzed from the standpoint of what they are in essence, there are six: desire, anger, pride, ignorance, belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates, and belief in some ideological extreme.

If these six are analyzed with respect to the realms of ordinary existence, all six pertain to the realm of desire; five pertain to each of the two

higher realms (with anger being absent), making an additional ten factors. Thus, there are in all sixteen factors to be eliminated.

If the factors to be eliminated are analyzed with respect to the states of conditioned existence, the six obscurations pertain to the realm of desire, [113a] four groups (each with five obscurations) pertain to the four states of meditative stability,²³⁹ and four groups (each with five obscurations) pertain to the four states of the realm of formlessness; this makes a total of forty-six factors to be eliminated.

These six obscurations in the states of conditioned existence can also be categorized with respect to the stronger or weaker degrees of their intensity. There are nine states of conditioned existence: the realm of desire; the first, second, third, and fourth states of meditative stability; and the formless states (those of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and the pinnacle of conditioned existence).²⁴⁰ In each of these nine states, there is a group of nine degrees of desire (three degrees—weak, moderate, and strong—each with subdivisions), making 81 factors. Similarly, there are nine states with nine degrees of pride, nine states with nine degrees of ignorance, nine states with nine degrees of belief in the reality of the perishable mind-body aggregates, and nine states with nine degrees of belief in some ideological extreme. By adding together these five groups of 81 factors to be eliminated, we arrive at a total of 405 factors, to which the nine degrees of anger in the realm of desire are added to give a final total of 414 factors. These are eliminated individually by one of four processes: that of preparation, that without obstacles, that of complete freedom, and that of distinctive features.

Regarding the distinctive qualities of this path, the twelve capabilities of the first spiritual level, which involve one hundred functions each, manifest on the second level, but increase to one thousand functions each in every moment. On the third level, one is able to demonstrate these qualities with one hundred thousand functions; on the fourth level, with one hundred billion functions; on the fifth level, with one hundred trillion functions; on the sixth level, with ten quadrillion functions; on the seventh level, with one hundred sextillion functions; on the eighth level, with as many functions as there are atoms in one million three-thousand-fold world systems; and on the ninth level, with as many functions as there are atoms in one million “incalculable” buddha realms.²⁴¹ [113b] On the tenth level, one can demonstrate these qualities with as many functions as there are atoms in one septillion “indescribable” buddha realms; as well.

one can simultaneously manifest buddha realms clearly in every pore and ensure benefit for ordinary beings through activities such as the twelve enlightened deeds. Qualities like these are perceived as though they were new, but they are not something created that was not there before; rather, they become apparent upon the elimination of obscurations that overlie one's fundamental being. This is because such qualities, and countless others as well, are timelessly and spontaneously present, and manifest in a person as that person's newly awakening perception of this fundamental being becomes more and more purified.

There is also the distinctive feature of taking rebirth in a body. One dwelling on the second spiritual level is able to take rebirth as a universal monarch ruling over the four worlds of the human realm; on the third level, one can take rebirth as Indra;²⁴² on the fourth, as the ruler of the Yama gods; on the fifth, as the ruler of the Tushita gods; on the sixth, as the ruler of the Nirmanarati gods; on the seventh, as the ruler of the Paranirmitavashavartin gods; on the eighth, as the ruler of the Brahma gods, with dominion over a one-thousand-fold world system; on the ninth, as a ruler of the Mahabrahma gods, with dominion over a two-thousand-fold world system; and on the tenth level, as Maheshvara, the ruler of the gods who has dominion over a three-thousand-fold world system.²⁴³ *The Garlands of Buddhas* states:

Those who dwell on this spiritual level become lords over three-thousand-fold world systems.

However, the fact that bodhisattvas are able to take rebirth as rulers of those realms does not impel them to do so, nor are all those who take rebirth as rulers of those realms necessarily bodhisattvas dwelling on those spiritual levels. [114a] It is said that some of these rulers may be ordinary beings who have accrued an enormous amount of merit, while others may be emanations of tathagatas appearing in those realms to ensure the welfare of beings.

Furthermore, although power over life span is attained from the first spiritual level onward, a bodhisattva may demonstrate birth and death should it be of benefit to beings to do so (even though such a bodhisattva no longer experiences birth and death existing in their own right). According to *The Compendium*:

Although not subject to aging, illness, or death, they demonstrate the transition of death.

Moreover, *The Highest Continuum* explains:

Spiritually advanced beings have thoroughly eliminated the suffering of death, illness, and aging. Rebirth takes place because of karma and afflictive states, but since such beings are not subject to these, they are not subject to what follows from them. Because they perceive what is authentic, just as it is, they have transcended birth and so forth. Nevertheless, these embodiments of compassion demonstrate birth, death, aging, and illness.²⁴⁴

5. THE PATH OF NO MORE LEARNING

The explanation of the fifth path,²⁴⁵ that of no more learning, also has two aspects: the foundation of the path and its nature. The foundation is twofold. As to the physical foundation, according to the ordinary interpretation, one's attainment of buddhahood involves being born in the social classes of political or religious leaders in this human world of Jambudvīpa. According to the extraordinary interpretation, however, this foundation consists of whatever circumstances serve as the basis for awakening to buddhahood in the realm of Akanishtha;²⁴⁶ subsequently, when emanations appear in the various realms of ordinary beings, this foundation consists of whatever circumstances serve as the basis for manifestation as a buddha in those realms. The mental foundation is the fourth state of meditative stability.

The nature of this path is discussed in relation to three things: its cause, its result, and what it is in essence. [114b] Its cause is the consummation of twofold spiritual development on the four preceding paths, which involve learning. Its result is that all ordinary beings are brought to one of the three degrees of enlightenment through magnificent enlightened activity. What it is in essence can be examined from four points of view, which will be discussed in turn: its characteristics, what is characterized, an analysis, and its distinctive features.

a. Characteristics

The three kayas, together with timeless awareness, are the basis for what can be characterized as, and appropriately designated, "the Mahayana path of no more learning." This term refers to the positive factors that are

the consummation of the processes of elimination and realization according to the Mahayana.

b. What Is Characterized

The term “path of no more learning” refers to the level of buddhahood, with its ten attributes that require no more learning, five incorruptible aggregates, and six transcendent perfections.²⁴⁷

c. Analysis

This path can be analyzed under three main headings: the kayas as supporting factors, timeless awareness as what is supported, and the deeds that constitute enlightened activity.

i. The Kayas as Supporting Factors

There are three kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya.

(a) DHARMAKAYA

Dharmakaya is by nature the nondual unity of basic space and timeless awareness—timeless awareness free of absolutely all distortions, the spacelike state that is the consummation of realization. *The Primacy of Buddhahood* states:

... endowed with spacelike dharmakaya and the beautiful forms of rupakaya.

According to *The Drops of Nectar: A Letter of Advice*:

Like water dissolving into water
and oil dissolving into oil,
timeless awareness is blended completely with and inseparable
from
suchness—the experience of freedom from elaboration.
This is the nature of all buddhas,
which is called “dharmakaya.”

If we analyze dharmakaya, we find that it has two aspects. The term “svabhavikakaya” refers to the aspect of basic space—emptiness as the unity of purity and equalness—serving as the true nature of the kayas.

[115a] What is termed “realization as jnana-dharmakaya” is posited to be timeless awareness as the consummation of the process of elimination and realization—that is, the essence of awareness comprising twenty-one categories—because that which is the timeless awareness of buddhahood has become evident as the consummate unity of basic space and awareness.²⁴⁸

Regarding the first aspect, svabhavikakaya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* explains:

The svabhavikakaya of the Sage
is the attainment of whatever attributes are incorruptible,
is totally pure in every way,
and by nature is characterized by these attributes.²⁴⁹

As for the state of realization as jnana-dharmakaya,²⁵⁰ by delineating the aspects of awareness in the fully evident state of timeless awareness that is one’s fundamental being, we arrive at some thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment, as well as other attributes. According to the same source:

Dharmakaya is described as
the embodiment of factors that contribute to enlightenment,
immeasurable attitudes,
aspects of liberation,
nine successive states of meditative equipoise,
the embodiment of ten states of total immersion,
the fields of experience that overwhelm ordinary perceptions
(numbering eight when analyzed in detail),
the absence of afflictive states, wisdom arising from aspiration,
supernormal cognitive faculties, states of authentic discernment,
four aspects of absolute purity,
ten powers, ten strengths,
four states of fearlessness,
three factors that need not be guarded,
three bases of mindfulness,
a nature that is not neglectful of beings,
authentic victory over habit patterns,
supreme and innate compassion for beings,
all qualities unique to the Sage
(which are explained to be eighteen),
and omniscience itself.²⁵¹ [115b]

Furthermore, in the context of the essence of being itself—skylike basic space—realization (that is, timeless awareness) shines like the sun, causing adventitious obscurations to disperse like clouds. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

Buddhahood itself is undifferentiated.

On the basis of its pure attributes, it can be thoroughly analyzed and characterized as having two aspects, like the sun and the sky: timeless awareness and a state of elimination.

It is inseparable from utter lucidity, which is not something produced,
and its functions surpass in number
the grains of sand in the bed of the river Ganges, and so it
is endowed
with all the attributes of buddhahood.²⁵²

Moreover, its nature is inconceivable to the ordinary mind. According to the same source:

Without origin, interim, or end, undifferentiated,
without the two extremes, free of the three obscurations, flawless,
and nonconceptual:
such is the realization of what is the nature of the basic space of
phenomena,
seen by the yogin resting in meditative equipoise.

Unfathomable, its qualities surpassing in number the grains of
sand in the bed of the river Ganges,
unimaginable, unparalleled, endowed with the qualities of
enlightenment,
the flawless basic space of the tathagatas
constitutes the elimination of all flaws and their attendant habit
patterns.²⁵³

In short, although it manifests on the strength of distortions being eliminated, dharmakaya is not newly compounded. The same source comments on this and similar attributes:

Uncompounded and spontaneously present,
it is not realized through the agency of anyone or anything else
and is endowed with wisdom, love, and energy.

This is buddhahood itself, which embodies the two kinds of benefit.²⁵⁴ [116a]

(b) SAMBHOGAKAYA

Sambhogakaya, as the manifest aspect of the way of abiding that is the ground of being, is the perfection of all qualities of enlightenment without exception. This perfection is defined by the fact that what pertains to samsara—that is, the basis of all ordinary experience and its eight attendant avenues of consciousness—has subsided within basic space.²⁵⁵ This ever-present kaya, endowed with five certainties, is like a precious gem, but not in the sense that it is some multicolored thing, material and durable (though impermanent). Nor is its empty nature such that it is incapable of manifesting in any way at all. It is like a gem in that it provides all that is wished for, is like a rainbow in that it appears yet has no essence, and abides as awareness—timeless awareness. *The Highest Continuum* states:

The kaya endowed with the radiance of various spiritual teachings
exerts itself in ensuring the benefit of complete freedom for
ordinary beings.
Its enlightened deeds are similar to the most majestic wish-
fulfilling gem,
but although its various facets manifest, they are not its
nature.²⁵⁶

The five certainties are as follows: It is certain that the environment is Akanishtha Ghanavyuha; it is certain that the retinue consists of bodhisattvas on the tenth spiritual level; it is certain that the teaching is entirely that of the Mahayana; it is certain that the teacher is Vairochana; and it is certain that the occasion is the continuum of the eternal present. According to *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*:

This embodiment of the thirty-two major marks
and eighty minor marks of perfect form
thoroughly enjoys the wealth of the Mahayana,
and so is held to be the sambhogakaya of the sages.²⁵⁷

Moreover, in the commentary on this text, we read the following:

The very essence of the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of perfect form lies in a thorough appreciation of the richness of

the teachings of the Mahayana, [116b] an experience of utterly impeccable joy and bliss that one enjoys in unison with great bodhisattvas of the tenth spiritual level. This is the sambhogakaya of the transcendent, accomplished, and victorious buddhas.

Furthermore, Akanishtha is the environment in which buddhas initially awaken to actual enlightenment. As the sutra *The Dense Array of Adornment* indicates:

Beyond the realms of formlessness, desire, and form,
and likewise nonconceptual states:
it is beyond these realms.

Powerful buddhas dwell there, in the mandala of Ghanavyuha.

That is, buddhas awaken in the environment of Ghanavyuha, which transcends the three realms. And exactly where is this, you wonder? Just as one cannot determine where one goes in a dream and pinpoint it as one specific place and that alone, so Ghanavyuha is found wherever there is freedom from absolutely all obscurations and basic space blends with timeless awareness. *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena* states:

Both the sublime environment of Maheshvara
and this pinnacle realm are lovely,
but I declare the latter to be the blending
of three aspects of consciousness in one.²⁵⁸

According to *The Compendium of the Supreme Spiritual Approach*:

Because nothing is misconstrued as having identity,
there is no separate location,
but on the basis of previous accounts,
distinctions are made by ascribing features to that realm.²⁵⁹

On this note, Shakyamuni is considered to have awakened to buddhahood in the beginningless past, in the realm of Akanishtha. However, in carrying out enlightened deeds to ensure benefit for beings, [117a] after the formation of this universe of sorrow Shakyamuni seemed, in light of the differing perceptions and inclinations of individual beings, to awaken to buddhahood initially in Akanishtha in the realm of form, bringing harmony among the gods, after which he is said to have manifested as someone awakening to buddhahood at Vajrasana in this human world. The tantra *The Sphere of the Secret Moon* explains:

The Buddha did not actually awaken to buddhahood in the realm of desire or in the realm of formlessness; you, who were free of desire and attachment, became a buddha in Akanishtha in the realm of form.²⁶⁰

In this case, “Akanishtha” is held to refer not to the state beyond that of the Sudarshana gods in the realm of form and everything below that, but to the transcendent state in which no further process of elimination is needed.²⁶¹ *The Journey to Sri Lanka* states:

In the delightful realm of Akanishtha Ghanavyuha,
beyond the immaculate abodes,
the completely awakened Buddha awakened to buddhahood.
It was an emanation who awakened to buddhahood in this world.

The certainty of the retinue means that the sambhogakaya is surrounded by bodhisattvas of the first to the tenth spiritual levels. As we read in *The Ornament of Manifest Timeless Awareness*:

The supreme sambhogakaya of the transcendent and accomplished conquerors is completely surrounded by an inconceivable number of great, courageous bodhisattvas dwelling on the tenth spiritual level.

The certainty of teachings is that the turning of the wheel of dharma takes place through the Mahayana teachings exclusively. According to the same source:

All of the immeasurable and inconceivable wheels of the unsurpassable dharma that exist are turned in their entirety. [117b]

Moreover, *The Aspiration Prayer of Maitreya* states:

The tathagata is Mahavairochana,
from whose form rays of light shine as from the sun
and from whose mouth issues the nectar of enlightened speech,
healing the afflicted who fill the three realms.

The certainty of the teacher is that it is always the glorious Vairochana, and by implication Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi, their forms radiant with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of perfect form. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* enumerates the thirty-two major marks:

Hands and feet marked with wheel designs; feet standing firmly
 like a tortoise's;
 fingers and toes webbed with light;
 palms and soles with soft and youthful flesh;
 seven smoothly rounded features of the body;²⁶²
 long fingers; broad heels; a large, erect body;
 inconspicuous ankle joints; body hair growing upward;
 calves like those of the black antelope; long, handsome arms;
 a most excellent male organ retracted into its sheath;
 golden-hued skin; smooth skin;
 each body hair well defined and curling clockwise;
 a tiny coil of hair at the midbrow; an upper torso like a lion's;
 well-rounded shoulders; broad shoulder blades;
 a tongue to which even unpleasant tastes seem delicious;
 a body as symmetrical as a banyan tree;²⁶³
 an ushnisha on top of the head; a long, beautiful tongue;
 a mellifluous voice; jaws like a lion's; teeth that are
 extremely white, closely set, even, [118a]
 and complete, exactly forty in number;
 deep blue-black eyes; and lashes like those of the finest cow:
 these are the thirty-two major marks.²⁶⁴

As for the eighty minor marks, the same source lists the following:

The Sage has nails that are copper-colored,
 glossy, and rounded;
 fingers that are full-fleshed, wide, and tapered;
 veins that are inconspicuous and not swollen;
 inconspicuous ankle joints; feet of equal size;
 the gait of a lion, an elephant, a bird,
 and a bull; a gait that tends to the right;
 an elegant gait; an erect posture; a physique that is well rounded,
 smooth as though polished, well proportioned,
 clean, soft, and pure;
 fully developed genitals;
 a large, noble body structure;
 an even gait; perfectly formed eyes;
 a body that is youthful,
 unimpaired, robust, and
 very firm and solid;
 well-proportioned limbs;
 clear and unobscured vision;

a belly that is round, smooth, without folds,
 and firm; a navel that is
 deep and spirals to the right;
 a form that is beautiful when viewed from any side;
 an impeccable bearing; a body that is
 free of moles and blemishes;
 hands as soft as cotton;
 palm lines that are deep, long, and clearly outlined;
 a face that is not too long;
 lips as red as a bimba fruit;²⁶⁵
 a tongue that is supple, slender, [118b]
 and red; a voice as resonant as thunder;
 pleasant, gentle speech; canine teeth that are cylindrical,
 sharp, white, even,
 and tapered; a nose that is prominent
 and extremely pure and clean;
 eyes that are long from corner to corner, with thick lashes
 and pupils with the luster of lotus petals;
 eyebrows that are long, soft,
 glossy, and made up of hairs of equal length;
 long and well-muscled arms; ears of equal size
 with completely unimpaired hearing;
 a brow that is well formed
 and broad; a large head;
 hair that is as black as a bumblebee,
 thick, soft, not tangled,
 not unruly, and fragrant with a scent
 that captivates people's hearts;
 as well as the adorning marks of the endless knot
 and the auspicious swastika.
 These are considered to be the noble minor marks of a buddha.²⁶⁶

The certainty of the time frame is that the sambhogakaya is ever-present and so is inconceivable to the ordinary mind. *The Entrance into the Middle Way* explains:

The kaya of peace illuminates like a wish-granting tree,
 yet like a wish-fulfilling gem it involves no thought.
 Until beings are liberated, it is ever-present, so as to be involved
 with the world.
 It is perceptible to those whose minds are free of conceptual
 elaboration.²⁶⁷

There are reasons for this ever-present quality. Because sambhogakaya itself is identical in essence to dharmakaya and so inseparable from it, like dharmakaya it is not subject to any transition or change. It is thus timelessly and spontaneously present, and so uncompounded. It manifests owing to the immeasurable merit of those to be guided, which is produced for as long as samsara continues. In addition, *The Highest Continuum* states: [II9a]

The powerful spiritual lord vanquished the mara of death.
In essence nonexistent, the guide of the universe is ever-present.

.

. . . because the lord of death cannot act²⁶⁸
where the deathless state of peace has been attained;
because, with a nature that is uncompounded,
the Sage is primordially in a state of utter peace;
and because, at all times, refuge and so forth are provided²⁶⁹
for those without a refuge.²⁷⁰

.

There is the ever-present quality of the rupakayas,
and for the latter three reasons,
there is the ever-present quality of dharmakaya as the Teacher.²⁷¹

(c) NIRMANAKAYA

Although the nirmanakaya never wavers from the basic space of sambhogakaya or the embrace of dharmakaya, it appears in various ways in the perceptions of beings to be guided, for as long as conditioned existence continues, guiding them in whatever way is necessary. This is termed “its eternal presence on a vast scale.” The same source states:

Enlightened embodiments that cause the world to be brought to
the path of peace,
cause beings to reach full spiritual maturity, and cause
prophecies to be uttered:²⁷²
such embodiments are ever-present in this world,
just as the realm of visible forms abides within the realm of
space.²⁷³

If there are beings to be guided, the nirmanakaya is present, whereas if there are none, it is absent; in this, it is like the reflection of the moon

where there is water. Although a buddha may be present, if someone has not developed a positive connection with that buddha, the situation is like that of a spoiled seed that cannot grow. According to *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*:

Once beings' minds have thoroughly matured,²⁷⁴
 however, whenever, and for whomever
 there can be action that ensures benefit,
 it manifests at just that time and in just that way.

But just as a spoiled seed will not germinate
 even though the ruler of the gods has sent down rain, [119b]
 so, even though buddhas have appeared,
 those who lack good fortune will not appreciate their noble
 qualities.²⁷⁵

There are three kinds of emanations, as *The Ornament of the Sutras* indicates:

There are emanations through artistry, through conscious
 rebirth, and similarly
 as expressions of sublime enlightenment.²⁷⁶
 The nirmanakaya of buddhahood
 is the supreme skillful means of total freedom.²⁷⁷

Specifically, “emanations through artistry” include castings, drawings, paintings, books, and so forth, because they all foster what is positive in ordinary beings. “Emanations through conscious rebirth” are those who emanate as noble individuals and others who protect beings from illness, famine, and so on. “Emanations as expressions of sublime enlightenment” guide beings by enacting the twelve great deeds and other means. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

Knowing the world through supreme innate compassion,
 seeing all worlds,
 it is the nature of nirmanakaya that in various ways
 it comes into being through manifest forms of rebirth,
 while not straying from dharmakaya.
 Descending from Tushita,
 entering a womb, taking birth,
 being trained in all the arts and martial skills,
 enjoying the company of a retinue of queens,
 resolving to gain release from samsara, practicing austerities,

going to Bodhimanda,
 defeating the legions of Mara, awakening to perfect
 enlightenment,
 turning the wheel of dharma,
 and passing into nirvana: those who have gone in these ways
 have done so within the total range of impure realms
 and will do so for as long as there is conditioned existence.²⁷⁸

Furthermore, the rupakayas abide within dharmakaya. [120a] Such is buddhahood—the transcendent, accomplished, and victorious state, the attainment of the three kayas. According to the same source:

First and foremost is dharmakaya;
 secondary to that are the rupakayas.
 Just as visible forms abide within space,
 the latter abide within the former.²⁷⁹

Moreover, *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

One should know that the kaya of buddhahood
 comprises three kayas.
 Its nature is sambhogakaya,
 and there is, furthermore, nirmanakaya.
 The three kayas demonstrate the significance
 of this nature and what it supports.²⁸⁰

This concludes my discussion of the kayas as supporting factors.

ii. Timeless Awareness as What Is Supported

My explanation of timeless awareness as what is supported has three parts: a thorough classification of timeless awareness in general, the nature of its individual aspects, and the way in which it knows all that can be known.

(a) CLASSIFICATION

The basis of the classification is simply the timeless awareness of buddhahood. What I am classifying is, in essence, the knowledge of reality just as it is and the knowledge of things in their multiplicity.

The first kind of knowledge is the direct knowing of all objects of knowledge—things with their individual properties, causes, results, and so forth—free of the limitations of conceptual elaboration. *The Intermediate-Length “Mother”* states:

What is called “knowledge of all things” is the result of knowing one thing: the true nature of phenomena, which has the attribute of peace.

In some source texts, this knowledge is termed “timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena.”

The second kind of knowledge is discussed in relation to three things: its nature, an analysis of it, and its causes. First, its nature is to know directly all objects of knowledge—things with their individual properties, causes, results, and so forth—as if they were illusions. According to the same source:

Whatever attributes, whatever distinctive marks, and whatever characteristics describe phenomena accurately, [120b] the tathagatas thoroughly comprehend those attributes, those distinctive marks, and those characteristics.

An analysis of timeless awareness as knowledge of things in their multiplicity shows that it has four aspects: mirror-like timeless awareness, timeless awareness as equalness, discerning timeless awareness, and timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment.

The causes of these aspects of timeless awareness are of two kinds: there are antidotes as causes, which bring about a process of removal, and there is the nature of these aspects as a cause, the nature from which overlying distortions are removed. In the first case, on the paths that involve learning, one is aided by retaining the many varieties of teachings one has heard, meditating on the equalness of oneself and others, imparting teachings appropriate to the personal lot of those to be guided, and ensuring benefit for others. By purifying one of distortions, these actions serve as causes for experiencing the four innate aspects of timeless awareness. *The Ornament of the Sutras* explains:

Through one’s retention, maintaining an attitude of equalness, imparting authentic teachings as much as possible, and accomplishing what is to be done, the four aspects of timeless awareness occur authentically.²⁸¹

A process of transformation is considered to take place, in that one’s innate timeless awareness manifests on the strength of being unencumbered by obscuring factors. With the collapse of the eight avenues of consciousness that function in the impure state of being, together with their

support—the basis of all ordinary experience—timeless awareness arises in their stead. With the purification of the basis of all ordinary experience, there is timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena. With the purification of consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience, there is mirror-like timeless awareness. With the purification of the coordinating mental faculty, there is timeless awareness as equalness. With the purification of the afflictive aspect of consciousness, there is discerning timeless awareness. With the purification of the five sense consciousnesses, there is timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment. [121a] The sutra *Approaching the Three Kayas* states:

The subsiding, within basic space, of the basis of all ordinary experience is the basic space of phenomena. The subsiding, within basic space, of consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience is mirror-like timeless awareness. The subsiding, within basic space, of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty is timeless awareness as equalness. The subsiding, within basic space, of the afflictive aspect of consciousness is discerning timeless awareness. The subsiding, within basic space, of the five sense consciousnesses is timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment.

In positing that there is transformation, moreover, one is simply using that term to describe the process whereby one is purified of afflictive states, along with their supports; this is a valid use of the term because, if one were not purified of these states, the corresponding qualities of enlightenment would not manifest. But it is impossible for what is transformed into timeless awareness to be afflictive states in their own right,²⁸² because such states would stand in complete contradiction to what timeless awareness is, and because afflictive states are in fact explained to be factors that must be eliminated, which means that one must be purified of them.

If these aspects of timeless awareness could be characterized as causes in the ordinary sense, this would contradict the explanation that they are timelessly present—in a spontaneous way, not as compounded phenomena—within one's fundamental being, because they would of necessity be compounded—that is, newly created through a process of transformation. If one held this to be so, it would mean that these causes were impermanent, because they would be thus compounded. If one held this to be so, the state of total freedom would entail transition and change, from

which it would follow that it pertained to the truth of suffering. Thus, through reasoning, these and similar erroneous statements can be disproved. They are also undermined by quotations such as the following:

Until beings are liberated, [the kaya of buddhahood] is ever-present, so as to be involved with the world.²⁸³

One should not even entertain erroneous ideas, let alone believe in them, convinced that they are true. [121b]

(b) INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS

My discussion of the nature of the individual aspects of timeless awareness is fourfold.²⁸⁴ Mirror-like timeless awareness is, in essence, endowed with five attributes. Its continuity is not fragmented, for it entails none of the divisive barriers imposed by the sense of "I." Its field of perception is not fragmented, for it is not that there is awareness of only what is immediately present but not of what is elsewhere. Its time frame is not fragmented, for timeless awareness, inconceivable to the ordinary imagination, is ever-present; this is because timeless awareness is not impermanent or subject to transition or change and so the three relative times do not apply. Its frame of reference is not fragmented, for there is knowledge of all objects in the phenomenal world without exception. Its data are not fragmented, for it knows all things that are knowable simply through their presence, without relying on the experience of the data of objects. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

Mirror-like timeless awareness involves no sense of "I" and "mine."

It always entails a complete absence of fragmentation, is undeluded regarding all that can be known, yet never needs to pay deliberate attention to that.²⁸⁵

It functions in concert with the other three aspects of timeless awareness. According to the same source:

Mirror-like timeless awareness is unwavering. It supports three aspects of timeless awareness, which are none other than awareness as equalness, discernment, and spontaneous fulfillment.²⁸⁶

Its function is similar to the arising of a reflection when a mirror and a

face come together. When this aspect of timeless awareness expresses itself with respect to someone to be guided, the other three aspects of timeless awareness and the sambhogakaya manifest like reflections arising in a mirror, serving as the ground from which the nirmanakaya emanates:

Because timeless awareness is the reason for everything,
that awareness is like a great source,
for the sambhogakaya of buddhahood
comes about as a reflection of timeless awareness.²⁸⁷ [122a]

Timeless awareness as equalness is, in essence, the thorough comprehension of all things in their equalness, without being confined to either extreme of samsara or nirvana:

Abiding in an unconfined state of peace
is described as timeless awareness as equalness.²⁸⁸

It functions in concert with the supreme qualities of love and innate compassion. Its function is to reveal the actual presence of the rupakayas according to the dedicated intent of those to be guided:

Endowed at all times with love
and supreme innate compassion,
in keeping with the dedicated intent of beings
the kayas of buddhahood reveal themselves explicitly.²⁸⁹

As I see it, then, while the mirror-like aspect functions as the ground for the arising of the rupakayas, timeless awareness as equalness causes them to reveal themselves to those who are to be guided.

Discerning timeless awareness is, in essence, timeless awareness that is unimpeded with respect to all objects in the phenomenal world, entailing mastery of the presentation of spiritual teachings:

Discerning timeless awareness
is always unimpeded with respect to all that can be known.²⁹⁰

It functions in concert with innumerable states of meditative absorption, powers of complete recall, and so forth:

It is entirely like a treasure trove
of meditative absorption and powers of complete recall.²⁹¹

Its function is to cause an outpouring of teachings, revealing the manifold richness of enlightened embodiments manifesting amid retinues:

Amid the surrounding retinue, [122b]
 it causes the revelation of all richness
 and a great outpouring of teachings
 that cut through all doubts.²⁹²

Timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment is, in essence, timeless awareness that ensures benefit for beings in myriad ways, sending forth innumerable emanations:

In myriad worlds throughout all realms,
 timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment
 ensures benefit for all beings
 through innumerable and inconceivable emanations.²⁹³

Its function is to enact deeds that ensure benefit on an inconceivable scale for those to be guided. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states:

These emanations of buddhahood
 should always be understood to be inconceivable
 in terms of the specific deeds they enact,
 their number, and every kind of realm in which they manifest.²⁹⁴

(c) THE WAY OF KNOWING ALL THAT CAN BE KNOWN

Two topics pertain to my discussion of the way in which such timeless awareness knows all that is to be known: discarding erroneous opinions and establishing the authentic view.

(i) *Erroneous Opinions*

I will discuss three erroneous opinions. Some who claim to be proponents of the Madhyamaka system maintain that a buddha has no timeless awareness and therefore has no knowledge arising from timeless awareness. They argue that this is so because objects of knowledge are conceptual elaborations, and buddhahood is free of such elaborations; moreover, they say, awareness must be entailed for there to be nonrecognition of awareness, and hence, with the undermining of the nonrecognition that entails awareness, the awareness it entails is undermined as well. They suggest that this is supported by the following line from *The Entrance into the Middle Way*:

The kaya makes the cessation of ordinary mind fully evident.²⁹⁵

This position is not reasonable. From the standpoint of dharmakaya—the perspective of emptiness—given that timeless awareness cannot be found to be either existent or nonexistent, [123a] even if one posited it to be existent this could be refuted, and even if it were held to be nonexistent this too could be refuted. Therefore, it is untenable to claim that a buddha does not have timeless awareness. On the other hand, from the standpoint of the rupakayas—the perspective of manifestation—once those to be guided have manifested, the enlightened deeds that ensure their benefit must of necessity manifest, and so timeless awareness must also become manifest. Although it is true that all things imputed by systems of philosophical thought—objects of knowledge, agents of knowledge, and so forth—are conceptual elaborations, sense objects that are considered manifestations (without being imputed in any way) cannot be considered conceptual elaborations. Even ordinary people in the world accept this, so it is unreasonable to deny that a buddha has timeless awareness. We may cite statements such as the following from the sutra *Acting in Accordance with the World*:

Whatever ordinary people accept as existing, that I consider to exist.

Since awareness is the support for the nonrecognition of awareness, and not something predicated on it, awareness does not collapse with the collapse of this nonrecognition, just as the ground remains even though a house has been destroyed. It is said that the dharmakaya aspect of awakening to buddhahood is made evident through awareness; even our hypothetical proponent of Madhyamaka holds that “the kaya makes the cessation of ordinary mind fully evident.” Although ordinary mind is arrested, not only is timeless awareness not arrested, it is ever-present as a superlatively positive state. Alternatively, on what basis is ordinary mind arrested? If one holds that there is an interruption of its functioning—a state something like space—one is similar to a proponent of the Barhaspatya system. Therefore, ordinary mind and mental events [123b] (everything that is subsumed within the basis of all ordinary experience and the eight avenues of consciousness) are arrested in the context of awareness—timeless awareness. Furthermore, the position that a buddha has timeless awareness is a worthy one, for as *The Explanation of “The Entrance into the Middle Way”* states:

That which ensures benefit for anyone is timeless awareness, which entails unsurpassable enlightened deeds. This, moreover, is attained by transcendent and accomplished conquerors solely in Akanishtha.

Regarding the second erroneous opinion, some proponents of the Chittamatra system hold that it is illogical to say that the timeless awareness of a buddha can know objects in the external world. In support of this, they say that if there were knowledge of objects that involved sense data, this would mean that timeless awareness was involved with dualistic perceptions of object and subject; or, alternatively, if there were knowledge without sense data being experienced, this would be a logical absurdity. But their position is not reasonable, either. It would mean that there could be no omniscient timeless awareness, because there would be no knowledge of sensory appearances manifesting as objects in the external world, and one would be applying the same criteria as one does to ordinary awareness—that is, whether or not sense data are present.²⁹⁶

Regarding the third erroneous opinion, some who accept two levels of truth while professing a materialist viewpoint say that sensory appearances based on confusion—which manifest as the impure state of *samsara*—actually manifest in their own right in the timeless awareness of a buddha, and that these selfsame appearances are known by the timeless awareness of things in all their multiplicity.²⁹⁷ If there were no such knowledge, they say, it follows that it would be impossible for our impure universe to be an object of knowledge, since that universe could not be perceived by the timeless awareness of an omniscient being. They say that the fact that something is not perceived by a buddha entails its not being an object of knowledge at all, and as proof they cite *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*:

... And why, you ask? Because a buddha knows yet does not perceive phenomena.²⁹⁸ [I24a]

According to *The Ascertainment of Valid Cognition*:

One should understand that when an omniscient one cannot perceive something, it is because that thing in no way exists.²⁹⁹

Therefore, they maintain, even though perceiving what is impure, a buddha is not sullied by the flaws of confusion. But this position, too, is incorrect. Putting aside, for the moment, any question of a buddha's time-

less awareness, it is explained that even on the three pure spiritual levels, the five sense consciousnesses have undergone such a transformation that there is the power to experience pure realms. *The Ornament of the Sūtras* states:

Because the conceptual mind, reifying perception, and ordinary thinking have been transformed, there is the fourfold power to experience nonconceptual awareness, pure realms, timeless awareness, and the carrying out of activity.

These four powers apply to the three spiritual levels of the immovable one and the rest.³⁰⁰ For the first of these, there are two kinds, and for the others, there is held to be a single power for each.³⁰¹

How is this quotation to be interpreted? Because a buddha is free of the distortions of perception based on confusion, it is illogical to maintain that perception based on confusion is ever experienced from a buddha's own perspective.³⁰² Nevertheless, some say that although the timeless awareness of a buddha knows the universe in its pure manifestation, it is impossible for it to know the universe in its impure manifestation, because the latter is produced by the afflictive states and karma of ordinary beings and because all impure perceptions are, for a buddha, transformed into pure ones. But this position, too, is illogical. Is or is not the timeless awareness of a buddha omniscient timeless awareness? If it is, we can discount the alternative whereby it does not know the perception of ordinary beings (which is based on confusion). If it is not, [124b] it falls short of being the timeless awareness of a buddha.

In conclusion, then, the foregoing opinions are incorrect, held only because their proponents see simply what accords with their perception or are unable to see what does not accord with their perception.

(ii) The Authentic View

There are two ways to establish the position of the authentic view: by showing the way in which a buddha perceives objects of knowledge and by dealing with objections. In the first place, concerning a buddha's own perception, it has been utterly purified of all confusion; therefore, because confusion has been utterly eliminated and misperception cannot occur, a buddha cannot experience even an iota of perception based on confusion.

Concerning others' confusion, a buddha knows all of the unlimited ways in which individual ordinary beings experience things, together with the causes and results involved, seeing them as plainly as a myrobalan fruit in the palm of one's hand. That is, a single timeless awareness simultaneously knows all that is perceived by that buddha and by others because it is, after all, omniscient timeless awareness. *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth* states:

In a single instant of knowing,
it embraces the entire spectrum of what can be known.³⁰³

The significance of this awareness of both states of perception can be illustrated by the following: Suppose two householders, who are brothers, live in a fine mansion made of precious substances, beautifully appointed with unlimited resources. The elder brother, having gone to sleep, awakens within his dream to find that he has acquired the power to read another's mind. While he is still dreaming, his younger brother also goes to sleep and dreams of a variety of experiences that are pleasurable, painful, or neutral—all the perceptions based on confusion that are specific to the six classes of beings. [125a] The younger brother does not come to his senses as he sleeps and dreams, nor would there be any point in waking him. So while the younger brother experiences the joys and sorrows of being a god or some other being, the elder brother creates some suitable emanation—whether a spiritual practitioner, a member of a priestly class, a man, a woman, a buddha, a shravaka, a pratyekabuddha, a bodhisattva, or any ordinary being—who appears to the younger brother in his dream. This emanation gives the brother spiritual teachings, saying, “Alas, all compounded phenomena are impermanent; they have no true essence, and it is impossible that they actually exist. These perceptions based on confusion are false, so do not fixate on them as true! Put the teachings into practice!”

This causes the younger brother to give up negative actions and pursue positive ones, and he has the impression of passing through lifetime after lifetime, during which he enjoys the happiness of higher states of rebirth and is reborn into families of those who put the teachings into practice. For the time being, he is happy, and furthermore his sleep becomes gradually lighter; then, because he comes to understand that samsara is false, he awakens from sleep. At that point, without moving from the bed he has slept in all along, he remembers the dreams that have occurred and recalls that his elder brother sent an emanation, thus ensuring his welfare.

Although he is in fact no better or worse than his elder brother, imagine how the two brothers would recount this story and laugh at the relatively brief period of seeming discrepancy, of one being superior to the other! Similarly, one should bear in mind that although buddhas and ordinary beings share equally the right to dwell in the fine mansion of timeless awareness that is their very essence, the difference between them lies in whether or not they have, at some point, awakened from the sleep of adventitious obscuration. [125b]

There are two ways in which a buddha knows all that is to be known. “Knowledge of reality just as it is” refers to the fact that with respect to the essence of all phenomena of samsara and nirvana, the timeless awareness of a buddha cuts through the limitless speculation involving conceptual elaboration—concerning origination, cessation, and so forth—and the perception of the ordinary characteristics of things, and instead thoroughly and directly comprehends that no object of knowledge can be conceived to have any independent nature, even to the slightest degree. This is also termed “knowledge of the true nature of phenomena just as it is.” According to one of the sutras:

Not to perceive anything at all is truly to perceive phenomena.³⁰⁴

Moreover, Shantideva explains:

When the tangible and the intangible
are not experienced in light of ordinary consciousness,
because there are no other alternatives at this point
there is utter peace without any frame of reference.³⁰⁵

The way in which a buddha knows things in their multiplicity is as follows: Without a buddha ever wavering from meditative equipoise, the timeless awareness of that buddha knows directly that all unlimited objects of knowledge are false and like illusions. This is “knowledge of things in their multiplicity.” Another sutra states:

The frame of reference for knowledge of all things is the absence
of anything having substantial existence.

That is, this is not knowledge like that of each sense consciousness perceiving its respective objects. Rather, there is a single state of consciousness that knows all objects in the phenomenal world without exception. According to *The Garlands of Buddhas*:

The unsurpassable timeless awareness of a victorious one
is instantly aware of all objects.

It is not that objects of knowledge associated with the three times are known in a temporal sequence, but rather that they are known all at once. *The Ornament of the Sutras* states: [126a]

A single ray of sunlight shines forth,
bringing illumination to beings.
Similarly, everything that can be known
manifests all at once in the timeless awareness of a buddha.³⁰⁶

Moreover, given that these objects are perceived without any wavering from the context of meditative equipoise, there is nothing that can be characterized as a postmeditation phase in the ordinary sense, because distractions have been eliminated, as have their underlying habitual tendencies. As the same source explains:

The Sage is definitely free of all obscuration.³⁰⁷

The nominal distinction between meditative equipoise and the postmeditation phase is as follows: Meditative equipoise is the state of not wavering from dharmakaya (for one's own benefit), whereas the postmeditation phase is described as the occurrence of enlightened activities within that state (for the benefit of others). As we read in *The Highest Continuum*:

The causes of becoming free of the two kinds of obscuration
are two phases of timeless awareness.
Both nonconceptual awareness
and its postmeditation phase are held to be timeless awareness.³⁰⁸

This description is given for purely semantic reasons, for *Amassing of the Rare and Sublime* establishes that a buddha's awareness never wavers from meditative equipoise:

Though an elephant sits, this is meditative equipoise;
though an elephant sleeps, this is meditative equipoise;
though an elephant dreams, this is meditative equipoise.

In the second place, there are two objections to be dealt with. First, someone might object that it is impossible for the true nature of phenomena to be the object of the knowledge of reality just as it is, and so it follows that it is impossible for there to be timeless awareness that perceives that nature. *The Vajra Cutter* states:

The true nature of phenomena is not something that can be known;
one cannot have knowledge of it.³⁰⁹

My response to this objection is as follows: The Buddha did speak these words, for the true nature of phenomena is not an object of knowledge that can be established to have some finite essence. [126b] However, that nature can be known by a buddha, for it is the object of one's self-knowing timeless awareness in the sense that there is simply a freedom from extremes, inexpressible and inconceivable to the ordinary mind. Rāhula states the following in his work *In Praise of the "Mother"*:

Indescribable, inconceivable, and inexpressible, the perfection of sublime knowing
is unborn and unceasing—the very essence of space.
It is the domain of one's self-knowing timeless awareness.
I pay homage to the mother of victorious ones of the three times.

Second, someone might object that because it is impossible for the timeless awareness of things in their multiplicity to have any impure objects that exist in their own right, it would follow that it is impossible for there to be timeless awareness that perceives those objects. My response is that although these objects do not truly exist, a buddha knows them for the fallacious things that they are. Someone might respond that because it is impossible for there to be a finite limit to what can be known, a finite number of beings, or a beginning or an end to samsara, it would follow that it is impossible for there to be timeless awareness that can perceive these. But although I accept that a buddha knows anything that could possibly be an object of knowledge, that buddha does not perceive anything that could not possibly be so, for that would not constitute an object of knowledge; it is rather like the horns of a hare. *The Commentary on "The Highest Continuum"* states:

Though there is no beginning, there is an end.

This refers to the point at which those who attain a state of total purity have been purified of the last vestiges of afflictive states; then there is thorough knowledge.

iii. Enlightened Activity

Regarding the deeds that constitute enlightened activity, nirmanakaya emerges within the context of sambhogakaya, occurring without inter-

ruption for as long as conditioned existence continues, in keeping with the dedicated intent of ordinary beings. *The Ornament of Manifest Realization* states: [127a]

Thus, for as long as samsara endures,
activity is considered to be uninterrupted.³¹⁰

According to *The Highest Continuum*:

Because the certainty of release is the result of other factors,
because the equalness of oneself and others is seen,
and because the enactment of enlightened deeds is never truly
finished,
for as long as samsara endures, enlightened deeds are
uninterrupted.³¹¹

You might wonder how this can be so. A buddha ensures benefit by knowing the character of beings, what is required to guide them, what actions constitute skillful means, and how not to lose opportunities to act. As the same source indicates:

With respect to the character of those to be guided, the skillful
means to guide them,
the actions to guide those to be guided according to their
character,
and the opportunities of place and time,
the sovereign lords act spontaneously.³¹²

How does this spontaneous involvement take place, you ask? This can be understood through nine analogies. According to the same source:

Like Indra, a drum, clouds,
Brahma, the sun, the most majestic wish-fulfilling gem,
an echo, space, and the earth, for as long as conditioned existence
endures
buddhas ensure benefit for others effortlessly, and yogins are
aware of this.

They manifest like the form of the lord of the gods reflected in a
precious jewel.

They offer excellent counsel, like the drum of the gods.

The sovereign lords amass clouds of supreme wisdom and love,
which pervade the realms of limitless beings up to the pinnacle of
conditioned existence.

Like Brahma, not wavering from his untainted realm,
they display emanations to the greatest extent, [I27b] in manifold
ways.

Like the sun, their timeless awareness radiates its brilliant
illumination.

Their enlightened mind is totally pure, like a precious wish-
fulfilling gem.

The enlightened speech of victorious ones,
like an echo, is ultimately beyond words.

Enlightened form is like space:
pervasive, without form, and continuous.

Like the earth, buddhahood
serves as the ground for all
spiritual medicine, without exception,
which nurtures what is positive in beings.³¹³

Thus, wherever the makeup of beings provides the opportunity, the
effect of spontaneously accomplished enlightened activity is felt immedi-
ately, like sunlight. The same source states:

How is this so? Pure beings to be guided
are vessels of water, in all of which
the reflections of the sun—sugatagarbha—
appear instantly in countless numbers.³¹⁴

Furthermore, the same source indicates that enlightened activity con-
forms to the minds of those to be guided:

On an immaculate ground of lapis
appears the reflection of the form of the lord of the gods.
Similarly, on the immaculate ground of beings' minds
appears the reflection of the form of the Lord of Sages.

For beings, the arising and subsiding of such reflections
take place according to the unsullied or sullied condition of their
own minds.³¹⁵

The enlightened activities (of buddhas giving teachings and so forth)
that manifest in such ways do so because of the individual karma of those
to be guided. According to the same source:

Among the gods, the sound of the drum
of the gods occurs because of their own karma.

Similarly, in this world, the teachings spoken by the Sage [128a] take place because of beings' own karma.³¹⁶

For example, just as those without ears do not hear anything, not even an echo, those whose karma is such that they will not meet with buddhas and other spiritual beings and receive teachings from them will not do so. The same source continues:

Those without ears
do not hear the slightest sound,
and even those with clairaudience
do not hear everything.

Similarly, subtle spiritual teachings,
the domain of extremely precise timeless awareness,
reach the ears of only the few
whose minds are not subject to afflictive states.³¹⁷

To summarize, until samsara has been emptied, benefit is ensured through three kinds of miracles, establishing beings on the path to peace. These three are described in *The Commentary on "The Highest Continuum"*:

To fill all universes without exception in the ten directions with physical displays of miracles is to demonstrate what is termed "miracles based on supernormal powers." To know the minds of different beings, and thereby cause realization to manifest as a profound experience in the minds of these beings, is to demonstrate "miracles based on effective speech." To speak melodiously in order to advise and instruct beings, beginning with the path to certain release, is to demonstrate "miracles based on instruction."

d. Distinctive Features

The path of no more learning has three distinctive features. As to the distinctive process of elimination, the two kinds of obscuration, together with their tendencies, are eliminated without exception. *The Vajra Pinnacle* states: [128b]

Afflictive states, as well as what they produce,
and likewise the afflictive and cognitive obscurations:
any factors whatsoever that are counterproductive have been
overcome.

This is explained here and now to be the state of a transcendent and accomplished conqueror.

Moreover, *The Ornament of the Sutras* declares:

The Sage is definitely free of all obscuration.³¹⁸

As to the distinctive realization, this is the authentic realization of all phenomena, just as they truly are, in one's direct experience. According to *The Intermediate-Length "Mother"*:

There is no phenomenon whatsoever about which tathagatas are unenlightened, or that they do not perceive, or that they do not know. In their direct experience, they know all phenomena to the utmost degree, just as they truly are.

As to the distinctive qualities, one is endowed with all qualities of enlightenment without exception, both those of the world and those that transcend the world. Analysis shows that one is in possession of a treasure trove of the sixty-four qualities of enlightenment, the ongoing adornments of enlightened form, speech, and mind. These sixty-four are enumerated in *The Commentary on "The Highest Continuum"*:

Thus, a tathagata's ten strengths, four states of fearlessness, eighteen qualities unique to buddhahood, and thirty-two major marks of a supreme spiritual being are all in evidence, united as one. These make sixty-four in all.

The ten strengths are listed in *The Highest Continuum*:

Knowledge of what is logically consistent and what is not,
of the consequences of karma, of the acumen of beings,
of their character, of their dedicated intent, [129a]
of paths that lead to all possible goals,
of states of meditative stability
(free of the distortions of afflictive states),
of recollection of former lifetimes,
of clairvoyance, and of the state of peace:
these are the ten strengths of knowledge.³¹⁹

The four states of fearlessness are enumerated in the same source:

Being completely enlightened about all phenomena,
eliminating hindrances,

demonstrating the path, and demonstrating the state of cessation:
these are the four states of fearlessness.³²⁰

The unique qualities are given in the same source:

The enlightened teachers know no confusion and do not speak
pointlessly.

They do not suffer from impaired memory.

Their minds are never such that they lack meditative equipoise,
nor do they entertain all manner of concepts.

They do not experience impartiality as undiscerning apathy.

They know no impairment of intention, diligence, mindfulness,
sublime knowing, total freedom,

or realization of the timeless awareness of total freedom.

Their actions are preceded by timeless awareness,
and their timeless awareness is not obscured with respect to
time.³²¹

Thus, these eighteen qualities and others
are the unique qualities of enlightened teachers.³²²

The major marks were described earlier.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the fourth chapter, a presentation of how the path is put into practice.

The Fruition-Based Secret Mantra Approach

Next, my presentation of the secret mantra approach of the Vajrayana has two parts: a demonstration of the ways in which it is superior to the dialectical approach [129b] and an explanation of the distinctive approach of the secret mantra itself.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE VAJRAYANA

The first part is discussed under three headings: a general presentation and analysis of the Mahayana, a detailed explanation of the ways in which the Vajrayana is superior to the dialectical approach, and a discussion of the ways in which it can be considered to be the fruition-based approach.

A. A General Presentation and Analysis of the Mahayana

The Mahayana falls into two categories: the cause-based dialectical approach and the fruition-based secret mantra approach. The tantra *The Total Accomplishment of the Mahayana* states:

The Mahayana has two aspects:
the paramita approach
and the unsurpassable Vajrayana.

According to the tantra *Excellent Accomplishment*:

Depending on whether its basis is that of causes or the fruition,
there is the paramita approach
or the unsurpassable Vajrayana.

B. A Detailed Explanation of the Superiority of the Vajrayana

This two-part discussion includes a brief presentation and an extensive explanation.

I. A BRIEF PRESENTATION

The inner approach of the secret mantra is remarkably superior to the outer dialectical approach. Although these approaches have the identical purpose of bringing one to a definitive conclusion regarding the ground of being—that is, the utterly lucid heart essence—and the phenomena it supports, there is a difference with respect to understanding.

Coming to a definitive understanding of the ground, path, and fruition, just as they are, by means of the dialectical approach entails some delusion, whereas the mantra approach entails no such delusion. Let us evaluate the profundity and extent of these two approaches. The profundity of the dialectical approach consists of nothing more than the following: The ground aspect is a mental construct concerning ultimate truth, which is investigated through logic and evaluated through deductive reasoning. [I30a] The path aspect is a process of striving to settle the mind in that context—that is, simply a process of calm abiding and profound insight. The fruition aspect is conceived of as something that tends to be attained after many eons. As for the extent of this approach, it consists of nothing more than coming to a definitive conclusion about the relative level of truth—including the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, components of perception, and so forth, which are dependent on one's fundamental being—and using this understanding solely to make ethical decisions about what to accept and what to reject.

As for the profundity of the mantra approach, without relying on logical argumentation, one simply focuses on the key points of the body, speech, subtle channels, energies, and bindu. In this way, one comes to a definitive understanding of the essence of dharmakaya—which is non-conceptual timeless awareness, rather than some mental construct—as the ground of being. With this understanding, the mind abides naturally in that context, so that in one lifetime or within some similarly short time frame, one realizes the ultimate level of truth to be basic space, and the state of enlightenment becomes fully manifest. The profundity of this approach, then, lies in this direct experience. As for the extent of the ap-

proach, one comes to a definitive understanding of basic space—timelessly present as the mandala of utter lucidity—as the ground aspect of tantra, the continuum of being. On that basis, the mantra approach entails the practical implementation of factors involved in the path aspect of tantra. This brings one to the definitive conclusion that all factors of relative reality supported by the ground aspect—the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception—constitute the array of deities, immeasurable mansions, and pure realms of experience, without some factors being accepted and others rejected. Through this approach, the eight major siddhis become fully manifest in the short term, while sublime enlightenment is the ultimate result.¹ [130b] In its profundity and extent, the mantra approach involves no delusion, because its teachings show that everything is part of the spiritual path and bring one to a definitive conclusion regarding the fruition aspect of tantra.

The Vajrayana is also superior because of the multiplicity of its skillful means. For the removal of even a single factor to be eliminated—for example, desire—the process in the mantra approach is to purify it within basic space without eliminating it as such. In the ordinary context of Vajrayana practice, this involves the transformation of desire (for example) during the development stage, whereas in the extraordinary context, the ideal aspect of desire—discerning timeless awareness—is incorporated into the path as the experience of supreme bliss. In the dialectical approach, however, the process of elimination depends on the duality of objects and the mind that perceives them. In the case of accomplishing any goal, this is seen to be a result of karma created in the past, such as the acquisition of material possessions as a consequence of one's former generosity. Moreover, the mantra approach is superior to the dialectical approach in that, in the latter, accomplishment comes about through ordinary circumstances, just as it does through efforts made in business, farming, and other occupations.² In the former approach, the water empowerment and sadhana practices such as that of the deity Shumbha bring about an increase in one's material possessions, and thus are superior to methods that ensure accomplishment only through karma created in the past and ordinary circumstances.³ Thus, the Vajrayana is superior, for although it was taught with a single purpose, that purpose has many ramifications, including an increase in longevity and the acquisition of power.⁴

The Vajrayana is also superior in that it entails no hardship. The dialectical path is ultimately tiring and wearisome, for it involves the rejec-

tion of some factors and the acceptance of others, as well as austerities. In the mantra approach, attainment comes about through reliance on sense pleasures and so forth, [131a] because what is ordinarily accepted or rejected is, in essence, inherently pure, and everything is experienced as supportive.

In addition, the Vajrayana is superior in that it is the path for people of keen acumen; it is the consummate approach of sacred pith instructions, whose nature is such that they are not complicated and are of great import.

These four specific ways in which the Vajrayana is superior are described in *The Lamp of the Three Methods*:

Although these spiritual approaches are identical in purpose,
the approach of mantra is notably superior, for it involves no
delusion,
offers many skillful means, entails no hardship,
and is suited to those of keen acumen.

Moreover, the mantra approach is classified as supreme because the foregoing features ensure excellence with respect to its frame of reference, its supportive elements of view and conduct, and its nature, as well as the accomplishment it entails. According to *The Detailed Classification of the Three Spiritual Approaches*:

Because of its totally pure frame of reference,
the force of its supportive factors, and its conduct,
it is well known to be the greatest of the great,
a spiritual approach for intelligent people.

2. AN EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

As to the extensive explanation of the Vajrayana's superiority, the tantra *The Inconceivable Rali* states:

Lesser approaches of shravakas and others
do not have pith instructions.
View, conduct, mental focus,
causal factors, path, fruition, spiritual levels,
time frame, enjoyment, yogic practice, [131b]
benefit for self and others, purpose,⁵
the avoidance of tiring extremes, a minimum of complication,
and spiritual development: these are the distinctive features.

Because of these fifteen features,
the approach of masters of awareness is notably superior.

For those involved in the dialectical approach, the view is simply that of emptiness free of conceptual elaboration; they do not realize the indivisible truth that abides primordially as the nature of deity and mantra.⁶ Those of the mantra approach do realize this. They train in experiencing the innate purity of things on the relative level—being mere emanations, apparent yet nonexistent—as the deity. In addition, they realize that this relative level and ultimate reality—the timeless nonduality of basic space and timeless awareness—are primordially inseparable in the context in which they have no finite essence. As *The Graduated Path of Magical Display* states:

In the inseparability of ultimate and relative reality,
within the supreme mandala of equalness, . . .

Furthermore, the tantra *The Presence of Timeless Awareness* refers to the purity of the mind-body aggregates as deities:

Forms are truly Vairochana,
sensations are Ratnasambhava,
perceptions are Amitabha,
formative factors are Amoghasiddhi,
and consciousness is Akshobhya.

The same source also refers to the purity of the five elements as the five feminine consorts:

The five elements are the five feminine consorts in actuality;
the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components
of perception
are all pure—the pure realm of buddhahood.

Moreover, according to *The Heart Essence of Secrets* from the cycle *Magical Display*:

The Tathagata knows all phenomena to be the timelessly
awakened state of buddhahood.⁷ [132a]

Regarding conduct, in the dialectical approach there is nothing more than a dualistic framework of ethical discernment based on acceptance and rejection. The superiority of the mantra approach lies in the fact that in the context of the deity and the immeasurable mansion—expressions

of the illusion-like nature of things that is the unity of equalness and purity—there are techniques such as the ganachakra and rituals involving the protective deities (as explained in the teachings concerning specific mandalas). Through such techniques, one makes offerings to the deities, develops one's understanding in accordance with the true nature of phenomena, purifies oneself of afflictive states, and so forth.

As for the mental focus of meditative absorption, in the dialectical approach one struggles to focus the mind for long periods in order to achieve calm abiding and profound insight. The mantra approach is superior, for in the stage of development (which involves mental constructs) the mind's conceptual elaborations are calmed, and in the stage of completion (which involves no such constructs) timeless awareness is experienced simply by intent focus on the key points of the subtle channels and energies.

Moreover, as for the causal factors, the dialectical approach holds that realization of ultimate reality occurs only when preceded on the relative level by a process in which certain factors are brought about by other factors. The mantra approach is superior, for one is directly and powerfully introduced to naturally abiding timeless awareness as the cause of purity, or the cause of removal, and by cultivating that awareness, one can begin to realize ultimate reality here and now.⁸

Furthermore, with respect to the path, in the dialectical approach twofold development takes place alternately in meditative equipoise and the postmeditation phase, so that the five paths are not traversed for eons. The mantra approach is superior, for it is the path of timeless awareness, in which these two kinds of development are inseparable; thus, having embarked on this path, one traverses it swiftly.

In addition, regarding the fruition, the dialectical approach considers it something that takes place in the future, after a long time. The mantra approach is superior, for it maintains that the fruition is indwelling, naturally and spontaneously, in the present moment. [132b]

As for the spiritual levels, the dialectical approach holds that there are eleven, based on an analysis of successive factors to be eliminated and their corresponding antidotes.⁹ The mantra approach recognizes three additional levels: that of the indivisible essence of being (the spontaneously present suchness of basic space), that of supreme timeless awareness as the unity of equalness and purity (the two stages of development and completion as the sacred state of utter lucidity), and that of the pure

and sublime experience of spontaneous presence (the fruition of supreme and total purity). According to an alternative treatment of the mantra approach, in addition to the spiritual levels of the cause-based approach, there are a twelfth (“the lotus level of nonattachment”) and a thirteenth level (“holder of the vajra”). Such treatments demonstrate the superiority of the mantra approach. As *The Heart Essence of Secrets* states:

The distinctive spiritual levels are ten plus three.¹⁰

As for the time frame involved, the dialectical approach is such that it is not completed for three immensely long eons or some similar length of time. Through one’s efforts and pure commitment in pursuing the mantra approach, one can ensure accomplishment in this very lifetime. In *Prophetic Enlightened Intent*, we read the following:

Whatever buddhas have come to know
after enormously long eons
practitioners of the mantra approach know all at once,
for they attain complete enlightenment in a single lifetime.

Regarding enjoyment, moreover, practitioners of the dialectical approach gain accomplishment by renouncing sense pleasures, whereas those in the mantra approach employ these pleasures as supports. As *The Vajra Array* indicates:

The five kinds of sense enjoyments,
which are normally debasing and to be renounced,
are the very best supports for skilled practitioners of the mantra
approach;
such fortunate ones should enjoy them to the utmost.

As for yogic practice, in the dialectical approach one forges the path in the phase of meditative equipoise by cultivating a nonreferential state that is empty like space, whereas in the postmeditation phase [I33a] one undertakes the yoga of experiencing the illusoriness of things. The mantra approach is superior, for the path is forged by the yoga of experiencing the inseparability of these phases, which is inconceivable to the ordinary mind.

With respect to the benefits that are achieved for oneself and others, in the dialectical approach, other than some slight benefit, nothing great is accomplished in the short term. The mantra approach, however, is superior, for it ensures benefit for others in ways that bring prosperity to

the surrounding region; for example, there are practices that cause rain to fall and ease famine, as well as yogic accomplishments that ensure an abundance of things like food, drink, and gems, heal those afflicted by illness, and calm social unrest. There is also benefit for oneself, for through the two stages of development and completion—inconceivable to the ordinary mind—one progresses inwardly, every moment, to higher and higher states of realization and meditative absorption.

Moreover, from the standpoint of enlightened intent, in the dialectical approach there is nothing more than the understanding that derives from a cause-based approach, whereas the mantra approach brings one certainty of the supreme secret that is the fruition. *The Vajra Pinnacle* states:

What characterizes every aspect of the mantra approach
is the enlightened mind of all buddhas.

Basing one's spiritual practice on the very essence of phenomena
imbues one with an authentic experience of the basic space of
phenomena.

The mantra approach is also superior to the dialectical approach in that it avoids tiring extremes (since no difficulty is required), and so great results are obtained with little hardship, as explained earlier (“... offers many skillful means, entails no hardship, ...”).¹¹

As for the distinctive method of spiritual development, in the dialectical approach there is nothing more than the six transcendent perfections—that is, the ordinary spiritual development that comes with simple generosity, simple discipline, and so forth— [133b] and so it takes a long time to complete this approach. In the mantra approach, spiritual development is quite vast in scope, because everything is understood to be a pure realm of buddhahood and thus whatever one experiences serves as a method of development. It is ennobling, for material things are understood to be nectar. It is sublime, for there is realization of the equalness and purity of self and others. And it entails experiencing the afflictive states as pure by nature, without having to be renounced. Thus, one's twofold spiritual development is consolidated and swiftly completed, so that freedom is ensured in the span of a single lifetime.

Similarly, it should be known that just as the skillful means of the mantra approach are special, so also the sublime knowing that is brought about by those means is of a particularly elevated nature when one is practicing this path.

In summary, one should be aware of the three secrets: forging the path of the secret of enlightened mind, the secret of enlightened speech, and the secret of enlightened form. The tantra *The Presence of Timeless Awareness* explains:

Compared with the cause-based Mahayana,
the paths of enlightened form, speech, and mind
are the supreme secrets, as a result of which the sublime secret
mantra approach
should be known to be infinitely superior.

In the dialectical approach, the principle of enlightened form signifies nothing more than the illusory nature of sensory appearances, as well as positive behavior through ordinary physical activities. The mantra approach is superior in that the secret of enlightened form signifies the perfection of the world of all appearances and possibilities as deities and immeasurable mansions, and the ordinary body as a mandala, with such techniques as mudras and dance incorporated into the path.

In the dialectical approach, the principle of enlightened speech signifies the emptiness of sound, like that of an echo, [134a] as well as positive behavior either through formal recitation or through the control of speech by observing silence. The mantra approach is superior in that the secret of enlightened speech signifies the understanding that sounds and melodies are of the nature of the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, which ensures an outpouring of spiritual teachings. As well, ordinary speech abides timelessly as the mandala of enlightened speech, and so one experiences sounds and words as mantra by their very nature. One's goals are realized through the unhindered power of one's repetition of mantras and recitation of liturgies.

In the dialectical approach, the principle of enlightened mind lies in the affirmation that thought lacks an independent nature and in the achievement of calm abiding and profound insight by the undermining and deliberate blocking of the mind's thought processes. The mantra approach is superior in that the secret of enlightened mind is such that one experiences thought as the display of the true nature of mind, and so experiences one's mind as timeless awareness, naturally lucid and naturally occurring. Thus, meditative absorption is ensured as an ongoing yoga, and thereby enlightened mind is experienced as the spontaneously present mandala of nonconceptual awareness. Moreover, as Dombi Heruka stated:¹²

Because of the exceptional recipients
and teachings that mold those recipients,
the exceptional scriptural sources and path,
and the exceptional results of the mantra approach,
it is notably superior.

In addition, Indrabhuti said:¹³

It is superior because of the exceptional nature of the guru and
the exceptional recipients, rituals, activities, commitments, view
cultivated in meditation, and conduct involved.

According to *The Web of Magical Display*:

Understanding in all these ways
the profound rituals of the secret mantra approach, [134b]
the spiritual hero approached the bodhi tree
and discovered the immeasurable state of omniscience.

My discussion of the ways in which the Vajrayana approach is superior
to others would not be truly exhaustive even if I were to go on for an eon.

C. The Vajrayana as the Fruition-Based Approach

As for determining in what respects the Vajrayana is a fruition-based
approach, there are three considerations: it can be classified as fruition-
based because it can be accomplished swiftly, because it employs sublime
skillful means, and because it makes use of an approximation of the frui-
tion to forge the path.

I. SWIFT ACCOMPLISHMENT

The Vajrayana is classified as a fruition-based approach because, through
its skillful means, enlightenment can be attained in the shortest possible
time. When a sharp blade cuts through wood quickly, we say, “This cuts
wood,” whereas even though a dull blade can cut through wood slowly
and over a longer period, we would say, “This doesn’t cut wood.” Simi-
larly, enlightenment, which is not attained for a long time through the
dialectical approach, can ideally be attained in a single lifetime through
the mantra approach. Therefore, on the basis of the respective lengths of
time involved, the latter is termed the fruition-based approach.

It is explained that, with great diligence, one can attain enlightenment
in a single lifetime. *The Well-Sealed Locket* states:

Since buddhahood, which is difficult to accomplish in many tens of millions of eons, can nonetheless be ensured in this very lifetime, it is known as “the fruition-based approach.”

According to *The Union of Buddhas in Equality*:

In countless tens of millions of eons,
the totality of buddhahood will not be attained;
but through the rituals of the secret mantra approach in this
lifetime,
it will be attained in this very lifetime.

With moderate diligence, freedom can be gained in the after-death state. As *The Fourfold Vajra Basis* indicates: [135a]

If one were to mentally transfer one’s consciousness immediately through the aperture above the nine orifices,¹⁴ even if one had killed a brahmin every day, committed the five acts that entail immediate karmic retribution, and indulged in acts of robbery and theft, still one would gain freedom through this path. One would not be sullied by the effects of harmful actions.

The Oral Transmission of Manjushri explains:

Although one will not gain accomplishment in this lifetime with one’s physical body,
one will attain vajrakaya with one’s mind,
and true accomplishment will come in the after-death state.

Moreover, *The Graduated Path* states:

A yogin with moderate diligence
lays aside the body—the residue of the complete maturation of
karma—
and, through awareness, reaches the level of Vajradhara;
that is what is described as “complete maturation.”

According to *The Sphere of Timeless Awareness*:

Alternatively, as soon as one has cast off this body,
the unsurpassable kaya of timeless awareness
will be attained, even by someone lacking diligence;
what need, then, to speak of someone who has diligence?

Among those of inferior acumen, the best will gain freedom in their next rebirth, as *Reciting the Names of Manjushri* states:

Immediately upon rebirth, the lord of beings . . .¹⁵

Moreover, as indicated in the tantra *Buddha Skull Cup*:

Therefore, although an intelligent yogin
with an attitude of extreme dedication
will not gain siddhis in this rebirth,
he will do so when taking another birth in conditioned existence.

Those of inferior acumen in the intermediate category will gain freedom in seven rebirths, as *The Treasury of Secrets* describes:

If one has been granted an authentic empowerment,
one will be empowered in rebirth after rebirth; [135b]
such a one will, in seven rebirths,
gain accomplishment even without meditating.

Even the lesser of those of inferior acumen will gain accomplishment in sixteen rebirths. According to *The Vajra Pinnacle*:

Through the paramita approach,
attainment will not come about for uncountable eons,
but if yogins are diligent,¹⁶
they will attain nirvana in this very lifetime.
Alternatively, by merely holding this approach in their esteem,
ordinary individuals will attain nirvana—
the accomplishment of buddhahood itself—in sixteen rebirths.
This is not so in other approaches.

2. SKILLFUL MEANS

The Vajrayana is classified as the fruition-based approach because it involves the most sublime skillful means. Let us suppose, for example, that someone, using more skillful means than someone else, accomplished in an instant a task that took the other person a week of effort; the tasks completed would be essentially the same, despite the difference in the effort expended to complete them. Similarly, in the dialectical approach, calm abiding and profound insight are achieved through intense mental effort after a long period of time, not just months or years, so that one can then settle in meditative equipoise and so forth. In the path of mantra, the same results can be experienced within even a single twenty-four-

hour period, owing to the key points of physical posture and the subtle energy channels. Because the mantra approach actually provides a definitive experience, it is classified as an approach that takes the fruition as the path. As *The Lotus Pinnacle* explains:

Because what cannot be achieved with extreme hardship
is authentically brought about in an instant,
and because the fruition becomes evident through key points
that do not rely on previous causal factors,
this is termed the fruition-based approach.

3. APPROXIMATION OF THE FRUITION

The Vajrayana is classified as the fruition-based approach because one uses an approximation of the fruition itself to forge the path. [136a] Buddhahood, free of all distortions, is the unity of the kayas and timeless awareness, beyond their coming together and separating, arising in total perfection as an array of the qualities of a pure realm. By cultivating an approximation of that state in meditation, one makes it fully evident, dispelling within basic space whatever obscures the presence of such qualities. For this reason, the Vajrayana is termed the fruition-based approach. The same source states:

The nature of flawless basic space
is that of the three kayas and timeless awareness, with their
attendant pure realms.
At the very point at which that purity becomes evident,
one actually experiences its natural lucidity,
and to forge one's path with an approximation of this
is truly said to be the fruition-based approach.

According to this verse, the Vajrayana approach is called the fruition-based approach because basic space is timelessly present as the sacred fruition, the very essence of being; with one's understanding of its nature as the basis, one trains in that very context. From the standpoint of dispelling distortions, one practices the stages of development and completion in meditation; the refinement of one's appreciation of suchness purifies one of adventitious distortions. Therefore, although the deities, mandalas, and so forth that one imagines are projections of one's own mind, and although this meditation is not the same as forging the path of the actual deities and mandalas of the fruition aspect of basic space, this approach

can nevertheless be seen to be an infallible and profound spiritual path, because it comes close to the ultimate significance of that basic space.

Hence, although the Vajrayana approach is similar to the cause-based approach in that it does not enable one to forge the path of actual basic space, there is an enormous difference in how close these approaches come to that basic space, depending on the degree to which they correspond to it. Suppose that a gem and a burning lamp are left out at night; [136b] one thief takes the gem and another the lamp, both thieves presuming the radiance to be that of the gem. While the thief who takes the lamp is deluded, the clever one who takes the gem is not. In a similar way, an approach may or may not enable one to swiftly realize one's aims. Regarding this significant disparity, *The Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* explains:

The radiance of a gem and that of a lamp
are pursued by minds that seek the gem;
though there is no disparity in the shortcomings of their
understanding,
there is a disparity as to whether the purpose is achieved.¹⁷

Given that in this context the fruition is enlightened form, speech, and mind, the method is to make an approximation of these evident. To elaborate, at the outset, an empowerment is bestowed. At that time, a qualified master carries out the requisite stage of approach, the consecration of the locale, and the preparatory phase of the empowerment.¹⁸ After the mandala has been drawn, the stage of accomplishment carried out, and offerings made, the master performs the ritual of self-empowerment. The students are then admitted, the commitments and precepts are imparted to them, and the ritual of actually invoking the deity as an aspect of timeless awareness is performed. These stages constitute "making the principle of enlightened mind evident." The stages of casting flowers on the mandala and removing the blindfolds, followed by the revealing of the mandala, constitute "making the direct experience of enlightened form evident." After the empowerment has been bestowed, the granting of permission using mantras and mudras constitutes "making enlightened speech evident."

The process of bestowing the four stages of empowerment on the three faculties of body, speech, and mind purifies one of distortions, making enlightened form, speech, and mind evident. Having initially received empowerment, while practicing "the path of freedom" one maintains

the continuity of that empowerment in meditation, understanding that it embodies the nature of the three kayas and the five aspects of timeless awareness—hence the term “taking the fruition as the path.” [137a] The tantra *The Vast Range of Secrets* explains:

All mandalas, all objects of knowledge without exception, constitute the complete fulfillment of the three kayas, the supreme secret mantra approach.

To merge with these three kayas is the fruition-based approach.

The unity of the three kayas, beyond coming together and separating, is the Vajrayana.

How does one make the kayas and timeless awareness the path? In the two stages of development and completion, the initial step of meditating on emptiness is the dharmakaya principle. Meditating on the form of a deity in that context is the sambhogakaya principle. Ensuring benefit for beings by visualizing light rays shining forth and being reabsorbed is the nirmanakaya principle. The five afflictive states purified by skillful means are the five aspects of timeless awareness. According to *The Gathering of Secrets*:

Through this, the vast dimension of timeless awareness,
completely adorned—
the supreme embodiment of the dharma
that derives from the indivisibility of the three kayas—
will be attained in this very lifetime.

Moreover, *The Adornment of the Charnel Ground* states:

In dharmakaya—emptiness fully evident—
is blissful sambhogakaya, adorned with the major and minor
marks,
creating its display, nirmanakaya.

As the tantra *The Spontaneously Present Vast Range of Timeless Awareness* indicates:

Owing to supreme timeless awareness, the basic space of
phenomena,
the very essence of being is supremely blissful,
the superb expression of perfect enjoyment.
Owing to supreme compassion,
the superb nirmanakaya arises as its display.

One may wonder, "If the mantra approach is then an aspect of the path that refines away distortions, how can this be termed taking the fruition as the path? Isn't this the equivalent of the cause-based approach, because that, too, is developed as a way to refine away distortions?" Although these approaches are indeed identical in that buddhahood is accomplished once the distortions that obscure one's fundamental being are completely removed, [137b] they differ in the length of time required. The phase of meditative warmth, which one experiences on the path of the dialectical approach only after one has made an effort for a long period of time, is incorporated into one's path in the mantra approach in a very short time. Moreover, since what one cultivates in meditation is analogous to reality just as it is, which abides as the mandala of basic space, even what are ordinarily factors to be eliminated are experienced instead as supports.

For these reasons, the mantra approach can be considered one of taking the fruition as the path. Nonetheless, it is still necessary to cultivate the path of this profound and extensive approach, because this is not a case of actually making the *final* fruition—reality just as it is—the path.

This classification of approaches as cause-based or fruition-based is generally meant to facilitate one's understanding on a relative level. Thus, in the case of the dialectical approach, the term "cause" refers to a path in which the refining away of one's obscurations and the completion of one's spiritual development are the results of employing meditative absorption and other means that derive from causes involving intense effort. In contrast, the term "fruition-based approach" describes the refining away of distortions by means that are related to the fruition, such as states of meditative absorption that are achieved with little hardship rather than created by effort or spiritual development as causal factors.

Among the teachings included in these approaches, moreover, are presentations that begin with a detailed treatment of the causes and conditions of the path, and that eventually give a treatment of the final fruition. Alternatively, there are presentations that begin with a detailed treatment of the fruition, the mandala of pure basic space, emphasizing the timeless and uncompounded state of buddhahood, in which attitudes of acceptance and rejection are experienced impartially.

If these approaches are analyzed in terms of the relationship between the causal factors and the fruition, it is only reasonable to conclude that when the three kayas (and the timeless awareness they entail) are taken

as the path, the fruition that comes about will be consistent with them. On the strength of the distortions that obscure one's fundamental being having been removed, qualities of enlightenment manifest as though new, and it is certain that perfect buddhahood, adorned with the kayas and timeless awareness, will eventually be attained. [138a] But because the dialectical approach consists simply of twofold spiritual development, there is no meditation that incorporates the kayas and timeless awareness, and so the causal factors and the fruition do not accord with one another. Therefore, because there is an inherent contradiction between cause and fruition in the philosophical tenets of this approach, attainment does not come about for a long time. This is further proof that the secret mantra approach is the superior one.

II. AN EXPLANATION OF THE DISTINCTIVE APPROACH OF SECRET MANTRA

My explanation of the distinctive approach of secret mantra has two parts: a description of how the secret mantra approach came into being and a detailed treatment of the approach.¹⁹

The Origins of the Vajrayana

Throughout beginningless and endless time, countless manifestations of Vajradhara have successively appeared, abide at present, and will appear in the future, all giving innumerable variations of teachings to those of extremely keen acumen who are to be guided.²⁰ According to *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*:

What was taught by buddhas in the past,
and will, moreover, be taught by those in the future,
is what is taught again and again
by perfect buddhas appearing in the present.²¹

Thus, these teachings are not limited to any fixed time period or quantity, nor are they subject to any fragmentation whatsoever. They were spoken by those manifestations of Vajradhara who have appeared in the past, throughout beginningless time. Vajrapani and others—immeasurable hosts of those who, though buddhas in actuality, manifest in the manner of bodhisattvas—preserved these categories of unsurpassable teachings, the inconceivable tantras. In this universe and others in the ten

directions, countless manifestations of Vajradhara have come and will come in succession. [138b] Bodhisattvas abiding continually in the presence of those manifestations, as well as those currently present, will preserve the teachings they hear. Then, without wavering from those realms, they will promulgate among ordinary beings in their respective universes tantric texts with an immeasurable range of titles and within an immeasurable range of categories.²² Vajrapani embodies the vajra principle of the mind of all buddhas, Avalokiteshvara the vajra principle of speech, and Manjushri the vajra principle of form. These and innumerable other “fruition-level bodhisattvas” themselves create the display of the one speaking, the ones requesting, the ones codifying, the teachings, and the environment.²³ They thus cause the supreme secrets to manifest for the benefit of beings. The tantra *Vajra of Delight* states:

I am the expounder, I am also the teachings,
I am even my own retinue assembled to codify the teachings.
I am the mundane and also the transcendent.

Therefore, Vajrapani was already a buddha in the past, as indicated by the tantra *Refining Away Lower States of Rebirth*:

Having awakened to buddhahood before all other buddhas,
you vanquished all distortions that are the result of ignorance;
O vajra, king of vajra holders,
O vajra, vajra, holder of the vajra,
I pay homage to and praise Vajrapani.

With respect to the tantras preserved by Vajrapani, one cannot think in terms of a beginning or an end and say, “At this point in time, the secret mantra approach came into being.” Even with respect to the teacher, one cannot impose an arbitrary limitation by saying, “This teacher alone spoke these teachings.” This is because the display of Vajradhara in the universe is boundless. For example, if we consider our universe, “Difficult to Renounce,” during the interval between its gradual formation and its disintegration, this display will have accounted for the manifestation of some one thousand “ordinary buddhas” and two bodhisattvas.²⁴ [139a] The first of these buddhas, Vipashyin, is considered to have taught some of the outer classes of tantra. Shakyamuni taught the four classes of tantra in their entirety, some of these in his actual form as Shakyamuni:

Then the Bhagavat, Shakyamuni,

.

opened his mouth to speak,
his noble tongue long and wide.²⁵

It is maintained that other teachings, such as those of *The Wheel of Time* and other cycles taught at the Shridhanyakataka stupa, as well as cycles like *The Gathering of Secrets*, were spoken by the Buddha manifesting in the form of Vajradhara.²⁶ In the future, it is said, the buddha Adhimukta will teach the tantras.²⁷

Moreover, these teachings will last forever, preserved by Vajrapani and by dakinis. Because extraordinary teachers—Vajradhara, Vajrasattva, and the indescribable hosts of buddhas of the five families—who dwell forever in Akanishtha have spoken, are now speaking, and will speak in the future to immeasurable retinues, the time frame is one of continuous manifestation.²⁸ The tantras spoken by these teachers, furthermore, have been preserved from the earliest eon to the present by Vajrapani and by others who have received empowerment, including bodhisattvas, siddhas, holders of mantras of awareness, and dakinis. They have been disseminated and practiced in the respective realms of gods, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, kinnaras, and dakinis.

In particular, in this human world of Jambudvipa, [139b] teachings found in lands of dakas and dakinis, such as Sahora, Sri Lanka, and Od-di-yana, were brought from those lands by great masters such as Nagar-junagarbha, Padmakara, and Vimalamitra and practiced by the fortunate people to whom these lineages were individually transmitted. As a result of such training, people like the eighty-four mahasiddhas became highly accomplished adepts in India, and many more gained such accomplishment in Tibet during the time of King Trisong Detsen and his ministers.

Those whose small minds cannot accept such an account and who indulge in biased judgments say that since certain tantras were not well known in India, they cannot be authentic tantras, but are Tibetan fabrications. By slandering many authentic tantras, explanatory treatises, and sutras in this way, these critics simply reinforce the causes for remaining for a long time in lower states of rebirth. Tantras of the Indian Buddhist tradition were brought from such regions as Oddiyana, Shambhala, and Mount Malaya by mahasiddhas, but not all tantras were to be found in India. Even if we allowed that, to be considered authentic, the tantras would have to have been located in that country, these critics could not have seen all the tantras that were there simply by traveling once to India. Merely by compiling numerous lists of titles of the sutras and tantras

found in the holdings of a few minor temple libraries, one could not prove that there were no texts other than these. Therefore, do not disparage great teachers who demonstrated the path in the past!

Here in Tibet, we have many sutras and tantras that were to be found in India, as well as many that were not. Padmakara and other historical masters came to Tibet, [140a] bringing with them many categories of tantras from Oddiyana and other realms of dakas and dakinis, which they translated. In the case of the sutras, some texts had been translated into Chinese before Suryasiddhi destroyed the manuscripts in a fire.²⁹ Many of these Chinese translations, such as *The Garlands of Buddhas, Passing into Nirvana*, and *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya*, were translated into Tibetan by Bairotsana and Ba Sangshi; they based their translations on the originals that had been memorized by the Chinese scholar Hashang Mahayana.³⁰

For these reasons, no one but the Omniscient One can appreciate the true measure of a teaching or an individual. As is said in *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime*:

Kashyapa, it is appropriate for me or someone like me to assess the measure of a teaching or an individual, but not for others to do so, because they would fall into error.

The dharma, moreover, comprises authentic words that are the enlightened speech of the Buddha. Do not think that the nirmanakaya, having appeared in the past, is no longer present. It always manifests in response to devotion, and it is entirely possible that nirmanakaya buddhas can reveal previously unknown sutras and tantras. So do not cast aspersions, but consider any teaching that demonstrates how to engage in the path to liberation and renounce samsara to be an authentic example of the excellent speech of a buddha. *The Highest Continuum* affirms this:

Whatever . . . was spoken to eliminate afflictive states throughout the three realms,
and expresses the qualities of the state of peace,
that is the speech of the Seer; anything contrary would be from another tradition.³¹

Buddhahood is ever-present, ensuring the welfare of those to be guided. [140b] Moreover, the Buddha's words, which came about through blessings, include various kinds of teachings resounding from mountains, trees, lotuses, and wish-granting trees or being uttered by men, women,

boys, girls, birds, and wild animals. Since even these are said to be examples of the Buddha's words, do not entertain erroneous views by saying, "That happened in the past, but it would be impossible now." It is entirely possible for teachings to occur as a result of blessings. Therefore, the only conclusion to be drawn is that although it is perfectly appropriate to hold sacred what one believes in and make a commitment to it, one must never disparage alternatives.

According to some accounts of its origins, the Nyingma tradition of the secret mantra approach appeared in the human realm when Vajrapani bestowed empowerment on a king known as Ja, on Mount Malaya in the country of Sahora, and caused a rain of scriptures to fall. This corresponds precisely to statements about these origins that are found in *The Unified Intent of All Buddhas*, *The Web of Magical Display*, and many other sources. *Prophetic Enlightened Intent* states:

In a region in the southeast of Jambudvipa,
Vajrapani will reveal this
to the most fortunate and highly born among people,
the one called King Ja.

This is also consistent with the following passage from the tantra *The Vajra Underground*:

Cause-based teachings emphasize engaging in causal methods.
Once this wheel has been extensively set in motion,
the fruition-based approach, a shorter path,
will appear in the future.

If tantras that appeared in earlier times were fabrications, on what was their composition based? [141a] If they were fabrications, this would mean that the tantras that appeared in later times were also fabrications, because they convey no meaning beyond that of the earlier tantras, and their length and choice of words differ only slightly. These great tantras of the Sarma and Nyingma traditions are entirely authentic, for many greatly accomplished masters ensured that the lines of transmission for the empowerments and blessings remained unbroken. Moreover, these masters wrote many commentaries and pith instructions. Thus, we may place our confidence in this tradition.

In India there was only the simple term "secret mantra"; no distinction was made such as "This is the Sarma tradition" or "This is the Nyingma tradition." Here in Tibet, however, the earlier and later schools of transla-

tion became well known. The term “Nyingma” is applied to those tantras translated into Tibetan during the period beginning with Bairotsana and others of the early spread of Buddhism in Tibet (during the reign of King Trisong Detsen and his ministers) and continuing up to the time of Pandita Smriti.³² The tantras translated from the time of the translator Rinchen Zangpo on are widely known as Sarma.³³ Of these two groups, the older texts seem easier to understand and the newer ones more difficult, and the older texts seem to have a much greater appreciation of basic space than do the newer ones. This greater appreciation makes sense, because the translators of the earlier period were emanations of buddhas and so were capable of truly masterful translation. The translators of later times manifested as learned people, but more in the manner of ordinary individuals. Their choice of terms was rather literal, and therefore the texts are more difficult to understand. These translators gave a precise rendering of the order of words in the Indian manuscripts, but otherwise were not capable of translating in a truly interpretive way to bring out the meaning. This accounts for the differences in these tantras. [141b]



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the fifth chapter, a commentary on the significance of the secret mantra approach.

6

The Sarma Tradition

My detailed treatment of the secret mantra approach has two parts: a treatment of the Sarma tradition of secret mantra and a treatment of the Nyingma tradition.¹ My four-part discussion of the Sarma tradition entails the general nature of the secret mantra approach, an analysis, the differences between outer and inner tantra, and a detailed explanation of inner tantra.

I. THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE SECRET MANTRA APPROACH

The general nature of these teachings has four aspects: the basis of what is characterized as secret mantra, what is characterized, the derivation of terms, and an enumeration of synonymous terms.

A. The Basis of Secret Mantra

The basis of what is characterized as the secret mantra approach is the utterly lucid nature of being—that is, naturally pure basic space, the unity of the kayas and timeless awareness, which do not come together and separate, as well as all phenomena (including those factors to be refined away and those that cause the refinement), whose manifestation depends on that unity. The approach can be subsumed under four points, which concern the ground in which refinement takes place, the factors that are to be refined away, the factors that cause the refinement, and the result of the refinement.

First, the ground in which the process of refinement takes place is basic space, the utterly lucid nature of phenomena, completely pure by its very nature.

Second, the distortions, or factors, that are to be refined away are the phenomena of samsara—adventitious obscurations, karma, and afflictive states—together with the basis of all ordinary experience and the eight avenues of consciousness it entails. What is undermined (since it is the root of samsara) is the basis of all ordinary experience as a multiplicity of habit patterns, not the way of abiding that is the true ground of all experience. At any rate, with the undermining of that aspect conventionally termed “the basis of all ordinary experience,” there is instead what is called “timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena.” I have already explained how the four remaining aspects of timeless awareness arise as the other avenues of consciousness are undermined.²

Third, the factors that cause the refinement are those that constitute the path of timeless awareness—the four stages of empowerment, which are bestowed to promote one’s spiritual maturity, [142a] and the stages of development and completion, which one practices in meditation to cause the qualities of enlightenment to arise as though new.

Fourth, with refinement having taken place in this way, all obscurations are purified within basic space, and one’s fundamental being “becomes” the state of enlightenment; that is, the kayas and aspects of timeless awareness, which are spontaneously present, become fully evident. This is the consummation of benefit both for oneself and for others; one should understand that this, in essence, is the result of the refining away of distortions within one’s fundamental being.

These points are referred to in *The Accomplishment of Secrets*:

Fruition as the attainment of purity, with freedom from flaws in basic space:

the secret mantra approach explains this in four ways.

B. The Characterization

What are characterized are basic space, pure by its very nature, and “the secret teachings of vajra mind” that describe it, as well as any attendant factors. *The Vajra Pinnacle* explains:

What characterizes every alternative within the mantra approach is the enlightened mind of all buddhas.

Having realized the essence of the Buddha’s teachings, one is truly immersed in the basic space of phenomena.

C. The Derivation of Terms

As to the derivation of terms, the Sanskrit term *mantrayāna* can be translated as “the spiritual approach of mantra.” When *ma* is modified by the affix *n*, the root formed from *ma* gives the sense of “conceptual mind”—that is, mind that misconstrues things as having identity. When *tra* is modified by the affix *tha*, *tratha* gives the sense of “protecting” and the further sense of “protecting swiftly” or “protecting easily.” “Protecting swiftly” implies that victory is gained over counterproductive factors; for example, afflictive states can be instantly transformed into timeless awareness. “Protecting easily” implies that sense pleasures can be experienced as supportive factors, without the suffering involved in ascetic practices and the like. [142b] As *Supreme Magical Illusion* indicates:

Accomplishment comes about when one relies at will
on the five kinds of sense pleasures.

The significance of this discussion, as the term *mantra* indicates, is that consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty is protected swiftly and easily from the fearsome aspects of samsara. *The Subsequent Tantra* of “*The Gathering of Secrets*” explains:

Ma is what is termed “conceptual mind”;
tra has the meaning of “ensuring protection.”

Moreover, *Rali, the Secret King of Nectar* states:

It is “mantra” because it protects the conceptual mind.
It renders one’s mind flexible
and protects one from the malevolent influences of
conceptualization.

Thus, these are said to be the most majestic functions of
mantra.

Yāhetu (cause as approach), where *yā* is modified by the affix *hetu*, signifies “causal nature.” In this case, the meaning of “spiritual approach” (*yāna*) is that of “proceeding” to the ground of being, which abides as a spontaneous presence. Even afflictive states, which are dependent on that ground, are experienced through skillful means as supportive factors. Thus, “spiritual approach” also means that the three mental poisons (in the context of one’s present condition) are refined away by the path that is understood to be the integration of skillful means and sublime knowing,

and when this refinement is consummated, one “proceeds” to the level of the three kayas.

Yamarga (path as approach) means that in the context of the spiritual path, the three mental poisons, when refined away by the two processes of maturation and liberation, are experienced as the simultaneity of three factors: bliss, lucidity, and nonconceptual awareness.³ Their nature is understood to be that of the three kayas.

Yamaspranima (fruition as approach) signifies a spiritual approach in the sense that one “proceeds” toward a fruition. In the context of the fruition, on the strength of the three mental poisons having been purified within basic space, ignorance is nonconceptual awareness (that is, dharma-kaya), desire is bliss (sambhogakaya), and aversion is lucidity (nirmanakaya). [143a] The mantra approach is one in which the three mental poisons as they are ordinarily experienced are freed through skillful means, while one’s mind is restrained by one’s commitments and vows. *The Gathering of Secrets* states:

Commitments and vows are explained
to be what constitute complete freedom from mundane conduct.
The protection of all vajra principles
is explained to be “the mantra approach.”

According to *The Vast Range of Vajra Dakas*:

By engaging fully in the entire Mahayana,
one employs the mantra approach itself.⁴

D. Synonyms

The synonymous terms for this approach are “mantra approach,” “Vajrayana,” and “fruition-based approach.” It is termed “mantra approach” because it is extolled as the most sublime skillful means for experiencing the innate purity of the factors to be eliminated (the afflictive states and so forth) and for attaining what is to be accomplished.⁵ *Sublime Awareness* states:

Receiving empowerment and applying oneself to what is
authentic
are extolled as most excellent; they are termed “mantra.”

An analysis of mantras shows that they are of three kinds. The tantra *The Accomplishment of Enlightened Intent* explains:

As for the analysis of all mantras,
they should be understood to be of three kinds.
Mantras of awareness are the essence of skillful means,
dharani mantras are the essence of sublime knowing,
and secret mantras are nondual timeless awareness.

As for the term “Vajrayana,” although this approach brings one into contact with the principles of vajra form, speech, and mind through great skillful means, this takes place without any wavering from basic space. As *The Gathering of Secrets* indicates:

Great desire, aversion, and ignorance [143b]
are thoroughly discussed in the Vajrayana.

.
Desire, aversion, and ignorance
abide purely and are enjoyed in their vajra nature;
therefore, the skillful means of all buddhas
are explained to be the “Vajrayana.”

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECRET MANTRA APPROACH

My analysis of the secret mantra approach has three parts: the analysis itself, the reasons for determining a fourfold classification, and an enumeration of the texts in the respective classes of tantra.

A. The Analysis Itself

On the basis of naturally pure basic space, there are three phases to be discussed: ground, path, and fruition. In essence, if the tantras that explain these phases are analyzed according to their respective discussions, they can be subsumed within four classes: kriyatantra, upatantra, yogatantra, and anuttarayogatantra. The tantra *The Array of the Vajra Heart Essence* states:

The tantras intended by the Sugata
are accurately explained to consist of four classes:
kriya, upa, yoga, and anuttarayoga.

I. KRIYATANTRA

“Tantra of action,” which in Sanskrit is *kriyatantra*, is so called because it emphasizes physical and verbal actions. The commentary on *The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability* states:

This tantra is termed “kriyatantra” because it emphasizes physical and verbal actions.

According to *Excellent Spiritual Attainment*:

Thus, when one is engaging in spiritual actions,
having scoured the body with earth,
one should immerse it in a copious amount of clean water,
bathing at whatever time one wishes.

To elaborate, the physical actions are as follows: taking three full baths daily, as well as performing minor ablutions; changing one’s garments three times daily; eating three kinds of food or else fasting;⁶ [144a] observing ritual purity and ascetic practices; adopting specific cross-legged postures for sitting; and performing mudras. With such actions as the basis, great emphasis is also placed on the verbal actions of mantra repetition and liturgical recitation. Mentally one gains accomplishment by viewing oneself as a servant and the deity as a noble master. This is kriyatantra, as the tantra *The Request of Subahu* indicates:

Eat and bathe at proper intervals.
Having presented the deity with garlands, flowers, lamps,
incense, scents,
and food offerings that contain no meat or alcohol,
sit on a mat of kusha grass and begin reciting mantras
and liturgies.

.

The Tathagata repeatedly recommended fasting
as a means of attaining a blissful state of meditative stability.

Moreover, *The Five Protective Charms* states:

. . . ritual purity of body and speech;
third, ritual purity of mind;
fourth, speaking the truth;
and fifth, observing external ritual purity is explained.

2. UPATANTRA

“Tantra of conduct,” which in Sanskrit is *upatantra*, is so called because one engages in physical and verbal actions in equal measure, gaining accomplishment with the attitude that the relationship between oneself and the deity is one of friendship.⁷ As we read in *The Concise Summation of “The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana”*:

This tantra is termed “upatantra” because one’s conduct, flouting ritual purity and so forth, is antithetical to the ways of the world.

This conduct involves numerous kinds of physical and verbal actions in equal measure, along with the mental activity of meditation.

3. YOGATANTRA

“Tantra of union” in Sanskrit is *yogatantra*. Rather than physical and verbal actions, [144b] the teachings of this class emphasize mental activity. As the master Anandagarbha said:

In yogatantra, the emphasis is on meditation, and so mantra repetition is taught to be optional.

According to *The Concise Summation of “The Illumination of Suchness”*:

Since this tantra emphasizes the cultivation of meditative absorption, it is called “yogatantra.”

One meditates with equal emphasis on oneself as the deity as an expression of one’s samaya and on the deity present as the expression of timeless awareness.

4. ANUTTARAYOGATANTRA

“Tantra of supreme union” in Sanskrit is *mahayogatantra*.⁸ Here the emphasis is on supreme timeless awareness as a function of mind, while on the level of physical and verbal actions one skillfully enjoys the five kinds of sense pleasures, without engaging in reactions of indulgence or rejection. *The Gathering of Secrets* explains:

Ascetic practices and vows seem innumerable,
and even though one practices them, accomplishment does
not occur.

By relying on every sense pleasure,
one will attain siddhis.

Moreover, *Sublime Bliss* states:

Therefore, bliss itself comes from bliss;
one should strive to attain sublime bliss.

In addition, Aryadeva said:

To bring about attainment of the fruition, supreme bliss,
there are no skillful means other than those of supreme bliss.
Therefore, through the pleasures of food, dwellings, and so forth,
one should accomplish the bliss that embodies the eight aspects
of powerful mastery.

These eight aspects are mentioned in *The Secret Session*:

Powerful mastery of enlightened form, powerful mastery of
enlightened speech,
powerful mastery of enlightened mind, and similarly of
enlightened activity, [145a]
powerful mastery of supernormal powers, of omnipresence,
of teaching whatever is desired, and of abiding at will: these are
the eight distinctive aspects.⁹

Alternatively, according to *Sublime Bliss*:

Subtlety, spaciousness, the ability to gain access to more subtle
levels,
the ability to engage in spiritual conduct, supreme embodiment,
joyfulness, mastery over all beings,
and actions that accord with beings' wishes: these are the eight
aspects of powerful mastery.

The way in which these are accomplished is discussed according to three principles.¹⁰ First, the powerful mastery of enlightened mind has three aspects: the subtle motile energy of timeless awareness, the realm of the central energy channel, and the even more subtle state of blending everything with timeless awareness.¹¹ With motile energy focused in the central avadhuti channel through intensive breathing exercises, there arises timeless awareness that perceives, within the central channel, a freedom from the elaborations of all phenomena of samsara and nirvana. When the central channel is perceived,¹² at that point, through the inter-

play of circumstances that causes the motile energy of timeless awareness to become focused in the central channel, one experiences supernormal powers and sublime states of perception. With one's instinctive dualistic perceptions subsiding, one has an ongoing and uninterrupted experience of utter lucidity.

Second, the powerful mastery of enlightened form involves supernormal powers and the like—that is, enlightened activity that responds to the devotion of beings wherever this is present. It has three aspects: the nondual joy of the union of masculine and feminine aspects, the embodiment of transformative power, and the ability to engage in conduct that ensures benefit.¹³ So when the motile energy of timeless awareness is held within the central channel, there is a gathering of wealth to be enjoyed in the form of Samantabhadra's clouds of offerings; there is the manifestation of forms adorned with the major and minor marks of perfection; and there is the ability to emanate in any way that will guide beings under any circumstances. [145b] These aspects of powerful mastery, which ensure benefit for beings, come about simply as awareness's own manifestations.

Third, the powerful mastery of enlightened speech involves mastery of the various categories of teachings at will. It has two aspects: giving whatever teachings beings desire (according to their lot, as determined by their acumen) and exerting control over beings. Spiritual development is completed on the strength of the blending of motile energy and mind in the central channel, which ensures benefit for beings, for one guides beings and gives them teachings with one's knowledge of myriad languages.

The term "powerful" is used because one attains the power that brings such capabilities, and "mastery" is used because one can actually enjoy the inexhaustible qualities of enlightenment.

B. The Fourfold Classification

The categorization of tantra into four classes is based on five considerations.

I. THE FOUR SOCIAL CLASSES

Tantra was taught as four classes to accommodate the four social classes of ancient India. Kriyatantra was taught for the sake of those of the priestly (brahmin) class, who emphasized bathing and ritual purity; upatantra for the sake of those of the merchant (vaishya) class, who observed

bathing and ritual purity outwardly, and modesty and decorum inwardly; yogatantra for the sake of those of the warrior (kshatriya) class, who, with outstanding personal qualities and great fortunes, ruled kingdoms; and anuttarayogatantra for the sake of those of the servant (shudra) class, who because of their coarser emotions had little sense of hygiene and exhibited more vulgar actions and behavior. As is said in the tantra *The Display of Sublime Bliss*:

Kriyatantra complements the priestly class, with its ritual purity.
 Upa is especially suited to the merchant class.
 Yoga is for rulers, with their many assembled retinues. [146a]
 Primordial freedom is for those who are fundamentally deluded.
 This has not been taught to anyone else,
 only to you, O lovely goddess.

In addition, the tantra *The Adornment of the Charnel Ground* explains:

The priestly class, the merchant class, the warrior class,
 and the servants and outcastes: in order to tame these,
 tantra was taught in four ways,
 as kriya, upa, yoga, and anuttarayoga.

2. THE FOUR DEGREES OF ACUMEN

Tantra was also taught as four classes to accommodate the four kinds of intelligence found in individuals. Among all those of high caliber, kriya is for those of relatively low acumen, upa is for those of intermediate acumen, yoga is for those of high acumen, and anuttarayoga is for those whose acumen is highest among the high. *The Vajra Pavilion* states:

For the inferior ones, kriyatantra;
 for those above them, the yoga that downplays action;¹⁴
 for the most excellent of beings, yogatantra;
 and for those above them, anuttarayoga.

3. THE FOUR AGES

Tantra was also taught as four classes to accommodate the successive ages. During the golden age of perfection, in the first eon of this cycle, beings in this human world had four qualities: their life spans were immeasurably long, they lived on the nectar of the gods, their bodies were

radiant, and by means of supernormal powers they could fly through the sky. At that time, there was kriyatantra.

These qualities then deteriorated; people's life span, radiance, and supernormal powers diminished. Still their lives spanned an uncountable number of years, they lived on nectar, their aura extended out one hand's width, and they moved about by means of supernormal powers, so that their feet did not quite touch the ground. At that time, when three-quarters of the original qualities remained, there was upatantra. [146b]

Humans then became possessive of their wealth, the nectar that nourished them became sullied, they ate the refined essence of the earth element, and their bodies had merely a clear complexion. At that time, when half of the original qualities remained, there was yogatantra.

Then, because humans had no supernormal powers, they could no longer sustain themselves on refined earth essence, so they ate the finest grain. With the advent of the age of strife, and the full development of male and female genitalia, anuttarayogatantra was taught.

According to the tantra *The Authentic Gathering of All Deities*:

In the first golden age of perfection, there was kriyatantra;
 in the second age, of three-quarters perfection, there was
 upatantra;
 in the third age, of one-half perfection, there was yogatantra;
 and in the fourth age, that of strife, there was
 anuttarayogatantra.

Taking the four ages into account,
 it is explained that tantra has four classes.

Moreover, *The Adornment of the Charnel Ground* states:

In keeping with the four ages
 of the eon of perfection, of three-quarters, of one-half, and of
 strife,
 tantra was also taught in four ways:
 as kriya, upa, yoga, and anuttarayoga.

4. THE FOUR LEVELS OF DESIRE

Tantra was also taught as four classes to accommodate the four ways in which sexual desire (the context for refinement) was expressed. Specifically, in the golden age of perfection, the afflictive state of sexual desire

was in abeyance, and people were satisfied with merely glancing coyly at one another. Kriyatantra was taught for their benefit. The deities of this class gaze at one another, as explained in *The Vajra Crown Prominence*:

With the design applied on a white canvas,
the assembly of deities of the mandala
is drawn with the masculine ones gazing at the feminine [147a]
and the feminine gazing at the masculine.

According to the tantra *The Empowerment of Vajrapani*:

In the center, draw the transcendent and accomplished conqueror
Avalokiteshvara. To his left, draw Pandaravasini, gazing at the
transcendent and accomplished conqueror.

Moreover, *The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana* states:

The five goddesses of the five families
are depicted beside the five victorious ones.

.

The transcendent and accomplished conqueror gazes
at Pandaravasini.

Thus, all the deities of kriyatantra have their eyes wide open.

In the age of three-quarters perfection, the sexual desire that developed was satisfied by flirtation. Therefore, upatantra was taught. *The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana* explains:

The lord protector has a topknot of hair.
On his left is a goddess,
drawn with a faintly smiling expression.

.

Vairochana, the great king,
is depicted with a faint smile on his face.

Therefore, all deities of upatantra have smiling faces.

During the age of one-half perfection, the sexual desire that developed was satisfied by mutual touching and embracing. Therefore, yogatantra was taught. *The First Sublime and Glorious One* states:

In the mandala, the assembled deities
rest with their shoulders gently touching.

According to *The Vajra Pinnacle*:

The goddess utters sounds of vajra mirth;
 each deity's own goddess, embracing him in her arms, [147b]
 smiling and gazing ardently,
 wraps her legs around the lower body of the transcendent and
 accomplished conqueror.

Therefore, all the deities of yogatantra are associated with consorts.

In the age of strife, the sexual desire that developed required the actual union of the two sexual organs. Therefore, anuttarayogatantra was taught. *The Two Sections* states:

The bolla joined with the kakko;¹⁵
 the bliss of that is especially superior.

According to *The Gathering of Secrets*:

Through the union of the two organs,
 one can comprehend everything.

In addition, the fundamental tantra *Sublime Bliss* explains:

Having praised the two genitals,
 the tantric practitioner unites with the dakini.

Therefore, all deities of anuttarayogatantra appear as masculine and feminine forms in sexual embrace. About this, *The Illuminating Lamp* says:

For the benefit of people with sexual desire,
 there is Vajrasattva, the ruler of that.¹⁶

Moreover, *The Suchness of Secrets* states:

In keeping with the fourfold division of the ages,
 tantra was taught in four ways.
 For flirting, glancing coyly,
 similarly for holding one another's hands,
 and the embrace of coupling—whichever is the case—
 there are thus four classes of tantra.

There are parallel classifications for the levels of gods in the realm of desire, which correspond to the degrees of desire among human beings. Kriyatantra is for the benefit of gods such as those of the Paranirmitavashavartin level, who are satisfied by coy glances. Upatantra is for gods such as those of the Nirmanarati level, who are satisfied with flirtation. Yogatantra is for gods such as those of the Tushita level, who are sat-

ified with embraces. [148a] Anuttarayogatantra is for those of the Trayastrimsha level and below, who engage in sexual union. *The Two Sections* states:

For such actions as glancing coyly, flirting,
holding hands and embracing, and coupling,
four classes of tantra are taught.

Also according to *The Well-Sealed Locket*:

For glancing coyly, flirting, holding hands,
and the embrace of coupling—for whichever of these—
in the manner of drawing moths to a flame,
four classes of tantra are taught.

5. FOUR HINDU GODS

Finally, tantra was taught as four classes to influence the four kinds of people who were misguided in their worship of four gods. Those of a phlegmatic temperament, who worshiped Brahma, professed that ritual purity was spiritual practice. As *The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability* indicates:

Just as clothing immersed in cleansers
becomes stainless,
so the body immersed in ritual acts of purification,
such as bathing at the bank of a river, is cleansed.

Thus, the purpose of kriyatantra was to influence those who employed such methods. This process is referred to in *Excellent Spiritual Attainment*:

In performing ablutions, maintain ritual purity;
in holding to what is auspicious and marvelous,
rely on substances that ensure attainment.

Upatantra was for the sake of those who had an angry temperament, worshiped Vishnu, and professed that harmful actions were spiritual practice:¹⁷

Killing those of the warrior class for those who wish to become
members of the warrior class,
and those of the priestly class for those who wish to become
members of the priestly class, . . .

In addition, there is a parallel passage in *The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana*:

How marvelous! This killing is good.
Killing causes one to attain enlightenment. [148b]

Yogatantra was taught to guide those of a proud temperament, who worshiped Indra, as the following indicates:

The tantra of the powerful god of fortune
is truly explained to be yogatantra.

Those of a desirous temperament worshiped Ishvara, professing that desire was spiritual practice:¹⁸

Gautama was not a woman,
but there was someone by his side.¹⁹

Anuttarayogatantra was spoken in order to guide them. As we read in *The Gathering of Secrets*:

With a woman of fine figure and complexion
who has reached sixteen years of age,
having performed consecration
one exerts oneself on three levels in making offerings in
solitude.²⁰

C. An Enumeration of Texts

As to an enumeration of the texts of the respective classes, in general the categories of texts in the mantra approach are as infinite as the mentalities of beings and the basic space of phenomena, so how could it be appropriate to assign finite limits, numbers, and quantities? The tantras are like space, for countless manifestations of Vajradhara have taught them amid immeasurable retinues throughout time without beginning.

Nevertheless, let me try at this point to enumerate the texts to some small extent, on the basis of their compilation into separate classes. I shall refer to the structure of the body's seventy-two thousand energy channels, which, given the patterns of subtle essences and motile energies passing through them, are parallel to a like number of spiritual teachings and aspects of timeless awareness. *The Vajra Garland*, an explanatory tantra, states:

Twenty-four thousand channels
 are understood to allow for the circulation of blood;
 twenty-four thousand
 account for the thorough circulation of bodhichitta;²¹ [149a]
 twenty-four thousand
 are understood to allow for the passage of motile energy.

Moreover, the master Nagarjuna wrote in his *Commentary on the Five Stages*:

The divisions of mantra are seventy-two thousand.

I. KRIYATANTRA TEXTS

I shall now list a few of these texts. The classification of those of kriyatantra, the first of the four classes, is threefold. First, if the classification is of texts that give an overview, there are four: *Excellent Spiritual Attainment* teaches primarily offerings and tormas rituals.²² *The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability* teaches primarily the accomplishment of meditative absorption. *The General Tantra of Secrets* teaches primarily mandala rituals.²³ And *The Request of Subahu* teaches primarily conduct.

Second, if the classification of the texts is more specific, there are those concerned with the principles of enlightened form, speech, and mind. The fundamental tantra concerning enlightened form is *The Vajra Crown Prominence*. The explanatory tantras are such texts as *The Fundamental Tantra of Manjushri*, *Manifest Enlightenment*, *The Secret Tantra of the Manifest Display*, *The Sublime Wish-Fulfillment of the Manifest Display of Manjushri*, *Singing Praises*, and *The Condensed Ritual of the Explanatory Tantra "The Vajra Garland."*

The fundamental tantra concerning enlightened speech is *Heaps of Lotus*. The explanatory tantras are texts such as *The Lotus Coronet*.

The fundamental tantra concerning enlightened mind is *Sublime Awareness*. The explanatory tantras are texts such as *The Dharani of Akshobhya*.

Third, if the texts are classified with respect to their origin, there are, for example, the following: *The Goddess of the White Parasol*, which issued from the Buddha's head; *Heaps of Lotus*, from his tongue; *The Request of Subahu*, from his shoulders; *Sublime Awareness*, from his heart; [149b] *The Empowerment of Vajrapani*, from his hands; *Excellent Spiritual Attainment*, from his navel; *The Dharani of Amoghapasha*, from his

genitals; *The Tamer of Elemental Spirits*, from his feet; and *The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, *The Vase of Spiritual Attainment*, *Arrayed with Light*, and *Tara the Savioreess*, from his fields of experience.

In brief, a great many such tantras are also found in the “Sutras” and “Collected Dharanis,” where some are called “biographical accounts” and some “dharanis.”²⁴ All together, there are some four thousand tantras in the kriyatantra class.

2. UPATANTRA TEXTS

The fundamental tantra of the upatantra class is *The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana*. The explanatory tantras are such texts as *The Elephant’s Sport: The Enormous and Complete Array* and *The Seedling of Bliss*. Some hold that a text like *Manjushri: The Web of Magical Display in Sixteen Thousand Chapters* is associated with the upatantra cycles of Manjushri, but this cannot be the case, because *The Seedling of Bliss* explains that this text belongs to the mahayoga class.

The master Buddhaguhya contends that, although it is used, the term “upatantra” has no intrinsic meaning, for it is subsumed within the two classes of kriya and yoga. However, it is reasonable to consider upatantra a separate class, because it presents a balanced approach.²⁵

3. YOGATANTRA TEXTS

The fundamental tantra of the yogatantra class is *The Summary of Suchness*. The explanatory tantra is *The Vajra Pinnacle*. Some related tantras are *The First Sublime and Glorious One*, *Secret Buddhahood*, *The Emergence of Commitment*, the “four fragmentary texts” (the fragments entitled *Vajra Basic Space*, *The Realization of All Goals*, *The Refinement of Beings in Lower Realms*, and *Complete Victory over the Three Realms*), [150a] and the three tantras associated with Vajrasattva: *Consecration Through Blessings*, *The Refinement of Beings in Lower Realms in Seventy Chapters*, and *The Universal Secret*.

4. ANUTTARAYOGATANTRA TEXTS

In the anuttarayogatantra class, there are three categories: father tantra of skillful means, mother tantra of sublime knowing, and unsurpassable nondual tantra.

a. Father Tantra Texts

The fundamental tantra of the first category is *The Gathering of Secrets in a Hundred Thousand Chapters*, a version of which in seventeen chapters exists in the human realm. The explanatory tantras are *Prophetic Enlightened Intent*, *The Compendium of Vajra Timeless Awareness*, *The Vajra Garland*, and *The Request of the Four Goddesses*. Some related tantras are *The Black Enemy: Slayer of the Lord of the Dead* and *The Red Slayer*.

As for the fragmentary tantras, among the 125,000 chapters of the tantra *Supreme Magical Illusion*, the master Lalitavajra extracted tantras that were taught primarily as corrective measures: *The Three-Faced Form of the Black Slayer of the Lord of the Dead*, in order to tame Yama, the lord of the dead; the tantra *The Youthful Six-Faced One*, in order to tame the god Kumara Shanmukha; and the tantra *The Nine-Faced One: The Seven Accounts of the Terrifying One*, in order to tame the powerful god Maheshvara.²⁶

The auxiliary tantras are such texts as *The Secret of Vajra Equipoise*, *The Ten Wrathful Deities*, *The Elucidation of the Meaning of Mantra: Sealed with a Vajra*, *The Flawless Vajra*, *The Compendium of Empowerment*, *The Emergence of the Vajra Essence*, and *The Emergence of the Vajra*. [150b]

b. Mother Tantra Texts

The most fundamental text of the entire mother tantra is *The Complete Array of Vajrasattva*. The tantra concerning enlightened form is *The Wheel of Sublime Bliss*; the tantra concerning enlightened speech is *Supreme Magical Illusion*; the tantra concerning enlightened mind is *The Vajra of Delight*; the tantra concerning the qualities of enlightenment is *The Supreme Sphere*; and the tantra concerning enlightened activity is *The Fourfold Vajra Basis*.

There are four subcategories of the mother tantra class, the texts for which are *The Dakini Tantra of Bliss*, *The Oceanic Tantra of Bliss*, *The Tantra Equal to Space*, and *The Tantra Like a Golden Rain*. Some related sources are *The Tantra Capable of Rivaling Supreme Joy in Enlightened Activity*, *The Tantra of the Supremely Blissful and Charming Goddess Mamaki*, and *The Tantra of Blissful Wish-Fulfilling Secrets*.

As supports to these tantras, there are such texts as *The Highest Continuum of Nomenclature*, which gives an extensive analysis of the development stage for Vajrayogini; *The Department of Yoginis*, which gives an abridged version of this analysis; *The Emergence of Varahi*, which discusses the feminine deity solely; *The Emergence of Heruka*, which discusses the distinctive qualities of the foregoing text; *The Tantra of the Vajra Daka*, which emphasizes the completion stage; *The Tantra of the Vast Range of Activities*, which emphasizes ritual activities; *The Tantra of the Vast Range of Precepts*, which discusses the duties of a vajra master; *The Tantra of the Vast Assembly of Dakas*, which discusses enlightened activity; *The Tantra of the Oceanic View*, which discusses the four stages of empowerment; *The Tantra of the Vast Range of Sacred Occasions*, which discusses direct wrathful intervention; *The Emergence of Precepts*, which discusses activities associated with motile energy; *Buddha Skull Cup*, which discusses the activities of tantric department; and *Rali*, which gives advice on more ordinary topics.

c. Texts of Unsurpassable Nondual Tantra

In the nondual category are such texts as *The Web of Magical Display: The Fundamental Tantra of Manjushri* and *The Wheel of Time*. [151a]

These lists provide a rough summary of the texts that are currently well known throughout most of India and Tibet. An inconceivable number of minor works are extant, as both *The Emergence of Precepts* and *Buddha Skull Cup* state:

The number of yogi, or father, tantras
is defined as 900 million.

Moreover, the number of yogini, or mother, tantras
is counted as 160 million.²⁷

III. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUTER AND INNER TANTRA

As for the differences between outer and inner tantra, three classes—kriya, upa, and yoga—are outer, whereas anuttarayoga is inner. The differences have to do with the maturing factor of empowerment and the liberating factor of the path followed in meditation.

A. Empowerment

As for the first difference, any of the classes of tantra that do not present the four stages of empowerment in their entirety (and especially those that discuss only the empowerments of awareness) are outer tantra.²⁸ According to the tantra *Glorious and Secret Timeless Awareness*:

The bestowal of empowerment with water in a vase involves one in kriyatantra.

The bestowal of empowerment with crowns involves one in upatantra.

The granting of the vajra and bell is classified as yogatantra.

Moreover, *The Sphere of Timeless Awareness* states:

The water empowerment and crown empowerment are well known to be associated with kriyatantra.

The vajra, bell, and likewise name empowerments are very clearly presented in upatantra.

The empowerment that imparts irreversibility is to be clearly seen as yogatantra.

These are six specific empowerments; they are termed “the empowerments of the master.”

The majestic secret empowerment is explained [१५१६] to be characteristic of anuttarayoga.

The empowerment of sublime knowing and timeless awareness is anuttara,
and so is the fourth empowerment.

This means that all that is included in the vase empowerment is outer tantra.²⁹ Whichever categories of tantra involve the bestowal of the four stages of empowerment in their entirety are inner tantra. As *The Gathering of Secrets* indicates:

The bestowal of the vase empowerment is first;
second is the bestowal of the secret empowerment;
third, that of sublime knowing and timeless awareness;
similarly, there is the fourth empowerment.

B. The Path

As for the second difference between outer and inner tantra, with respect to the liberating factor of the path, there are six distinctions to be

made. First, a distinction is to be made with respect to the view, or realization. If, in a given tantra, all phenomena are understood to be the threefold mandala that is the primordial state of buddhahood, such that basic space—the context in which phenomena are realized to be equal and pure, without being accepted or rejected—is taken as the basis, that is inner tantra.³⁰ If this is not the case, it is outer tantra.

Second, there is a distinction with respect to the deities on whom one meditates. No matter how many deities are involved, if they are not in union, it is outer tantra. If they are in union, it is inner tantra.

Third, there is a distinction with respect to the visualized environments. Outer tantra involves having the conviction that one is in a pure environment, such as a monarch's palace or the summit of Sumeru. Inner tantra involves having the conviction that one is in an environment such as a charnel ground or Oddiyana.

Fourth, there is a distinction with respect to the kinds of actions that make up one's conduct. If there is an emphasis on bathing, ritual purity, and so forth, that is outer tantra. According to *The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability*:

When one has disturbing concepts
about pollution and impurity,
one should maintain ritual purity in solitude.

If one is able to forego ritual purity and partake of whatever food and drink one likes, one can practice inner tantra. [152a] *The Gathering of Secrets* states:

Selecting meat and so forth, partake . . .

Fifth, there is a distinction with respect to the ritual vessels employed. If it is preferable that these be pure, made of precious jewels and so forth, that is outer tantra. If there is an emphasis on skull cups, that is inner tantra. As we read in *Engaging in Secret Conduct*:

Noble vessels are of one piece;
one should partake of what is contained within.³¹

Sixth, there is a distinction with respect to the ritual substances used. Outer tantra involves the use of pure foods such as the three white and three sweet foods.³² Inner tantra specifies either using the actual five meats and five nectars or having the conviction that one is using them af-

ter the ritual substances have been consecrated with nectar pills.³³ Therefore, *Excellent Spiritual Attainment* states:

I have extolled the three white foods;
 root, stalk, and fruiting vegetables;
 grains; vegetable oils; whey and buttermilk;
 and noodles: these, I say, are food and drink.

In contrast, *The Gathering of Secrets* exhorts:

Eat excrement, urine, and blood.
 Constantly drink alcohol and so forth.
 One should always partake of human flesh.
 This is the very best commitment.

IV. A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF INNER TANTRA

My detailed explanation of the inner tantra of secret mantra has two parts: an analysis of inner tantra as a whole and a discussion of the distinct emphasis of each category.

A. An Analysis of Inner Tantra

Although inner tantra can be divided into three categories, there are actually only two. They are explained to be two because nondual tantra demonstrates the inseparability and balance of skillful means and sublime knowing; thus, the underlying purity, terminology, and philosophical tenets of nondual tantra are not at variance with the other two categories of inner tantra. [152b] The tantra *The Universal Renown of Enlightened Intent* states:

Moreover, owing to different emphases concerning supreme
 timeless awareness,
 the unsurpassable, sublime spiritual approach is explained
 in terms of a twofold division of tantra
 into unsurpassable father tantra
 and unsurpassable mother tantra.

Although there is an underlying nonduality, the makeup of ordinary beings is, generally speaking, subsumed within the range of the masculine-feminine polarity. In keeping with this polarity, both tantras of skillful

means and those of sublime knowing have been taught. According to *The Vajra Pavilion*:

To guide men,
yogi, or father, tantra was taught;
to delight women,
subsequently yogini, or mother, tantra was taught.

B. The Distinct Emphases of the Categories

As to the distinct emphases of these two categories of inner tantra, generally speaking, if there is an emphasis on the aspect of skillful means—that is, the stage of development, which relates to sensory appearances, and those practices of the stage of completion that involve motile energy—that is father tantra. If there is an emphasis on the aspect of sublime knowing—that is, the completion stage related to emptiness and those practices of the stage of completion that involve bindu—it is mother tantra. *The Accomplishment of Secrets* explains:

There are two forms of the sublime yoga:
skillful means (development stage and motile energy)
and sublime knowing (completion stage and bodhichitta).³⁴
Timeless awareness, the realm of space,
is focused in the four chakras.

To elaborate, it should be specifically understood that there are seven distinctions. First, there is a distinction with respect to the unique nature of these two classes of tantra. Whenever there is emphasis on an extensive approach involving innumerable varieties of rituals—including empowerments, fire ceremonies, consecration rites, rituals to accept siddhis, and rituals of enactment— [153a] that is father tantra. Whenever there is emphasis on a profound approach to the stages of development and completion, siddhis, and so forth, it is mother tantra.

Second, there is a distinction with respect to the development stage. Whenever the positions of the principal masculine deities within the mandala change but those of the principal feminine deities do not, that is mother tantra. If the positions of the principal feminine deities change but those of the principal masculine deities do not, that is father tantra. In his *Commentary on "Praise to Sublime Bliss,"* Vajrapani states:

Whenever the positions of the principal masculine deities change while those of the principal feminine deities do not,

this is explained to be yogini, or mother, tantra,
 so that spiritually immature people can recognize it as such.
 Whenever the positions of the principal feminine deities change
 while those of the principal masculine deities do not,
 this is explained to be yogi, or father, tantra.

To give an example, in the mandala of Vairochana, the principal masculine form is Vairochana and the principal feminine form is Dharveshvari. When, in place of Vairochana, the principal masculine form becomes Akshobhya while the consort remains Dharveshvari, that is mother tantra. Shantipa stated:³⁵

In terms of the position of the one with the wheel,³⁶
 any other victorious one may become the central figure;
 Akshobhya takes that position.

Moreover, Dipamkara wrote in his *Compendium*:

The one who is present in the central position of the mandala
 is called “the wheel” of the mandala,
 the master of all tathagatas.
 Then Akshobhya is actually present;
 in other words, “the vajra,” the sole and specific master,
 is present.

The master of the former specific family having been replaced,
 the intelligent practitioner will begin
 by installing the latter, according to the ritual.

At that point, since “the master of the family” has become Akshobhya, [153b] this is now a mandala of enlightened mind. According to *The Vast Range of Dakas*:

Whenever a given deity is master,
 the mandala is “sealed” by that deity.

Moreover, Shantipa wrote:

Whenever the retinue and principal figures of buddhas change
 positions,
 one should be absorbed into the other.
 A bodhisattva may become the principal figure;
 that bodhisattva should be absorbed into the master of the
 family.
 Should a victorious one replace another

as the principal deity of a mandala,
 the function of the central deity remains the same;
 each occupies the other's position.

When the positions of masculine buddhas of various families thus change while that of the principal feminine deity does not, that is mother tantra. When the form aspect of enlightened form is the focus, the central figure is Vairochana. If one's practice then focuses on the speech aspect of enlightened form (within that mandala of enlightened form), the central figure is Amitabha; for the mind aspect of enlightened form, it is Akshobhya; for the aspect of the qualities of enlightened form, it is Ratnasambhava; for the activity aspect of enlightened form, it is Amoghasiddhi. If Vairochana moves from the central position, the deity moving into that position unites with Vairochana's consort.

Similarly, in a mandala of enlightened speech, such as that of Amitayus, when the speech aspect of enlightened speech is the focus, Amitayus and the goddess Pandaravasini occupy the central positions. If one's practice then focuses on the form aspect of enlightened speech, the central figure becomes Vairochana; for the mind aspect, Akshobhya; for the aspect of qualities, Ratnasambhava; and for the activity aspect, Amoghasiddhi. As each of them is located consecutively in the central position with Pandaravasini, the original central form of Amitayus unites in turn with the feminine consorts of the others in their place.

Likewise, it should be understood that in the case of Akshobhya's mandala of enlightened mind, where the principal masculine form is Akshobhya, [154a] there is a parallel process for changing positions with the other figures. In the case of Ratnasambhava's mandala of enlightened qualities, there is a process whereby the principal form of Ratnasambhava changes places with the other four; and in the case of Amoghasiddhi's mandala of enlightened activity, there is a process whereby the principal form of Amoghasiddhi changes places with the other four figures.

Then, using the reverse of the foregoing processes, one can fully comprehend the process for father tantra.

Therefore, within even a single mandala, one's practice can focus on the mandalas of all five families. From the standpoint of one's personal practice, however, one can attain siddhis more directly if one practices by relying on the principal deity of the family on which one's flower falls as the central figure, because this is the family of the mandala with which one is most closely connected.³⁷

Third, there is a distinction with respect to the forms and accoutrements of the deities. Whenever the masculine deities are more numerous than the feminine deities (especially when the masculine deities occupy the positions of the four families),³⁸ and the deities are adorned with accoutrements that parallel ordinary styles of dress—jackets, skirts, crowns, earrings, jeweled ornaments, snakes, and so forth—that is father tantra. Whenever the feminine deities are more numerous (especially when they occupy the positions of the four families), and the deities are naked, their hair hangs freely, and they are coated with ash, wear ornaments of bone, and have seats made of corpses, that is mother tantra. The tantra *The Vajra of Delight* states:

In the chakra in the crown of the head is Akshobhya,
wearing a jeweled garland at his throat.

Rali also refers to this:

The distinctive seats consist of corpses,
the distinctive ornaments are of bone, [154b]
and the distinctive raiment is a coating of ash.

Fourth, there is a distinction with respect to orientation. In traditional descriptions of the deities and so forth, if a clockwise pattern is employed, that is father tantra, whereas if a counterclockwise pattern is employed, it is mother tantra. *The Highest Continuum of Nomenclature* instructs:

One should arrange the offerings and the tormas
in a counterclockwise direction.

Fifth, there is a distinction with respect to how things are represented. Whenever the forms are predominantly masculine and there is emphasis on daylight hours and the waxing phase of the moon, that is father tantra; the opposite applies to mother tantra. The tantra *Sublime Bliss* states:

Daytime for the transcendent and accomplished holder of the
vajra;
in the nighttime, sublime knowing is to be investigated.

Sixth, there is a distinction with respect to the stage of completion. Whenever the path is based on the experience of the bliss of bindu and involves the energy channels, that is mother tantra. Whenever the path is based on the experience of lucidity and involves the motile energies, that is father tantra. According to the tantra *The Dakini's Secrets*:

The distinctive feature of the sublime secret is that the path is based on bliss. The realization of the true nature of the energy channels is yogini, or mother, tantra; the realization of the true nature of the subtle energies is yogi, or father, tantra.

Moreover, *The Precious Garland* states:

In the glorious *Gathering of Secrets*, the upper and lower energies are integrated. In the anuttarayoga of sublime knowing, frankincense and camphor are integrated.³⁹

Seventh, there is a distinction with respect to the symbols of purity. If there is an emphasis on the innate purity of the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception, and on demonstrating that these are gods and goddesses, that is father tantra. As *The Gathering of Secrets* indicates: [155a]

In brief, the five mind-body aggregates are well known to be the five buddhas. The vajra commitment of the realm of basic space is actually the Vajra Holder.

If there is an emphasis on the innate purity of the energy channels and bindu, and on demonstrating that these are heroic yogis and yoginis, that is mother tantra. *Sublime Bliss* states:

The innate purity of the teeth and nails is the hero Mahakanakala.

In addition, *The Well-Sealed Locket* explains:

The yogini dwelling in that place is truly present in the form of a subtle channel.

Moreover, we read in *The Two Sections*:

The pairs of energy channels are yoginis; each of these, moreover, is explained to be one of three types. The right and left lateral channels and the avadhuti, or central channel, are understood to be the yogini Nairatmya.⁴⁰

These classifications, then, are based on their respective emphases. In addition, in certain texts of father tantra, there are also explanations of the symbols of purity associated with the energy channels, motile energies, and bindu, whereas mother tantra speaks of the symbols of purity associated with the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception. According to *The Well-Sealed Locket*:

The aggregate of form is Vairochana;
 that of sensation is Vajrasurva;
 that of discernment is Padmanarteshvara;
 similarly, that of formative factors is Vajraraja;
 that of consciousness is Vajrasattva.
 All are herukas by their very nature.

Moreover, *The Supreme Commitment of Rali* states:

The aggregate of form is Vairochana; [155b]
 likewise, the aggregate of sensation and the rest [are other
 buddhas].
 Earth is Buddhalochana;
 likewise, the element of water and the rest [are other buddhas].
 A similar situation pertains to vision and the other sense
 faculties.⁴¹

Thus, these classifications are based on various kinds of emphasis. To summarize, mother tantra entails the attainment of the most sublime siddhi through the cultivation of meditative absorption that focuses on bliss and the subtle essences. In father tantra, this sublime attainment is considered to come about through skillful means that focus on lucidity and the motile energies. Both classes of tantra, with their respective emphases, hold that the way of abiding—entailing the kayas and aspects of timeless awareness—is made evident through the skillful means of meditative absorption (involving experiences of bliss, lucidity, and nonconceptual awareness), which in turn comes about through the supportive factors of focusing on the key points of the energy channels, motile energies, and subtle essences.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the sixth chapter, on the secret approach of vajra mind.

The Nyingma Tradition

My detailed treatment of the Nyingma tradition of secret mantra has two parts: a general survey and a detailed explanation.

I. A GENERAL SURVEY

However many buddhas there are, however many transcendent and accomplished conquerors—the primordial protector, the glorious Samantabhadra, and others—they all ensure an array of spiritual traditions that shed light in the world for the sake of beings, who are as infinite as space in their extent. If all the ways in which spiritual teachings have been transmitted in the past, are transmitted in the present, and will be transmitted in the future are summarized, they are seen to be taught in three ways. *The Supreme Array* states: [156a]

The teaching traditions are three:
 Like climbing the steps of a staircase,
 there is teaching according to acumen.
 Like churning butter from milk,
 there is teaching for the sake of pithiness.
 And like treating a fever with camphor,
 there is teaching to provide antidotes.

According to *The Reverberation of Sound*:

The way in which teachings were conveyed involved a threefold intention;
 in consideration of antidotes, pithiness, and acumen,
 words were assembled and caused to manifest.
 Victorious ones in any of the three times do not utter words that describe anything else.¹

The first of these three is teaching with the intention to provide antidotes. As antidotes to the eighty-four thousand kinds of afflictive states, a corresponding number of categories and avenues of the dharma have been taught. *Vajrasattva: The Web of Magical Display* explains:

As antidotes to the eighty-four thousand kinds of afflictive states, eighty-four thousand teachings were spoken, are spoken, and will be spoken.

As for teaching with the intention to provide a pithy treatment of the entire range of traditions in the dharma, the approach of the vajra heart essence is both profound and extensive. For example, *The Presence of Timeless Awareness* states:

The entire range of the Teacher's secrets
is consolidated and distilled into its quintessence, the heart
essence of being.

This is the definitive, supreme secret.

Without this manifestation, there can be no freedom.

As for teaching with the intention to provide a treatment that conforms to listeners' acumen, in general such a treatment would include the mundane approach of gods and humans and the three transcendent approaches.² [156b] A more precise treatment would include the approach of the existing situation among gods and humans, the misguided approaches of those who hold extreme views, and the authentic approach of Buddhism. *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

Teachings are presented to beings
through two approaches.³

.

Spiritual approaches are held to be of two types:
the mundane and the transcendent.

The most fundamental is the mundane approach;
beyond this there are two positions.

The transcendent approaches are cause-based or fruition-based,
with three relating to causes and two to the fruition;
the latter two in turn give rise to six.

These are based on levels of acumen.⁴

As *The Supreme Array* indicates:

In accordance with nine stages of mental development,
there are general and more precise treatments.

II. A DETAILED EXPLANATION

My detailed explanation has two aspects: a general analysis and a specific explanation of this approach of secret mantra.

A. A General Analysis

If this analysis is based on a model of developmental spiritual approaches, there are nine such approaches, six of which are classes of tantra. Of the nine, the three cause-based approaches are collectively lesser approaches, the introductory being the shravaka approach, the middling being the pratyekabuddha approach, and the highest being the bodhisattva approach. Of six fruition-based approaches (that is, the six classes of tantra), the three of outer tantra are collectively considered intermediate approaches, the introductory being kriyatantra, the middling being upatantra, and the highest being yogatantra. The three of inner tantra are mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga. As we read in *The Reverberation of Sound*:

The transcendent approaches are cause-based or fruition-based, with three relating to causes and two to the fruition; the latter two in turn give rise to six. [157a]
 These are based on levels of acumen.
 Thus, by relying on these nine approaches, beings in the three realms are brought to an authentic path.⁵

B. A Specific Explanation

Two topics pertain to the specific explanation: the outer tantric approach of the Sage and the inner approach of supreme secret mantra.

I. OUTER TANTRA

Outer tantra emphasizes ritual purity, physical and verbal actions, and mental activity, and so corresponds to the three lesser, or nirmanakaya, approaches.⁶ It is therefore termed “the outer approach of the Sage.” It is nevertheless classified as tantra, for it comprises great teachings that are included in the secret mantra approach, entailing an uninterrupted continuum of being with aspects of ground, path, and fruition. If analyzed, it is seen to consist of three classes: kriya, upa, and yoga.

a. Kriyatantra

The discussion of the first class has four parts: a determination of the nature of the ground, the path, and the fruition, as well as an enumeration of the tantras.

i. The Ground

The Sanskrit term *kriya* (action) signifies an emphasis on physical and verbal actions, and the term *tantra* indicates that a group of tantric texts is associated with that emphasis. According to the tenets of this class, the relative level is that of sensory appearances perceived out of confusion, which are distorted experiences and factors to be refined away. The ultimate level to be realized is the nature of basic space (the ground underlying the refining process), which in essence is experienced as the inseparability of the two levels of truth. With these tenets as a basis, followers of kriyatantra accept that deities are expressions of basic space, pure by its very nature. [157b]

ii. The Path

As for the path, everything that manifests on the relative level is understood to be of the nature of “the deity manifesting in six ways.” One practices by regarding one’s chosen deity—an expression of timeless awareness—as a master, and oneself—meditating on oneself as the form of a deity that is an expression of one’s samaya—as a servant. One thus experiences, on the ultimate level, the utterly lucid state that is the unborn nature of phenomena.

The deity manifests in the following six ways: First, the form of the deity clearly expresses itself like an illusion, and so is not bound by the extremes of being one thing or many; one experiences the freedom of sensory appearances as “the deity of form.” Second, the syllables of enlightened speech clearly express themselves as “the deity of sound,” so that the unity of sound and emptiness is the ongoing process of mantra repetition; one experiences freedom in the nature of these syllables. Third, as one’s mind focuses on the insignia that symbolizes enlightened mind, thought processes clearly express themselves as a state of meditative absorption; one experiences the freedom of conceptualization as “the deity of meditative stability.” Fourth, the proliferation and resolution of

thoughts, clearly expressed as the color of the deity's form, are free as "the deity of light shining forth and being reabsorbed"; one experiences that as the freedom of the mantra syllables in the context of timeless awareness. Fifth, the lucidity of mind clearly expresses itself as "the deity of the aesthetic setting" (that is, the deity's seat, throne, accoutrements, and so forth); one experiences the freedom of everything one perceives as the immeasurable mansion. Sixth, the freedom one experiences as "the deity of timeless awareness" is such that the world of all appearances and possibilities clearly expresses itself as dharmakaya; one experiences the freedom of factors to be eliminated as timeless awareness. In the foregoing ways, one experiences freedom from the six kinds of overt fixation on six kinds of objects; once one thus understands the six principles involved—sensory appearances as the deity of form and so forth—one's afflictive states are refined away.

iii. The Fruition

It is held that, in the relatively short term, one's development of the qualities of the deity and of meditative absorption is ever-increasing and that ultimately, within sixteen human rebirths, one awakens to buddhahood as the embodiment of the deity. [158a] According to the tantra *The Summit of Sumeru, the Vajra Mountain*:

Any tantric practitioners with great fortune
 who exert themselves with flawless ritual purity
 will, having taken sixteen rebirths,
 reach the complete freedom of sublime timeless awareness.

The tenets of the Nyingma tradition are identical to those of the Sarma tradition with respect to such supportive conduct as eating the three kinds of white foods, changing one's clothes three times daily, bathing, and observing correct deportment.

iv. Authoritative Texts

As for an enumeration of the authoritative tantras of this class, during the early spread of Buddhism in the reign of King Trisong Detsen and his ministers, such great masters as Shantarakshita, Padmakara, and Vimalamitra served as scholars, while Bairotsana, Nyak Jnanakumara, Ma Rinchen Chok, the master Yeshé Yang, and others served as translators.⁸

Of the many tantric texts, both outer and inner, that were thus translated, in the case of kriyatantra, or the tantra of action, the six general tantras were *The Request of Subahu* (which defines the context for all the practices concerned with mantras of awareness), *The Empowerment of Vajrapani* (which concerns the empowerments for all such practices), *Sublime Awareness* (which presents the secrets of all such practices), *Excellent Spiritual Attainment* (which presents the ethical codes for all such practices), *Complete Victory over the Three Realms* (which presents the ritual activities for all such practices), and *The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability* (which presents the intent underlying all such practices). [158b]

The specific tantras fall into three families. The cycle of Avalokiteshvara contains such tantras as *The Mantra of the Lotus Pinnacle*, *The Lotus Coronet*, *Tantric Rituals*, *The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, *Amoghaphasha*, *The Dancing Yaksha Spirit*, *The Inspiration of Jvalamukhi*, and *The Treasury of Space*. The cycle of Manjushri contains such tantras as *Manjushri: The Immaculate Expression of Timeless Awareness*; *Manjushri: The Sharp and Unobscured*; *Manjushri: The Web of Conduct*; and *Singing Praises*. The cycle of Vajrapani contains such tantras as *The Empowerment of Vajrapani*, *The Vajra Underground*, *Taming the Three Wrathful Ones*, *The Vajra Scepter*, and *The Sharp-Pointed Vajra*.

As for minor texts, these consist of innumerable lesser texts of dharani mantras, such as *Five Protective Dharanis*, *Marichi*, *Vijaya*, and *The Gem at the Midbrow*.

b. Upatantra

The second class, upatantra, or the tantra of conduct, is also called “the twofold tantric approach,” because one’s conduct resembles that of kriyatantra in the observance of flawless ritual purity, yet one’s view resembles that of yogatantra.⁹ The ground, path, and fruition of upatantra are similar to those discussed under kriyatantra and yogatantra.

The particular style of meditation in the deity yoga of upatantra is to meditate on the deity that is an expression of timeless awareness as if the deity were a sibling or a friend, directly in front of oneself. One meditates on oneself as the deity that is an expression of one’s samaya. One attains siddhis within seven rebirths.

As for the authoritative tantras of this class, they include such texts as *The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana*, [159a] *The Blazing Expanse of Fire*, *The Conferral of Empowerment*, and *Nonconceptual Awareness*.

c. Yogatantra

The discussion of the third class, yogatantra, or the tantra of union, has three parts: its essence, its divisions, and an enumeration of authoritative texts.

i. Essence

The teachings of yogatantra emphasize the mental activity of meditative absorption as the process that brings the attainment of siddhis, with physical and verbal actions being mere supports. Furthermore, the nature of everything on the relative level is that of the perfect and complete mandala of a deity or of a single deity embodying sublime splendor. Thus, one meditates on oneself as the deity that is an expression of one's samaya. The deity that is an expression of timeless awareness is then invited, from either Akanishtha or the deity's specific natural abode, and is absorbed into the samaya aspect. One repeats the mantra while holding one's attention on a lattice of light rays shining forth and being reabsorbed. In finishing a session, one requests that the timeless awareness aspect of the deity depart. It is maintained that through such tantric practice, freedom is gained within three human rebirths.

ii. Divisions

There are two main divisions: practice that emphasizes meditative absorption and practice that emphasizes ritual activities. In the first case, one undertakes the stages of development and completion using "the five aspects of manifest enlightenment," developing meditative absorption as a preparatory phase and as a state of complete purity.¹⁰ That is, when one undertakes the stage of development in meditation, "enlightenment through reliance on a seat of the sun and moon" involves meditation on sun and moon disks in the center of a lotus; these symbolize the nature of skillful means and that of sublime knowing. "Enlightenment through the insignia symbolic of mind" involves meditation on a vajra, or a jewel, lotus, sword, wheel, and so forth, above the seat; [159b] these symbolize the individual tantric families. "Enlightenment through the perfect and complete form" involves clear visualization of the respective deities, such as Vairochana, which arise from a thorough transformation of these insignia; this is a total expression of the great deeds of a buddha. "Enlightenment through reliance on syllables that symbolize speech" refers to the

mandala of Sanskrit vowels and consonants; repetition of mantras while one imagines that the speech of the respective deities resounds throughout the realm of space constitutes transmission of the supreme secret. “Enlightenment by means of the complete purity of the timeless awareness aspect of the deity” involves meditation on oneself as the deity that is an expression of one’s samaya, into which the aspect that is an expression of timeless awareness is absorbed. When the union of these two aspects is ensured by the four seals of practice, one receives the blessings of enlightened form, speech, and mind;¹¹ this process symbolizes the nonduality of basic space and timeless awareness.

In this way, these five aspects serve as symbols that presage the five aspects of excellence, which are experienced at the time of one’s awakening to buddhahood in Akanishtha. To train the mind in such a context, without distraction, is termed “emphasizing meditative absorption.”

In the second case, to emphasize subsidiary or specific rituals is termed “emphasizing ritual activities.” Training in any of a number of auxiliary rituals, such as making offerings, offering praises, and repeating mantras, with the wish to attain siddhis is termed “subsidiary activity.” Relying on tormas offerings, fire ceremonies, the development of meditative absorption as a preparatory phase and as a state of complete purity, and so forth with the wish to attain siddhis associated with the five or six specific kinds of enlightened activity is termed “supremely victorious activity.”¹² [160a] Siddhis are said to be attained through five means—a ritual to consecrate the practice site, the laying out of a mandala, a preparatory sadhana practice, an actual empowerment ritual, and the implementation of yogic practice—which constitute the supremely victorious activities of the mandala. These activities are also said to bring about complete purification of the five mind-body aggregates on the most obvious level, the five sense faculties on a more subtle level, and the five afflictive states on the most subtle level, as well as the accomplishment of enlightenment as epitomized by the buddhas of the five families.

iii. Authoritative Texts

As for an enumeration of the authoritative tantras of this class, these include four major scriptural sources: the fundamental tantra *Vajra Basic Space in Five Thousand Verses*, together with its appendixes, and the tantras *The Vajra Pinnacle of Pashakara*; *Padmakara, the First Sublime*

and *Glorious One*; and *The Compendium: A Summary of Realization*. There are also such texts as the fundamental tantra, simply entitled *The Fundamental Tantra*; the tantra of twelve mandalas entitled *Purifying Beings in Lower States of Rebirth*; and *Suchness: The Concise Version of the Sublime and Glorious One*.

Thus, these three outer classes of tantra bring about freedom within a few lifetimes for those of intermediate caliber. *The Supreme Array* states:

The intermediate approaches are shown to be three.
 For the most inferior, there is kriya,
 for the inferior, there is charya,
 and for those with discursive minds, there is yoga.

With this quotation, I conclude my discussion of the outer approach of secret mantra.

2. INNER TANTRA

My presentation of the inner approach of supreme secret mantra has two aspects: its distinctive features and a definition of this distinctive approach.

a. Distinctive Features

As for the distinctive view, whereas practitioners of outer tantra consider the two levels of truth to be separate, those of inner tantra consider them to be inseparable. [160b] As for meditation, practitioners of outer tantra do not meditate on deities in sexual union, whereas those of inner tantra do. As for conduct, practitioners of outer tantra cannot rely on the five meats and the like (because they observe ritual purity), whereas practitioners of inner tantra can.

b. A Definition of the Approach

In defining this distinctive approach, we can identify three specific classes of inner tantra. *The Supreme Array* states:

As for the three greater stages,
 there is the development stage for those with expansive minds,
 the completion stage for those whose minds are more focused,
 and the sublime secret, the Great Perfection approach, for the
 most excellent.

To elaborate, mahayoga—the father tantra class that is associated with sensory appearances and the nature of which is that of skillful means—is taught for the sake of those who have a predominance of aggression and a multitude of thoughts. Anuyoga—the mother tantra class associated with emptiness, sublime knowing, and the completion stage that focuses on suchness—is explained for the sake of those who have a predominance of desire and who delight in settling their minds. Ati—the nature of which is nondual—is taught for the sake of those who have a predominance of ignorance and can make a concerted effort.

The stage of development is the ground of skillful means, within whose scope the stage of completion is the path of sublime knowing. The fruition is perfection in the nondual state beyond acceptance or rejection. *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion* explains:

The development stage of mahayoga is comparable to the ground of the teachings.

The explanatory transmission of anuyoga is comparable to the path of the teachings.

The perfection of atiyoga is comparable to the fruition of the teachings.¹³

Thus, there are three classes.

i. Mahayoga

The first class, the development stage of mahayoga, is discussed in relation to three things: its essence, divisions, and authoritative texts. [161A]

(a) ESSENCE

The Sanskrit term *mahayogatantra* means “the continuum of skillful means as supreme yoga.” According to this approach, one gains freedom in this lifetime by clearly visualizing the world of appearances and possibilities as that of deities and immeasurable mansions and clearly visualizing one’s mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception as the deity, thereby forging a path of nondual timeless awareness—blissful, lucid, and nonconceptual; this is a path in which the five major motile energies play a predominant role.¹⁴

(b) DIVISIONS

If we analyze mahayoga, we find that it has three main perspectives: emphasis on the essentials of ground, path, and fruition; emphasis on ac-

accomplishment through the path of skillful means; and emphasis on the integration of various factors into the path. From the first perspective, one realizes the ground aspect—the continuum that is the nature of being—to be utterly lucid mind itself and its symbolic expression to be in the form of syllables, words, and phrases. Once this is realized, the path consists of the maturing process of empowerment and the liberating process of meditative absorption within the stages of development and completion. One undertakes these stages with one-pointed focus to develop more and more qualities of enlightenment, beginning with meditative warmth. The fruition is the most sublime attainment, whereby naturally occurring timeless awareness becomes evident. These are considered to be the main concerns in mahayoga.

From the perspective of practicing the path of skillful means, realization and meditative absorption are considered to arise as a consequence of practice associated with any one of five mandalas, and so attainment derives from sadhana practice.¹⁵ One may take as one's path the mandala of enlightened form, the cycle *Manjushri: The Web of Magical Display*. One may take as one's path the mandala of enlightened speech, the cycle *Padma: The Web of Magical Display*. Or one may take as one's path the practice of the mandala of enlightened mind, the cycle *Heruka*; that of the qualities of enlightenment, the cycle *Ratna*; or that of enlightened activity, the cycle *The Web of Magical Display*. [161b] It is held that practice of the path aspect automatically includes the aspects of ground and fruition.

There are two ways of integrating various factors into the path, termed *tantra* and *nopika*.¹⁶ According to the tantric way, the stages of development and completion can be undertaken either in succession or simultaneously, and accomplishment of the fruition automatically includes the ground and path aspects. According to the *nopika* way, there are two alternatives; the *sota nopika* way is to practice with the understanding that everything is the display of mind, while the *mandala nopika* way is to practice by “entering the mandala” and emphasizing the ganachakra.¹⁷

(c) AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS

An enumeration of the authoritative tantras includes both fundamental tantras and tantras of pith instructions. The fundamental tantras are *The Glorious Gathering of Secrets, Equal to Space*; *The Summit of Sumeru, Equal to the Ocean*; and *The Unfolding of Timeless Awareness, Equal to the Earth*. The tantras of pith instructions and advice include *Boundaries*

Blazing with Radiance: Guarding Against Obstacles; Ferocity Blazing Like Fire; The Fire Ritual: The Ravenous Display; The Total Freedom of Mahabala; The Dark Secret Moon; and The Peaceful Deities.

ii. Anuyoga

The second class, the explanatory transmission of anuyoga, is also discussed in relation to three things: its essence, divisions, and authoritative texts.

(a) ESSENCE

The Sanskrit term *anuyogatantra* can be interpreted to mean “supremely blissful basic space as the supreme continuum of yoga.” According to this approach, one realizes the animate and inanimate universe—the nature of which is that of the deity—to be simply the awakened state of buddhahood within basic space. In the context of that realization, the role of skillful means—the stage of development—is reduced. One takes as one’s path the stage of completion—timeless awareness that is blissful, lucid, and nonconceptual, [162a] aroused through the yogas of the energy channels, motile energies, and bindu—and becomes free in this lifetime.

(b) DIVISIONS

If we analyze anuyoga, we find that it has two main perspectives: that of explanatory transmission and that of discourses. The first has two aspects: the transmission of that which is demonstrated (that is, the nature of basic space and timeless awareness) and the transmission that describes this, bringing about understanding through words and conventional designations.

From the perspective of the discourses, there are six texts: *The Awesome Lightning of Timeless Awareness*, which discusses the essence of the fourfold path of magical display; *Vajrakila*, which illustrates the definitive understanding of “penetration”;¹⁸ *The Sport of the Cuckoo in the Charnel Ground*, which discusses timeless awareness that surpasses ordinary experience; *The Discourse on All-Embracing Awareness*, which discusses the seals of practice as states of inseparability; *The Discourse on the Unity of the Enlightened Intent of All Buddhas*, which discusses true realization as a state of natural lucidity and posits that basic space

and timeless awareness are spontaneously present; and *The Discourse of Completely Pure Words*, which distinguishes between ordinary mind and timeless awareness. Those who follow these texts hold various positions—that the “stages” of basic space and timeless awareness (that is, emptiness and bliss) are realized simultaneously, successively, instantaneously, or progressively, and so forth.

(c) AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS

As for an enumeration of the authoritative texts of this class, in addition to the six discourses just mentioned, these include the fundamental tantras *The Unified Sphere*, *Supreme Magical Illusion*, *The Sphere of the Secret Moon*, and *The Fourfold Vajra Basis*. The tantras of pith instructions and advice include *Blazing Like Fire*, the tantra of enlightened form; *The Gathering of Supreme Power*, the tantra of enlightened speech; *White Lily*, the tantra of enlightened mind; *Secret Goddess*, the tantra of enlightened qualities; *The Gathering of Masters of Awareness*, the tantra of enlightened activity; [162b] and *Heruka*, the general text for the practices of mantras of awareness.

The texts for specific sadhana practices include *The Black Secret Moon*, the tantra of enlightened form and Manjushri; *The Sport of the Sublime Hayagriva*, the tantra of enlightened speech and the lotus family; *The Great Section of the Heruka*, the tantra of enlightened mind and the deity Samyak; *The Hundred Thousand Categories of Vyitotamala*, the tantra of enlightened activity and Vajrakila; the longer and shorter texts of *The Display of Nectar*, the tantra of enlightened qualities and the deity Amritaguna; and *The Gathering of All Mamos*, the tantra of the imprecations of the wrathful feminine deities.

Among the auxiliary texts for these six practice-oriented sources are the tantras *The Torma Offering of the True Nature of Phenomena*, a supplement on ritual activities; *Ritual Activities: The Garland of Action*, which explains how to perform a vast range of ritual activities; the longer and shorter versions of *Accumulation*, which discuss the development of one's merit and experience of timeless awareness; *The Treasury of Space*, which discusses how to consecrate offerings as an inexhaustible treasury; *The Total Freedom of Mahabala*, which discusses the process of liberation in the context of innate purity; *The Expansive Sphere*, which discusses the process of union in the context of innate purity; *The*

Berserk Elephant, which discusses deportment through wrathful uncontrived conduct; *The Fire Ritual: The Ravenous Display*, which discusses bringing the four kinds of enlightened activity to consummation; the longer and shorter versions of *Torma Offerings*, which discuss the preliminary phases of all ritual activities; *The Wrathful Goddess: Blazing Glory*, which discusses the process of satisfying the retinue of attendant deities by offering the remainders of the feast and exhorting them to action; and *The Display of the Ten Candidates*, which discusses the annihilation of malevolent forces through rituals of oppression and suppression.

One should understand that tantras are classified as mahayoga or anuyoga on the basis of their emphasis; however, they are by nature tantras containing pith instructions that pertain to both mahayoga and anuyoga. [163a]

iii. Atiyoga

My discussion of the third class, the Great Perfection approach of atiyoga, has two parts: an analysis of the ways in which it is superior to the lower approaches and an explanation of the supreme secret of this distinctive class.

(a) THE SUPERIORITY OF THE APPROACH

To begin with, in atiyoga it is maintained that basic space—mind itself that is pure by its very nature, utterly lucid, and spontaneously and timelessly present as a supreme state of natural abiding—is the ground of being, uncontrived and unchanging as naturally occurring timeless awareness. In comparison, all the lower approaches obscure this naturally occurring timeless awareness with the veil of hope and fear, because they require the acceptance and rejection involved in attempting to achieve something. They afford no opportunity to reach the meaningful state of genuine being. The tantra *Awakened Mind, the All-Creating Monarch: The View Equal to Space* states:

Listen to this, great and courageous being!
 The three teachings of the three teachers in my retinue
 are erroneous and obscure.
 How is this so, you ask?
 The six approaches for attaining a degree of certainty

are shown to have the potential for error with respect to the great perfection.

How is this so? you ask.

The sutras of the bodhisattva approach posit the level that is total illumination.¹⁹

Assuming two levels of truth, they speculate about the empty nature of phenomena and hold it to be space.

Awakened mind, beyond conceptualization and analysis, is the supreme bliss of atiyoga.

The sutras are in the dark about this transcendence of conceptualization and analysis.

The Great Perfection explains that conceptualization and analysis are the errors in the approach of the sutras.

The kriya teachings posit the state of a vajra holder.

Passing through the doorway of threefold purification, one abides in the domain purified of dualistic perception.

Awakened mind, beyond dualistic perception, is the supreme bliss of atiyoga. [163b]

The kriya approach is in the dark about this transcendence of dualistic perception.

The Great Perfection explains that engaging in dualistic perception is the error in the kriya systems.

View and conduct in the upa approach

are such that one engages in the conduct of the kriya approach while gaining accomplishment in the yoga approach.

Since there is nothing meaningful that connects view and conduct,

one does not realize the ultimate meaning of nonduality.

Nondual awakened mind

is the supreme bliss of atiyoga.

The upa approach is in the dark about nonduality.

The Great Perfection explains that engaging in dualism is the error in the upa approach.

Given that the yoga approach posits the realm of Ghanavyuha, one emphasizes the four seals of practice by using techniques that may or may not involve constructs.

But one cannot enter the state that does not entail acceptance or rejection.

Awakened mind, which does not entail acceptance or rejection, is the supreme bliss of atiyoga.

The yoga approach is in the dark about this state without acceptance or rejection.

The Great Perfection explains that engaging in acceptance or rejection

is the error in the yoga systems.

The maha approach posits the state of Vajradhara.

By passing through the doorway of skillful means and sublime knowing,

one gains accomplishment through the four phases of approach and accomplishment

within the mandala of one's pure experience.

Awakened mind, beyond effort and achievement,

is the supreme bliss of atiyoga.

The maha approach is in the dark about this transcendence of effort and achievement.

The Great Perfection explains that engaging in effort and achievement

is the error in mahayoga.

The anu approach posits the state of inseparability.

By passing through the doorway of basic space and timeless awareness,

one views phenomena, however they appear,

regarding pure basic space as the cause

and the mandala of timeless awareness as the result.

Awakened mind, beyond cause and result,

is the supreme bliss of atiyoga.

The anu approach is in the dark about this transcendence of cause and result.

The Great Perfection explains that viewing cause and result as a duality

is the error in anuyoga.²⁰ [I64a]

Natural great perfection, the essence of utterly lucid basic space, is naturally occurring timeless awareness. Since it involves neither cause nor result, neither something to develop nor an agent to develop it, nor any

attendant conditions, it is timelessly present such that its nature is like that of space. According to *The All-Creating Monarch*:

As it was before, so is it afterward:
the unchanging nature of phenomena.

.

Uncompounded and spontaneously present, . . .²¹

On the ultimate level of truth, utterly lucid basic space—beyond transition or change, empty like space—cannot be defined as anything whatsoever, whether pure or impure, that is subject to transition or change. In that its manifest and lucid nature is spontaneously present, it is not an inert void, but comparable to the sun and moon. In that in essence it entails no cause or result, it does not pertain to either samsara or nirvana. In that it serves as the ground for anything whatsoever to arise, it is called “basic space,” present as an open dimension or as the source, or foundation, of all phenomena. Given that this itself constitutes the ground of being, those following the lower approaches are in error and their judgment is clouded owing to the very fact that they engage in effort and achievement, rejection and acceptance.

If one speaks of the path in the sense of taking the ground as the path, because the ground is uncontrived and unchanging (for it can never be made into some thing) it cannot be made into the path, for this would entail a contradiction between ground and path. With such an approach, there would never come a time when the fruition was attained, for this would mean that mind itself—which is like space and need not be modified or transformed—had been corrupted. *The All-Creating Monarch* states:

O great and courageous being!

The view and conduct of great perfection
are not like effects, which are achieved as a result of causes. [164b]

The nature of the view and conduct of awakened mind
is like that of space.

Space is beyond conceptualization and analysis.

Enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who indulge in conceptualization and analysis.

Given that the nature of view and conduct is that of space,
enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who indulge in dualistic perception.

The onset of dualistic perception constitutes error and obscuration.

Though view and conduct seem to be a dichotomy,
just as space is nondual
there is no duality in enlightenment.

Enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who indulge in dualities.

The onset of a dichotomy between view and conduct constitutes
error and obscuration.

The nature of enlightenment is that of space.

Space entails no acceptance or rejection.²²

Enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who indulge in acceptance and rejection.²³

Acceptance and rejection constitute error and obscuration.²⁴

The nature of enlightenment is that of space.

Space entails no effort or achievement.

Enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who indulge in effort and achievement.

Engaging in effort and achievement constitutes error and
obscuration.

The nature of enlightenment is that of space.

Space entails no cause or effect.

Enlightenment, which is like space, will not come about
for those who perceive in terms of the duality of cause and effect.

Perception in terms of cause and effect constitutes error and
obscuration.²⁵

That is, the ultimate state of basic space, pure in its very essence, entails no cause or effect. Nevertheless, all compounded phenomena, including the impure state of samsara and the spiritual path, are shown to develop from causes and effects and to be subject to destruction as a result of circumstances, so it would seem crucial to take cause and effect into consideration. [165a] However, it can be shown that the ultimate significance of genuine being is not affected by what is transmitted by all of the teachings that address causes and conditions, acceptance and rejection, especially not by the ten attributes delineated in outer and inner tantra.²⁶ The same source states:

No view to cultivate in meditation, no samaya to uphold,
 no spiritual levels on which to train, no paths to traverse,
 no enlightened activity involving effort, no empowerment to be
 bestowed,
 no effort of body, speech, or mind, no mandala to develop,
 no duality of cause and effect—like space.²⁷

.

Awakened mind is timelessly unerring.
 Having always been, it is timelessly without error.
 As it is unerring, concepts of truth and falsehood do not apply.
 It is beyond all causes, conditions, and effects, all effort and
 achievement.

There is no greater hindrance to enlightenment
 than being unaware of what is already ensured, beyond effort
 and achievement,
 and instead viewing it as being ensured by meditation involving
 plans and actions, effort and achievement.²⁸

One might wonder, “If buddhahood cannot be considered to come about by the refining away of distortions overlying one’s fundamental being through a path of acceptance and rejection, just how does it come about? What is the difference between buddhahood and an ordinary state?” Let me respond by saying that the great perfection itself, naturally occurring timeless awareness, is such that the supreme qualities of buddhahood are timelessly and spontaneously present. Thus, since the three kayas are present in their entirety as natural attributes, they need not be sought elsewhere. It can be shown that accomplishment is ensured when, without contrivance, one does not waver from the context of this very awareness, just as it is. As the same source explains:

Listen, great and courageous being!
 Dharmakaya is awakened mind.
 Dharmakaya is within awakened mind;
 not an iota of it can be contrived by anyone. [165b]
 Therefore, buddhahood is not other than mind.

Sambhogakaya is awakened mind.
 Sambhogakaya is within awakened mind.
 With respect to forms arising from mind,
 these are sambhogakaya and no other embodiment.

Nirmanakaya is awakened mind.

The enactment of benefit for beings is ensured in no way other than through the emanations of awakened mind.

All buddhas of the three times, moreover,
are none other than awakened mind.

Successions of buddhas in the past
perceived and realized uncontrived natural mind.

Buddhas in the present,
having realized this uncontrived natural mind,
without artifice, just as it is,
enact benefit for beings, too.

Again, for buddhas who will appear in the future,
this awakened mind itself—natural mind—²⁹
was never contrived in the past, was never proclaimed to be
anything,
and now is not a mind contrived through meditative absorption.
Buddhas will appear by having entered the uncontrived path.³⁰

According to *The Heart Essence of Secrets*:

Perfect buddhahood will not be found
anywhere in the ten directions or the four times.
Since mind itself is perfectly awakened,
do not seek buddhahood elsewhere!
Even if they sought it, victorious ones would not find it.³¹

Therefore, mind itself—unwavering dharmakaya, awakened mind—is the nature of great perfection, beyond any concerted effort. *The All-Creating Monarch* states:

Mind is the actuality of what simply is.³² [166a]
All phenomena are ensured because of their suchness.
Given what simply is, do not meddle with anything.
Given that this is the very essence, do not look elsewhere and try
to achieve something.³³
Even if they sought anything other than basic space, victorious
ones would not find it.
Because it is already so, there is no need to create it anew.
Because it is already ensured, there is no need to try to achieve it
anew.
Settle in a state of evenness, without thinking and without
intending anything at all!³⁴

(b) AN EXPLANATION OF THE SUPREME SECRET

The supreme secret of this distinctive class is discussed in relation to three things: its essence, its categories, and an enumeration of authoritative texts.

(i) Essence

Atiyoga is the great perfection—that is, naturally occurring timeless awareness, free of elaboration, not subject to restrictions or extremes—and the pinnacle of all spiritual approaches, in that it is the total perfection of all that is meaningful in them. *The All-Creating Monarch* states:

Perfection in one, perfection in two, perfection in awakened
mind:

there is ease in the abundance of fresh possibilities.

There is perfection in one—perfection in what is created by
ordinary mind.

There is perfection in two—perfection in abundance.

There is perfection in everything—perfection in awakened
mind.³⁵

In these lines, the phrase “created by ordinary mind” refers to the phenomena of the impure states of samsara—phenomena that constitute what is perceived to be the universe of appearances and possibilities and are subsumed within the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception. It also refers to view, meditation, and conduct—that is, all that is classified as the ground, path, and fruition of spiritual approaches. These phenomena pertain to a state of confusion—a state driven by the habit patterns of ordinary mind—because they are adventitiously created by the architect that is ordinary mind. They are experienced as appearances that manifest and are perceived out of confusion, and so at present seem absolutely real. But ultimately they cannot be found to have any finite essence, [166b] and so, because they do not stray outside the scope of naturally occurring timeless awareness, they are perfect.

The phrase “perfection in abundance” refers to utterly lucid and naturally occurring timeless awareness: its empty essence as dharmakaya, its lucid nature as sambhogakaya, and its aware responsiveness as nirmanakaya. So there is perfection in that the three kayas, which are timelessly and completely present as natural attributes, do not need to be achieved through effort in some other context.

“Perfection in awakened mind” refers to the fact that all phenomena—all appearances and possibilities—regardless of how they manifest, whether perceived as pure or impure, are fundamentally subsumed within the scope of naturally occurring timeless awareness, arise within that scope, and abide within that scope. The situation is similar to the way in which a person’s state of sleep, and the various dream images that manifest therein, are subsumed within the scope of that person’s awareness, arise within that scope, and are dependent on that scope. And so there is perfection in mind itself, awakened mind.

Ordinary mind comprises the all-consuming thought patterns that arise from the basis of all ordinary experience through the eight avenues of consciousness, and so it is the distorted mode that is to be purified. Given that this is so, what is referred to by various terms—“awakened mind,” “utterly lucid mind itself,” “the sacred aspect of mind,” “nonconceptual timeless awareness,” “basic space,” “dharmakaya,” “ultimate truth,” “suchness,” “great perfection”—should be identified as naturally occurring timeless awareness, which lies at the very heart of enlightenment and is in essence the consummation of what is to be sought as truly meaningful.

(ii) Categories

If we analyze atiyoga, we find that it consists of three categories. *The Supreme Array* states:

However, after my passing, in later times
 this is how things will appear:
 There will be the Category of Mind for those with conceptual
 minds,
 the Category of Expanse for those with minds like space. [167a]
 and the Category of Direct Transmission for those who need not
 strive step by step.

To elaborate, one fixates on phenomena (whether internal or external), which one experiences as objects other than oneself, or on mandalas and so forth, which one takes to be absolute.³⁶ So that one can let go of these convincing dualistic perceptions, everything is shown to be the display of naturally occurring timeless awareness. The impure mode, which includes the animate and inanimate universe, is shown to be ordinary mind’s perceptions based on confusion; the pure mode—all the

manifestations of nirvana—is shown to be the manifestation and display of timeless awareness. The point is that everything is subsumed within basic space, as a supreme, nondual state free of extremes.

Next, so that one is freed from fixating even on that state, all phenomena are shown to be timeless great perfection, a timeless state of freedom, in which they have never known either existence or nonexistence.³⁷ Because of this infinite state of evenness, one is free of fixation even on antidotes. The point is that one is introduced to the supreme state of original purity, the purity and equalness of everything in basic space.

Next, the Category of Direct Transmission is taught so that one can overcome even the tendency to fixate on the empty nature of phenomena, a state of freedom from extremes, as some antidote to be accepted, and to demonstrate directly how to abide within pure basic space, the supreme and naturally lucid state of spontaneous presence. The purpose is to bring one to freedom in this very lifetime, as one experiences this state directly within the domain of the senses.

To summarize, one should be aware that this threefold progression—demonstrating that the quality of ultimate reality is a freedom from the extremes of factors to be eliminated and antidotes—accounts for the three categories of Mind, Expanse, and Direct Transmission.

The Category of Mind

In the Category of Mind, it is held that even though things manifest in all their variety, nothing goes beyond being solely the display of mind itself, [167b] just as various colors, like white and red, can arise on the single surface of a mirror. Because things that arise in all their variety are manifestations of mind, it is asserted that they cannot be found to exist in actuality, but are nondual with mind's essence—utterly lucid mind itself, naturally occurring timeless awareness. *The Lucid Expanse* states:

Because myriad appearances are manifestations of mind,
they are described as being nondual with their ground, mind
itself,
naturally occurring timeless awareness, the epitome of the
unwavering state,
utterly lucid and free of elaboration.

These days, ignorant people claim that the Great Perfection approach considers sensory appearances to be mind. This is totally untenable, for it would follow logically that mind has color, is identifiable, or has dis-

tinct aspects, because sensory appearances manifest thus. Instead, when myriad appearances manifest in the mind, they should be understood to be a magical display—like reflections in a mirror, which do not exist in actuality—with their manifestation in relation to ordinary consciousness being, by nature, an expression of habit patterns based on confusion. Mind itself should be recognized to be the ground from which things arise—comparable to the surface of a mirror, in that it is unrestricted and does not fall into any biased perspective; it should be understood to be the essence of one’s self-knowing awareness, which transcends conceptual extremes such as being one thing or many.

If we analyze this category, we find that it has seven perspectives.³⁸ First, there is the perspective that the fruition is found in mind’s source. The fruition is described as primordial basic space, and because by its very nature it does not change, mind itself is without transition or change. In that objects in the phenomenal world, which manifest with characteristics, are timelessly free, they abide as spontaneously present manifestations of the ground of freedom. Sensory appearances that are perceived in confusion— [168a] constituting the entire universe of the three realms—do not exist in actuality, yet they do manifest. From the standpoint of their lack of existence, they are inherently devoid of anything that could characterize them as impure, for they have never wavered, do not waver, and will not waver from the ground of being. From the standpoint of their manifestation, initially they are born from basic space, at present they abide within basic space, and eventually they are freed within basic space. They are like magical illusions in space; they are said to be “settled in the ground of being, spontaneously present without beginning or end.” It is maintained that sensory appearances are not freed by antidotes that restore them to some former status, for they are timelessly “settled”; that there are no actual antidotes, for sensory appearances are naturally “settled”; and that sensory appearances are spontaneously present in all their variety, without restrictions or limits, for they require no effort.

Second, there is the perspective in the Category of Mind that error and obscuration are transcended. The eight developmental approaches cannot be thought of as accurate, for they are based on mental constructs that are at variance with the ground of being. According to this perspective, naturally occurring timeless awareness is in essence free of consciousness, and so its true nature, which transcends causes and conditions, is a supreme and timeless emptiness, free of the biases of thought. Although

the universe of appearances and possibilities manifests as though it were impure, initially it does not come from anywhere; there is no basis for its having any source. At present, it is not located anywhere; there is neither an abode nor anything that abides. Finally, it does not go anywhere; there is neither anywhere to go nor anything that goes. Therefore, even what is called “confusion” is nothing more than a label; in the supreme state of freedom—the ground of being underlying the three realms—opinions about freedom and confusion, about what “is” and “is not,” do not pertain to that fundamentally unconditioned nature. [168b] Thus, it is maintained that the decisive experience is a single state of evenness in which there is no basis for any factors to be eliminated or their antidotes.

Third, there is the perspective in the Category of Mind that the state that undermines what ordinarily makes sense can be determined by lines of reasoning. Because the ground of being, mind itself, is not identifiable, it makes no sense for the mind to impute the arising of anything within the scope of that ground, and so there is nothing that can be identified in the slightest. All phenomena—apparent yet nonexistent, whether manifest or imputed—are timelessly free in the single state that undermines what ordinarily makes sense. Thus, there is nothing to support karma or habit patterns. Moreover, because no mind that reinforces these can be found to exist, there is no creator of karma or habit patterns. Furthermore, however one examines it, there is no rationale for the existence of karma that is reinforced or anything that can be identified as such, and so the maturation and fruition of karma cannot be found to exist. Therefore, one abides in a supreme and timeless state of freedom, in which even the term “samsara” does not exist; and within the unborn basic space of naturally occurring timeless awareness (that is, of mind itself), the unceasing display of that awareness arises without restriction. And so one has the conviction that there is nothing to reject or accept, to deny or affirm. According to this perspective, the line of reasoning that the true nature of phenomena is timeless emptiness, natural emptiness, a supreme state free of extremes arises intuitively within one, and so one is free in the unbiased panorama of samsara and nirvana.

Fourth, there is the perspective in the Category of Mind according to which there are no restrictions or extremes. In its essence, naturally occurring timeless awareness pervades all of samsara and nirvana, and therefore things that manifest in all their variety, whether pure or impure, occur as the display that arises from naturally occurring timeless awareness. In

actuality, although things manifest thus owing to the unceasing dynamic energy of awareness, with regard to their essence samsara and nirvana cannot be found to exist as separate, as identical, or even as inseparable. [169a] They manifest in our perception as distinct from one another, but their nature is that of complete purity. They do not fall outside the view of the pervasive state of timeless perfection, that of dredging the pit of samsara and nirvana.³⁹ It is maintained that the true nature of phenomena transcends striving and seeking, pleasure and pain, for it does not fall into any extreme of existence or nonexistence, appearance or emptiness.

Fifth, there is the perspective that is based on the foundational tenets of the Category of Mind.⁴⁰ From the standpoint of mind, its essence is not something to be perceived, and so it does not abide as either samsara or nirvana. It is basic space, naturally occurring timeless awareness, within which nothing whatsoever can be found to exist, yet within which anything at all can and does arise, so all that arises manifests as the display of mind. As to what this “is,” it is nothing whatsoever, but as to its manifestation, it manifests in all its variety. It is held that all things—sensory appearances and mind—are timelessly and naturally free in being unrestricted and not subject to extremes, and so their nature is such that it transcends anything needing to be done or any effort having to be made.

Sixth, there is the perspective in the Category of Mind that mind is free of ordinary consciousness and goes beyond the holding of any bias. Naturally occurring timeless awareness is free of ordinary consciousness, and so cannot be found to exist as a real entity. And because things that manifest arise as awareness’s own manifestations, the concepts in one’s ordinary consciousness are naturally free. It is asserted that, regardless of what manifests, it cannot be found to exist as either true or false in essence, and so is the display of the supreme state free of the extremes of existence and nonexistence.

Seventh, there is the perspective in the Category of Mind that speaks in terms of what things nominally are. Sensory appearances that manifest as they do, as the universe of appearances and possibilities, are the display of mind. Although they manifest in all their variety, mind itself has no finite essence, and so its myriad manifestations also have no finite essence. [169b] Therefore, it is held that therein lies the logical conclusion that phenomena, whether they are manifest or imputed, cannot be found to exist.⁴¹ All of one’s experiences—whether of the mind perceiving sense data or of the sensory appearances perceived—seem to be of

things distinct from one another, but both kinds of experiences are inseparable from naturally occurring timeless awareness, the true nature of phenomena in which they are not, in fact, anything at all. And so that which manifests as phenomena is considered to be the display of mind.

Although the display of mind comes from mind, manifests to mind, and is experienced within mind, mind itself has no finite essence, and so the assertion is not that mind is either identical to or distinct from its display. Rather, it is simply a matter of pointing out that what manifest as external objects cannot be found to exist as actual objects in the external world. The distinctive feature of this category is that although everything is experienced as pure or impure—that is, as nirvana or samsara—depending on whether or not one recognizes that everything comes from naturally occurring timeless awareness, the experiential context and what is experienced are pure in basic space.⁴²

The tantras associated with the Category of Mind, which were taught in 2,200,000 verses, are subsumed within three “expanses”: that of the true nature of phenomena, which is inexpressible; that of view, which is not nihilistic; and that of conduct, which does not affirm the existence of things.⁴³ These are contained in 6,300 sections. The tantras can also be subsumed within three “strongholds”: that of abiding, or settling, in the immediacy of the ground of being; that of manifestation, or the freedom of sensory appearances in their own place; and that of the equal essence of things, in which they are not distinct from one another. These tantras also contain 50 pivotal points on how to regard the true nature of phenomena unerringly, 511 topics on how to view mind and its objects, [170a] 20,000 verses on the key points that instantaneously distinguish between sensory appearances and mind, 50,000 verses on how the view surpasses ordinary experience, and 1,000 crucial points that cut through concepts about meditation.⁴⁴ These treatments are contained in tantras with 1,003 titles and are presented in three ways: by holding to the perspective of mind, holding to the key point of mind, and holding to an indwelling confidence in mind.⁴⁵

The Category of Expanse

The essence of the Category of Expanse is the supreme state of timeless freedom and natural purity, of naturally occurring timeless awareness and all phenomena, which arise within the scope of that awareness. Al-

though things “exist” in that they arise in myriad ways, they “do not exist,” and as a result they are timelessly free in their timelessly pure nature, and so things are not simplistically classified as mind and the display of its manifestations.⁴⁶

Within awareness, which is supremely free of any limitation of “is” or “is not,” one simply lets sensory appearances manifest, lets them be experienced, and lets them vanish. No matter how one examines them—seeing them as pure or impure and so forth—in the actual moment that sensory appearances manifest, they are in essence beyond existence or nonexistence, “is” or “is not.” There is a supreme panorama of timeless freedom. Philosophical systems that impute fixed concepts can be assessed in various ways;⁴⁷ having reached the definitive conclusion that these concepts are inherently empty expressions of confusion, proponents of this approach maintain that even as everything manifests or arises, all of it constitutes an infinite evenness that is limitless like space, a supreme state in which everything is equal.

If we analyze this category, we find that it has four divisions: the black expanse, which speaks in terms of the absence of causes;⁴⁸ the multicolored expanse, which speaks in terms of the myriad array of things; the white expanse, which speaks in terms of mind; and the immense expanse, which transcends cause and effect. [170b]

The Black Expanse

According to the black expanse, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness, which is unchanging and, in its natural perfection, beyond causes and conditions. Because it is not fragmented, there is no taking into account objects in the phenomenal world versus the true nature of those phenomena.

Upon further analysis, the black expanse is found to have three subdivisions: the category of the black expanse of enlightened deeds, the category of the black expanse of the responsiveness of being, and the category of the black expanse of emanation.⁴⁹ As for the black expanse of enlightened deeds, within the basic space of naturally occurring timeless awareness, what arises does so as though entailing a myriad array. However, in essence, sensory appearances, whose manifestations are experienced without bias, are naturally empty, and so cannot be found to have causes and conditions that exist in their own right. Even in manifesting,

sensory appearances are free, and so samsara and nirvana are fully embraced, such that the terms no longer exist. In this subdivision, a line of reasoning is to avoid the extremes of “is” and “is not” and establish the view of the great perfection as a freedom from limitations.

As for the black expanse of the responsiveness of being, because what arises is timeless awareness, knowledge does not rely on something else, and because freedom is mind itself, causes and conditions are left behind. The abiding nature is one of nonduality, the simultaneous arising and freeing of things, and so the fruition abides as a state of timeless freedom. In this subdivision, a line of reasoning concerning the inherent purity underlying all that we usually perceive is used to demonstrate that this fruition is the great perfection, in which sensory appearances are manifest yet timelessly free.

As for the black expanse of emanation, even as naturally occurring timeless awareness and all phenomena that are its display manifest, they are free of fixed limits of “is” and “is not,” and so cannot be found to exist as some duality of self and other. They abide without cause in timeless purity, and so do not depend on being created or contrived; within this timelessly free state, one applies the timeless seal that resolves extremes. Thus, because supreme timeless awareness, naturally pure and nonlocalized, is timelessly free, there is no sense of any basis on which it must depend. In this subdivision, a line of reasoning that transcends the confusion of ordinary mind is used to demonstrate that imputed phenomena are free in their own ground. [171A]

The Multicolored Expanse

According to the multicolored expanse, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness. Sensory appearances—which manifest as the display of that awareness—“are” in that they are the display of the true nature of phenomena, manifesting in a naturally arising way, but “are not” in that they arise such that this nature is all-pervasive and not subject to extremes. Thus, it is maintained, the display is beyond denial or affirmation.

Analysis of this expanse reveals that it has three subdivisions: the multicolored expanse that conforms to the Category of Mind and speaks in terms of what “exists”; the multicolored expanse that conforms to its own category and speaks in terms of what “does not exist”; and the multi-

colored expanse that conforms to the Category of Direct Transmission and speaks in terms of the unity of what “exists” and “does not exist.”⁵⁰

According to the multicolored expanse that conforms to the Category of Mind, because naturally occurring timeless awareness in essence cannot be differentiated in any way whatsoever, as abiding or as free, its essence is natural purity. Given that it cannot be found to exist within any duality of something to deny or affirm, its nature is utter lucidity. Given that it can be characterized as nondual, the arising and freeing of thoughts are subsumed within mind itself. Given that its display arises unceasingly, there is freedom in the nonduality of sensory appearances and mind. In this division, according to the line of reasoning that timeless awareness is, in its very essence, beyond ordinary consciousness, the phenomena of samsara and nirvana, whether manifest or conceptualized, are said to “abide in their own place in a timelessly free way.”

According to the multicolored expanse that conforms to its own category, since things that manifest in one’s perception with their individual natures are free in their own place, they “exist” in that the true nature of phenomena arises in myriad ways, but “do not exist” in that they are free in their own place, and so are beyond karma and its consequences. In this subdivision, using the line of reasoning that all vacillating things are empty and evanescent, one can prove that what is manifest yet ineffable is innately pure.⁵¹

According to the multicolored expanse that conforms to the Category of Direct Transmission, because things with their individual natures abide in a timelessly empty way, they are timelessly pure and do not rely on cause and effect. Because sensory appearances that manifest as conditioned phenomena, which are created by circumstances, [171b] are empty in the very context in which they manifest, they are free of the constraints of samsara and nirvana. The logical conclusion is that things that manifest or are conceptualized, which arise in a timelessly empty way, do not deviate from the naturally occurring ground of being. Therefore, because they are thus timelessly present in a way that is ineffable and beyond ordinary consciousness, the key point is that there is nothing to look at, nothing to familiarize oneself with.⁵² Because mind is free in the absence of any division between being at rest and being in motion, the key point is that mind itself is without transition or change. And because conditioned phenomena arise adventitiously, the key point is that the essence of any view and meditation that involve speculation about anything created by

circumstances is a timelessly free nonconceptual state. With the foregoing three key points, one comes to a final decision that samsara and nirvana involve no effort or achievement.

The White Expanse

According to the white expanse, which speaks in terms of mind, the essence of being is naturally occurring awareness, and everything within its scope—all that manifests outwardly or arises as awareness inwardly—is the display of mind.⁵³ Because conditioned sensory appearances are naturally free, they are effortlessly devoid of any cause; in the way that they abide, they cannot be established to be anything at all.

Analysis reveals that this expanse has two subdivisions: the white expanse of the supreme and naturally arising state of ineffability and the white expanse of the nonduality of view and meditation.⁵⁴ According to the white expanse of the supreme and naturally arising state of ineffability, the essence of being is awareness that perceives, free in the bare act of perception, and what is perceived is naturally pure, so mind and its objects are held to be nondual.⁵⁵

If we analyze this subdivision, we find that it has two sections: the expanse of the ocean and the expanse of space. According to the expanse of the ocean, the essence of being is a timeless freedom, on the basis of which one perceives the key point—that there is nothing to be done—and so knows this to be natural freedom. Given that things arise in a timelessly and completely free way, this knowledge constitutes a decisive experience of nonduality that is beyond ordinary consciousness.

Further analysis of the expanse of the ocean reveals that it has two subsections: the greater expanse and the lesser expanse of the ocean. As for the greater expanse, in that the naturally manifest aspect of mind is timelessly free, mind itself is untainted by any dependence on emptiness. It is held that in the naturally pure essence of mind and sensory appearances, [172a] all phenomena are alike in their supreme and timelessly transcendent nature. Thus, everything is devoid of origination, location, and cessation; because of this emptiness, nothing can be found to exist as anything whatsoever. As for the lesser expanse of the ocean, because the supporting ground of being has no finite essence, mind is without distortions, and because this ground permeates all supported phenomena as natural lucidity, without transition or change, the circumstances that per-

petuate samsara are naturally pure. This is held to be the supreme victory in the battle with samsara.

According to the expanse of space, the essence of being is mind itself, which cannot be contrived, and so the ordinary mind that arises within its scope is naturally free. Analysis reveals that this expanse has two subsections: the white expanse of the sun and moon and the white expanse of jewels. According to the white expanse of the sun and moon, the essence of being is the empty state of complete purity, unborn by nature and timelessly free. According to the white expanse of jewels, the essence of being is such that qualities of enlightenment arise timelessly as naturally perfect qualities, and so there is a natural purity underlying cause and effect, which involve effort and achievement. Given that there is nothing to be done concerning mind, it is held that the true nature of phenomena is spontaneously present.

The Immense Expanse

According to the immense expanse, which transcends cause and effect, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness; it is held that the phenomena arising within its scope are known through ordinary mind when they manifest in one's perceptions, but can be known in terms of how they abide even when they are not manifest. If we analyze this expanse, we find that it has four subdivisions: the outer immense expanse, of freedom from anything to be done; the inner immense expanse, which sets forth the tenets of this division; the secret immense expanse, which dispels obstacles; and the immense expanse of suchness, which reveals the key points.

According to the outer immense expanse, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness. In that it is without cause, the key point is that it is indivisible. In that it is without conditions, [172b] the key point is that it is unaffected by sensory appearances that manifest in a myriad array. And in that it is without either causes or conditions, the key point is that it cannot be found to exist as anything whatsoever, whether of samsara or nirvana. Because of these three key points, it is held that timeless awareness is beyond concerted effort to reject or accept anything.

In that there is nothing to be done concerning the essence of mind, the key point is that awakening to buddhahood cannot come about through conditioned phenomena. Because mind has no underlying cause, it arises timelessly, beyond being identical with or separate from anything.

According to the inner immense expanse, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness, which is not predicated on the eight lower approaches.⁵⁶ It thus clears away whatever causes ordinary consciousness to stray into developmental effort and prevents the mind from going beyond cause and effect, the trap of samsara. Within their fundamentally unconditioned nature, panoramic and not requiring that anything be done, even though sensory appearances manifest in a myriad array, they are free in that single way of abiding, which is termed “naturally occurring, beyond effort and achievement.” To give some analogies, the shade of various trees is not various kinds of shade, and various kinds of wood make a single fire.

The great perfection—the timelessly perfect way of abiding—arises in an all-pervasive way, in a boundless myriad array, but it forever constitutes enlightened intent as a timelessly free state of imperturbable rest. It is held to be the nature of reality, not subject to restrictions or extremes.

According to the secret immense expanse, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness, in which neither mind nor sensory appearances have ever known existence. Given that this is so, the hindrance of biased consciousness, which errs in taking sensory appearances to be mind, is cleared away in the timeless purity of its own essence. Thus, without having to be rejected, sensory appearances and mind are perfect in the supreme state of natural freedom, fully embraced within the single uniform space of nonduality.

Mental stirring—the thinking process that is a hindrance imposed by ordinary consciousness—is clearly perceived in all its immediacy, pure in its very essence, [173a] and so thoughts that proliferate and resolve arise as expressions of their true nature; mental stirring is fully embraced within the supreme state of pure emptiness.

Sensory objects—appearances that manifest in a myriad array—seem isolated “out there,” whereas consciousness—awareness that conceptualizes them—seems isolated “in here.” Everything seems to be separate from every other thing and lacking any contact or connection with it, but the true nature of everything is timelessly present. Dualistic fixation on subject and object, which results from a lack of recognition of this nature, is fully embraced within a supreme and naturally pure state of imperturbable rest.

Furthermore, according to this expanse, the view is beyond words and conventions, for it does not involve anything being something. Medi-

tation entails no acceptance or rejection, no affirmation or denial, for it does not involve anything not being something. Conduct is the freedom experienced as the true nature of conditioned phenomena, for it does not involve anything both being and not being something. The fruition is self-sustaining, without having to depend on anything else, for it does not involve anything being eliminated or attained.

According to the immense expanse of suchness, the essence of being is such that the phenomena of samsara and nirvana (both sensory appearances and consciousness) arise as the kayas and timeless awareness. Thus, it is maintained that, in the present moment, the supreme nature of phenomena is such that it cannot be divided in any way at all into samsara and nirvana, and so one experiences these kayas and awareness in whatever manifests as ordinary mind and its objects, without anything being added or subtracted. Identifying this fact in all its immediacy, one relaxes without distraction in a supreme state of naked perception and pure presence. With this, one is said to “drive the wedge of unchanging, supreme spontaneity between the two poles of dualistic consciousness.” One reaches a final decision that without their having to be transformed or eliminated, the manifestations of samsara, based on confusion, are in fact the enlightened intent of Samantabhadra. Resting in one’s natural state while recalling the key point of perceiving one’s own true nature in all its immediacy, one gains freedom in the innately pure essence of ordinary consciousness, with no sense of outer versus inner experience, and so one is said to “awaken to buddhahood in the supreme state of total freedom, without any fixed basis.” [173b] This awakening is said to “transcend ordinary consciousness,” for there is none of the restlessness of the thinking process. It is said to “transcend ordinary sense objects,” for whatever manifests arises in one’s experience without any fixed basis. It is said to “transcend any sense that something need be eliminated or some antidote applied,” for whatever arises in one’s experience dissolves within that very state of awakening. And it “transcends planning and striving, cause and effect,” for things that manifest or are conceptualized are experienced to be of equal taste.

Alternative Classifications

Alternatively, the teachings of the Category of Expanse can be subsumed within four expanses: those of display, adornment, the true nature of

phenomena, and freedom from anything to be done. According to the expanse of display, the boundless display of phenomena “is,” although there is no transition or change, no wavering into either samsara or nirvana; yet this insubstantial display “is not,” for it cannot be found to be anything absolute in itself. Thus, enlightened intent is understood to be unconstrained, like space.

According to the expanse of adornment, what manifests to one’s perception arises timelessly as the adornment of mind; mind itself arises timelessly as naturally occurring adornment; and the naturally occurring state arises timelessly as uncontrived and undistorted adornment. Arising ceaselessly within an unborn state, sensory appearances and mind are neither denied nor affirmed. Thus, enlightened intent is understood to be a natural mode of being, naturally at rest and naturally lucid.

According to the expanse of the true nature of phenomena, the true nature of all things is such that they do not come from anywhere at all, are not located anywhere at all, and do not go anywhere at all when they cease. Within the scope of that true nature, the manifestation, or display, or dynamic expression, of that nature is an amazing appearance of things in all their variety. Just as the changes undergone by the four elements do not stray from the basic space, or scope, of openness, so one rests in an infinite expanse, free of the occurrence or engagement of ordinary consciousness, free of hope or fear, [174a] in the scope of the supreme nature of phenomena, timelessly empty, timelessly free, and timelessly at rest.

According to the expanse of freedom from anything to be done, in the case of any given phenomenon, there is no need to make a concerted effort to accept or reject it. It is already just what it is without being made so; it is already pure without having to be purified; it is already ensured as such without having to be ensured. One is to understand that this freedom is like space, without transition or change, without contrivance or distortion.

The teachings of the Category of Expanse can also be grouped into nine expanses: the expanse of the view, which does not involve transition or change; the expanse of meditation, which does not involve what “is” or “is not”; the expanse of the fruition, which does not involve hope or fear; the expanse of the essence of being, which does not involve anything being confirmed or refuted; the expanse of the unceasing display of the nature of being; the expanse of the freedom of sensory appearances and mind, even in light of their ordinary characteristics; the expanse of basic

space, which does not involve transition or change; the expanse of the unceasing, naturally arising display; and the expanse of timelessly free, imperturbable rest, spontaneous and uniform. These nine can be condensed into three: the expanse of spontaneous presence, which is supremely spacious; the expanse of natural lucidity, which involves no concerted effort; and the expanse of the uncreated state, which is timelessly so.

The tantras that present these teachings in detail comprise 3,000 titles; there are 11,000 chapters, consisting of 6,400,000 verses. These teachings are subsumed within 80,000 decisive points, which are subsumed within 20,000 clear delineations, which are in turn subsumed within 900 significant points. The texts contain 2,000 key points and 50 pivotal points. [174b] The foregoing are all subsumed within three themes: freedom from conditioning, freedom in settling, and freedom in naked perception.

The Category of Direct Transmission

My discussion of the Category of Direct Transmission has three aspects: the distinctive features of this category, its essence, and its divisions. First, this category is notably superior to the two categories of Mind and Expanse. *The Supreme Array* states:

O vajra holder!

If you do not come to such a definitive conclusion,⁵⁷
you will be in no way different
from those caught up in intellectual speculation.

Therefore, this quintessence that is the definitive secret
is like a lamp that illuminates the darkness;
it is like an elephant among oxen;
it is like a lion among other wild beasts;
it is like a horseman among foot soldiers.

It is superior to all other approaches.

Thus, those who follow the Category of Mind become caught up in intellectual speculation about what mind is, and those who follow the Category of Expanse stray into speculation because of their concepts about the true nature of phenomena. The Category of Direct Transmission is superior in that it makes the way of abiding evident in all its natural lucidity.

Second, as for the essence of the Category of Direct Transmission, it is like a moxabustion treatment, for it directly addresses the key point, without leaving one mired in intellectual speculation and conjecture.⁵⁸

Third, if we analyze this category, we find that it has three divisions: miscellaneous instructions, personal advice, and instructions based on source tantras.

Miscellaneous Instructions

According to these miscellaneous instructions, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness, which surpasses ordinary consciousness, arising in the immediate moment owing to one's reliance on key points.

Analysis of these instructions reveals that they are of two kinds. First, pith instructions that define the path as one of settling focus on the distinctive feature of the ground of being—that it is “without letters,” for although it is the basis of conceptual elaboration, it cannot be established with mere words and so is beyond words or names. These instructions also concern the distinctive feature of the path, [175a] in that once one's true nature, free of elaboration, has been experienced thus as one's path, no concerted effort is involved, and so the fruition is like reclaiming one's natural state, with no transition or change affecting the true nature of phenomena. According to these instructions that entail no plans or actions, no causes or conditions, one finds freedom as one's natural state by dredging the pit of samsara.

Second, pith instructions that make the path evident as the pure force of freedom are based on the fact that from the standpoint of the abiding of the true nature of phenomena, mind is not subject to any change. According to these instructions, in the context of the path, as the three kayas become manifest it is impossible for one not to gain freedom, and so the fruition consists of encountering one's “mother,” the true nature of phenomena, when one arrives at the crucial point.

Personal Advice

According to the instructions taught as personal advice, the essence of being is the absence of confusion, free of ordinary consciousness. The nature of being is such that any underpinning of concepts has fallen away. Being can be characterized as nondual, free of anything identifiable.⁵⁹

These instructions are of two kinds. First, personal advice that does away with idle theories consists of pith instructions pertaining to subtle energy as the key point of the subtle channels. Through the key point of subtle energy, ordinary mind subsides into a natural state of quiescence, so that timeless awareness becomes evident. One has a decisive sense of the connection between the three avenues of body, speech, and mind, and finds freedom in the natural state underlying the stirring of thoughts. Any theory about buddhas versus ordinary beings is brought to an end.

Second, personal advice that gets directly to the point, without delay, takes into account the pervasiveness of basic space throughout samsara and nirvana, for in its vastness there is nothing at all that it does not encompass. This advice also takes into account the “transformation” of the essence of being, in that the basic space of phenomena is empty and cannot be identified as some thing. Moreover, the fact that basic space entails no concerted effort allows one to recognize naturally occurring timeless awareness.

Instructions Based on Source Tantras

According to the pith instructions that were taught on the basis of source tantras, [175b] the essence of being is the source of the words of all buddhas—the nature of being, free of either samsara or nirvana, which entails no concerted effort to reject or accept anything. This true nature of phenomena is beyond words that could describe it, and so it is emptiness, free of any basis for contention.

These instructions were taught for four reasons: to summarize the enlightened intent of the view, to remove hindrances like a blood-letting instrument, to give more prominence to some factors and less to others, and to give explanations that are clear in themselves.⁶⁰ According to the instructions that summarize the view, it can be demonstrated that the unelaborate essence of being is pervasive as the ground of one’s experience, so that there are no absolutes of positive or negative karma, and the three realms are experienced as a state of total freedom. The nature of being abides as the unity of emptiness and lucidity, so that positive and negative actions bring no ultimate benefit or harm, and neither buddhas nor ordinary beings exist. Given that this nature is devoid of syllables, words, and phrases, one does not awaken to buddhahood through the teachings of

various spiritual approaches; rather freedom is found instantaneously for those with the appropriate acumen.

These instructions are of two kinds. According to those of the first kind, manifest or conceptualized phenomena constitute the view, which does not entail anything having to be done. Because the essence of being does not exist as some phenomenon, there is not even the term “buddha.” Because the nature of being arises as a dynamic expression, samsara manifests in its distinctness. But this manifestation cannot be defined with absolute certainty, and so no finite limit can be placed on either the view or meditation.

Those of the second kind include the conceptual mind within the view. Given that the essence of being is unborn and thus pure, afflictive states are free in their natural state. Given that the nature of being is experienced unceasingly, there is nothing to either accept or reject, to affirm or deny. Given that being can be characterized as a timeless freedom, the paths of both samsara and nirvana have played themselves out.

According to the instructions taught to remove hindrances, like a blood-letting instrument, the essence of being is the true nature of phenomena, fundamentally unconditioned, and so samsara and nirvana are clearly delineated. [176a] Given that the nature of being does not allow for any error, there is no need for a model of the mother and child aspects of mind.⁶¹ Given that being can be characterized as the pure ground of being, confusion is dispelled in the immediate moment.

These instructions are of two kinds: those that dispel whatever prevents one from being authentically present and those that dispel whatever prevents one from gaining the warmth of the view and meditation. According to the instructions of the first kind, the essence of being involves no contrivance, and so anything that manifests is free in that it is mind. Given that the nature of being involves neither cause nor effect, the three realms are empty; not even their names exist. Being can be characterized as what requires no familiarization, and so it does not depend on anything—anything that must be “known.”⁶²

According to the instructions of the second kind, the warmth of the view is based on merging the two poles of samsara and nirvana into their “equal taste.” When one’s view is still unstable, one attempts to identify the true nature of the phenomena of samsara, which is comparable to someone attempting to track down an elusive poltergeist. When one ac-

tually attains the view, one gains physical and verbal warmth, which is comparable to adding fuel to a blazing fire. And when one's view is stable, one has clearly discerned the seeming difference between samsara and nirvana, which is comparable to a soldier who is victorious in battle.

When one's meditation is still unstable, one nevertheless gains proficiency in working with the unity of subtle energy and mind, which is comparable to gaining entrance into a wealthy person's treasury. When one attains a true state of meditation, one's mind can be directed toward the path, which is comparable to an elephant lying down on a bed of straw. And when one's meditation is stable, one discovers the strength of awareness and is comparable to someone being invested as the heir to a throne.

When one's conduct is still unstable, one nevertheless feels the diminishing of fixed reference points, which is comparable to a madman feeling disoriented. When one gains a degree of mastery in one's conduct, one's perceptions based on confusion are outshone by one's realization, and one is comparable to a soaring garuda. [176b] And when one's conduct is stable, one gains an authentic degree of warmth in one's experience of the three kayas, which is comparable to a brahmin girl finishing her tasks.

Furthermore, through conduct, one dispels hindrances to one's accurate perception of sensory appearances, so that circumstances producing these appearances are supportive, and there is nowhere to go other than the true nature of phenomena. Through meditation, one dispels hindrances caused by thoughts stirring, so that thought processes have nowhere to go and there is only a state of meditative absorption. Through the view, one dispels hindrances to one's realization of the true nature of phenomena, so that even though one does not rely on the teachings, there is nowhere to go other than buddhahood.

According to the instructions taught to give more prominence to some factors and less to others, the essence of being is not something to be attained, and so there is no basis on which to make any assumptions. Because the nature of being is not subject to bias or division, one does not hold on to the vicious cycle of hope and fear. Being is characterized in such a way that, if one examines it, nothing is found, and so "the root of samsara and nirvana has rotted away."

These instructions are of two kinds: those that give less prominence to one factor and more to two others, and those that give less prominence to two factors and more to one. According to the instructions of the first

kind, when more prominence is given to the view and conduct but less to meditation, the essence of being is experienced as a primordial unity that has no beginning or end, and so any notion of samsara or nirvana having a beginning or end is eliminated. The nature of being is not some separate thing, so its authentic sphere cannot be divided into external and internal.⁶³ Being can be characterized as not depending on anything, and so is unobstructed and without cause.

Alternatively, when less prominence is given to conduct and more to the view and meditation, one experiences “purity that is empty of being empty.” When less prominence is given to the view and more to conduct and meditation, consciousness that has no reifying concepts arises without bias, and so there is what is called “freedom in pure objectless awareness, without a fixed reference point.”

According to the instructions of the second kind, when more prominence is given to meditation and less to the view and conduct, [177a] awareness without any fixed reference point emerges without focusing on anything in particular, so that “the fruition that has no cause abides within one.” When more prominence is given to conduct and less to the view and meditation, it is said that “one’s body is cast into an abyss while one’s mind goes to its true nature.” When more prominence is given to the view and less to conduct and meditation, it is said that “mind is escorted into emptiness, while one arrives at the crucial points of body and speech.” There are a great number of passages in the tantras that are consistent with the latter approach; some tantras, such as *The All-Creating Monarch*, explicitly emphasize basic space while presenting other points more implicitly.

According to the instructions taught to give explanations that are clear in themselves, the essence of being is beyond words that could describe it, and so does not fit within a philosophical belief system. The nature of being is the true nature of phenomena, originally pure, which arises in and of itself without bias. Being can be characterized as what is beyond ordinary consciousness, and so is free of the proliferation and resolution of thoughts that cause mental stirring.

These instructions are of three kinds: those that maintain that confusion is like a cow to be herded, those that turn confusion back within the ground of being, and those that arrive at the crucial point of the sphere of authentic being. According to the instructions of the first kind, the essence of being lies at the root of confusion (the nonrecognition of aware-

ness), and so lays the foundation of samsara. When confusion is herded back into that very ground, the root of nonrecognition is cut through; self-knowing awareness has arrived at its original ground, and there is no turning back. The nature of being expresses itself in myriad ways, so that if one herds the cows of causes and conditions, one refines the precision of one's outlook; there is "supreme and timeless freedom, the falling away of the basis of confusion and samsara." Being can be characterized as the purity inherent in confusion, and so the path of confused consciousness has fallen away. [177b]

The instructions of the second kind present three methods. One is to subvert the dichotomy between samsara and nirvana by uprooting confusion. This method is based on the fact that the essence of being is beyond confusion or the absence thereof, for one understands that the nonrecognition of awareness—the root of confusion—is a naturally free state, and thus affirms that it has never known confusion.⁶⁴ The nature of being is beyond the framework of dualistic consciousness, for individual phenomena that are imputed out of confusion already have the status of being purely adventitious. Being can be characterized as unconfused timeless awareness, as one's recognition of the true nature of confusion brings one an authentic degree of the meditative warmth of that awareness.

The second method is to identify the unconfused nature of phenomena by letting confusion settle in the natural state. This method is based on the fact that the essence of being is such that it has never known confusion, and so is uncontaminated by anything that could cause nonrecognition. At present, this essence does not abide as a state of confusion, and so is devoid of any basis for karma and afflictive states. Subsequently, it cannot possibly become confused, and so any extremes of positive versus negative action have been eliminated. Given that the nature of being is indivisible, in awareness the ground of samsara is identical to that of nirvana, so confusion is innately pure. Being can be characterized as that which cannot be subject to confusion, and so the pit of the three realms is dredged.

The third method is to interrupt the flow of confusion's machinations by subverting the foundation of that confusion. This method derives from the fact that the essence of being is such that it is devoid of any basis for one's falling into samsara, and so instead the ground is established whereby there is no thing to be found. Given that the nature of being is beyond evaluation, it cannot be established to be either confusion or the

absence thereof. Being can be characterized as what is free of ordinary consciousness, whether confused or not.

According to the instructions of the third kind, which arrive at the crucial point of the sphere of authentic being, one's own essence is uniquely free of elaboration, and so is neither one thing nor many. Given that the nature of being is nondual, it is beyond conventional descriptions. [178a] Being can be characterized as a decisive experience, in that one places one's trust in it once one has been directly introduced to it.

These instructions are of two kinds: those transmitted orally and those found in the explanatory tantras. According to those transmitted orally, the essence of being is extremely close owing to one's connection to it, and an experience of it can actually be transmitted from one person to another. Given that one's experience of the nature of being is connected to one's faculty of hearing, no obstacle intervenes.⁶⁵ Being can be characterized as what is without error or deviation, and so it inspires trust and confidence. These oral instructions comprise pith instructions that combine words and their underlying meaning, whether the words are written down or not.

According to the explanatory tantras, the essence of being is naturally occurring timeless awareness, the true nature of phenomena, which entails no concerted effort. This essence has no cause, and so there is no basis for distinguishing the three realms from one another. Given that the nature of being is utterly lucid, without distortions, one understands what characterizes the five aspects of timeless awareness. Being can be characterized as what is beyond conceptualization and analysis, and so the enlightened intent of the three kayas and five aspects of timeless awareness abides as a constant presence.

The explanatory tantras have four cycles: the outer, inner, secret, and unsurpassable secret. According to the outer cycle, the essence of being is such that afflictive states do not exist as things to be eliminated, and so one abides by incorporating the five mental poisons into one's path. Given that the nature of being involves no effort or achievement, anything at all that manifests is experienced as its true nature. Being can be characterized as unfragmented, and so emptiness is in no way divisible.

According to the inner cycle, the essence of being is not some existent and autonomous thing with material properties, and so the true nature of phenomena cannot ultimately be characterized. Because the nature of being does not involve coming or going, timeless awareness is ever-present.

Being can be characterized as functioning like a root (from the standpoint of steadfastness), like a tree trunk (from the standpoint of cohesiveness), [178b] like leaves (from the standpoint of unfolding), like flowers (from the standpoint of lucidity), and like fruit (from the standpoint of maturation).

According to the secret cycle, the essence of being is such that direct introduction to it is simultaneous with gaining realization, and so realization is not dependent on hearing, contemplating, and meditating on teachings. Given that the nature of being is such that awakening to buddhahood is simultaneous with the cessation of breathing, this awakening does not depend on diligence or the power of familiarization.⁶⁶ Being can be characterized as the simultaneous awakening to buddhahood and onset of innate compassion, and so does not require twofold spiritual development as its cause.

According to the unsurpassable secret cycle, the essence of being does not rely on words, and so is not dependent on sublime knowing that involves conceptualization and analysis. Because the nature of being is known in one's direct experience, one is not confined to some opinion based on fixated speculation. Being can be characterized as the four visions coming to full expression, and so one does not hold out any hope or anticipation that the three kayas and five aspects of timeless awareness are the fruition. This cycle ensures that timeless and spontaneous freedom becomes fully evident to one in the present lifetime.

The following scriptural citation, from the master Vimalamitra's *Shining Lamp*, will give one confidence in the nature of the foregoing cycles:

The outer cycle is comparable to one's body; it presents conventional descriptions in great detail.

The inner cycle is comparable to one's eyes; its teachings are symbolic, pertaining to perception.

The secret cycle is comparable to one's heart; its teachings pertain to memory, which permits recollection.

[The unsurpassable secret cycle] is comparable to a person's entire body.

In the Category of Direct Transmission of the Great Perfection approach, the discussions of the subject matter found in the four cycles (outer, inner, secret, and unsurpassable secret) comprise 20,012 individual points; [179a] there are 35,000 chapters consisting of 6,400,000 verses. There are 5,000 key points, 8 great themes, 180 pivotal points, 900,000 significant points, 70,000 clear delineations, and 150,000 de-

cisive points. But the subject matter itself is equal to space in its extent. Such are the words of buddhas that make up the consummate Category of Direct Transmission.

These three divisions of the Category of Direct Transmission can also be subsumed within three expanses: the expanse of the display of being, which does not cease; the expanse of ordinary consciousness, which cannot but be free; and the expanse of the essence of being, which is neither good nor bad. The quintessence of these pith instructions can be subsumed within four principles: revealing the key point, discerning the implications, presenting a direct introduction, and arriving at the natural crucial point of direct experience.

(iii) *Authoritative Texts*

In atiyoga the authoritative texts are of two kinds. The first are those that are discussed in conjunction with one or another of the three categories. Those of each category will be discussed separately.

The tantras of the Category of Mind that were translated into Tibetan are known as the eighteen texts of this lesser category. Five are the so-called earlier translations by Bairotsana: *The Harbinger of Awareness*, *The Stirring of Supreme Dynamic Energy*, *The Soaring of the Great Garuda*, *Refining Gold from Ore*, and *Supreme Space: The Victory Banner That Never Falls*.

There are thirteen later translations by Vimalamitra, Jnanakumara, and Yudra:⁶⁷ *The Pinnacle State Victorious in All Circumstances*, *The Monarch of Space*, *The Magical Array of Bliss*, *The General Theme of the Great Perfection Approach*, *The Sphere of Awakened Mind*, *The Vast Array of Bliss*, [179b] *The Wheel of Life Force*, *The Sixfold Sphere*, *The General Conduct of the Great Perfection Approach*, *The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, *All-Embracing Awareness*, *The Sacred and Mighty One*, and *Meaningful Meditation*.

To these are added three texts that are early translations by Bairotsana—*The All-Creating Monarch*, *Superb Monarch*, and *The Ten Discourses*—totaling twenty-one texts in the Category of Mind.

The sources that list the titles of the above-mentioned eighteen scriptures tally with each other for the most part. However, some differ in their accounts of which texts come earlier or later, how many texts there are, and who translated them.

The tantras of the Category of Expanse were given in a hundred thousand texts, including *Dredging the Pit of Samsara*, *The Tantra of Secret Jewels*, *The Tantra of Effortlessness*, and *The Tantra of the Spacious Expanse of Space*.

The tantras of the Category of Direct Transmission, which number 51,000, include *The Clear Lotus Expanse*, *The Unfolding of Lotus Power*, and *The Tantra of the Wish-Fulfilling Summit*. In particular, there is a group of 5,300 texts that includes *The Union of Buddhas in Equalness* and *The Heart Essence of the Cycle of the Sphere*; there is, in addition, the group of seventeen tantras that define the supreme secret, including *The Reverberation of Sound*, and an eighteenth, *The Wrathful Goddess*. All of these derive from *Engaging in Secret Conduct: The Tantra of the Potential*.

The authoritative texts of the second kind consist of tantras that pertain to the general approach of the Great Perfection. These are *The Fundamental Tantra of Supreme Space*, which discusses mind itself as being beyond effort, and twenty-five other tantras: *The Auxiliary Tantra of Supreme Space*, which discusses how to put this approach into practice; *The Secondary Auxiliary Tantra: A Thorough Discussion of Supreme Space*, which discusses the utterly perfect fruition of such practice; *The Tantra of the Most Majestic Nature of Phenomena*, which discusses mind itself as being without transition or change; [180a] *The Tantra of the Sphere of Awakened Mind*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the unique sphere of being; *The Tantra of the Sphere of Timeless Awareness*, which demonstrates that mind itself is naturally occurring timeless awareness; *The Tantra of the Garland of Pith Instructions*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the root of everything; *The Tantra of the Most Majestic Secret*, which demonstrates that mind itself is supreme and all-pervasive; *The Tantra of Sacred Timeless Awareness*, which demonstrates that mind itself is one's self-knowing awareness; *The Tantra of the Total Purity of the Realm of Space*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the wholly positive display of Samantabhadra; *The Tantra of Quintessential Pith Instructions*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the very essence of everything; *The Tantra of the Secret Heart Essence*, which inspires the conviction that mind itself is one's self-knowing awareness; *The Tantra of the Fundamental Quality of Supreme Space*, which discusses mind itself as the root of everything; *The Tantra of Unique Enlightened Intent*, which discusses mind itself as a unified state; *The Tantra of Supreme*

Meditative Stability, which discusses letting mind itself rest just as it is; *The Tantra of Ongoing Meditative Stability*, which discusses familiarizing oneself with the ongoing experience of mind itself; *The Tantra Summarizing Meditation*, which speaks of mind itself as everything; *The Tantra of the Empowerment of Supreme Space*, which relates mind itself to the process of empowerment; *The Tantra Without Letters of Supreme Space*, which discusses mind itself as beyond words; *The Tantra of the Ground That Is Supreme Space*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the primordial state; *The Tantra of the Blazing Jewel*, which demonstrates that mind itself is utterly lucid; *The Tantra of the Garland of Jewels*, which demonstrates that mind itself has spontaneously present qualities; *The Tantra of the Lamp of the Three Realms*, which discusses mind itself being clearly evident throughout the three realms; [180b] *The Tantra of the Heart Essence of Certainty*, which demonstrates that mind itself is beyond acceptance or rejection; *The Tantra of the Vajra Secret*, which demonstrates that mind itself is without transition or change; and *The Tantra of Timeless Buddhahood*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the timelessly awakened state of buddhahood.

These general tantras also include eighteen scriptures: *The Harbinger of Awareness*, which discusses the fact that everything derives from awakened mind; *The Stirring of Supreme Dynamic Energy*, which outshines all effort and achievement; *The Perfection of the Great Garuda*,⁶⁸ which discusses the perfection of mind itself in basic space; *Refining Gold from Ore*, which discusses the true nature of phenomena as timelessly abiding enlightened intent; *The Victory Banner That Never Falls*,⁶⁹ which discusses mind itself as spontaneously present view; *The Superb Monarch*, which discusses mind itself as timelessly empty; *Sacred Timeless Awareness*, which demonstrates that mind itself is dharmakaya; *The Majestic Innermost Sphere*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the sphere of being; *The Wheel of Life Force*, which demonstrates that mind itself is without birth or death; *The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the source of all that is wished for; *The All-Embracing Sphere*, which demonstrates that mind itself is a supreme state of equalness and perfection; *Majestic Supreme Space*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the perfection of all spiritual approaches; *The Pinnacle State Victorious in All Circumstances*, which demonstrates that mind itself is the pinnacle; *The Vast Array of Bliss*, which demonstrates that mind itself is timelessly blissful and free of elaboration; *The Magical*

Array of Bliss, which demonstrates that mind itself is not subject to afflictive states and thus is not subject to degeneration; *The Totally Perfect and Supreme Treasure*, which demonstrates that mind itself subsumes the ground of samsara and nirvana; *The General Theme of Spontaneous Perfection*,⁷⁰ which demonstrates that mind itself is the universal theme of all spiritual approaches; [181a] and *The Tantra of the Reaches and Center of Space*, which demonstrates that mind itself is not subject to restrictions or extremes.

The foregoing are classified as “general tantras” because they demonstrate the quintessential points, in their entirety, of the definitive meaning of the teachings.

In my discussions in this chapter, I have given, briefly but in an excellent way, a definitive presentation of the key points of these vast and profound teachings.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the seventh chapter, a definitive conclusion concerning the perfection of all the teachings.

8

The Extraordinary Teachings: The Vajra Heart Essence

My detailed explanation of the spiritual approach of utter lucidity, the vajra heart essence, has two parts: a demonstration of the ways in which it is superior to the lower approaches and an explanation of this unsurpassable approach itself.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE APPROACH

According to the tantra *Heaped Jewels*:

“Not to understand the unsurpassable continuum of being,
yet to contend that one is making it one’s practice,
is like trying to follow a path that forks.”¹

In the lower spiritual approaches, having established confidence in a view based on mental examination and concepts, one thinks of enlightenment in terms of some linear time frame, with ideas such as “I will attain freedom in an eon, or in several lifetimes, or in this lifetime, or in the state after death.” Thus, because these approaches do not enable one to perceive naturally occurring timeless awareness in the present moment, they are not entirely correct. Even the three cycles of the authentic sphere of being do not enable one to perceive the reality of timeless awareness directly and instantly.² *The Turquoise Letters* states:

How marvelous, O child of spiritual heritage! [181b] Without taking this most secret, quintessential sphere of being as the authentic standard, an individual who trusts in the three ways of direct introduction—outer, inner, and secret—is like someone who believes that a sweet fruit can come from a bitter seed. . . . How marvelous, O child of spiritual heritage! Without perceiv-

ing the reality of this most secret of secrets, this quintessential sphere of being, and yet placing your trust in the four outer, inner, and secret intermediate states is like foolishly trying to rest on the clouds in the sky.

In this superior approach, the signs that one is experiencing naturally occurring timeless awareness, inwardly and instantly, are perceived through one's senses as the visions of the nature of being, the five aspects of timeless awareness. This visionary process is meditative absorption without the concepts associated with labels, words, or thoughts; it is far superior to any meditation that involves such mental constructs. There is no potential for error or misdirection. If one applies oneself with diligence, it makes no difference whether one's acumen is sharp or dull, and so, effortlessly, the natural manifestations of timeless awareness become fully evident. In this lifetime, one can actually experience the realm of supreme spontaneous presence, the three kayas. The tantra *The Secret Sound* explains:

The most sublime and consummate siddhis
are not the result of effort and striving,
and so whoever encounters this approach will certainly gain
freedom.

Therefore, the great perfection does not require that anything
be done

and does not come about through effort or anything else.

Because of this distinctive feature—the direct experience of the
true nature of phenomena—

all beings can abide as none other than buddhas,
regardless of whether their acumen is sharp or dull.

At the very least, by the blessings of the truth that is the nature of phenomena, even the simple conferral of an empowerment or a direct introduction to the true nature of mind can elevate one to a naturally occurring nirmanakaya realm. [182a] Once one has practiced on the basis of this introduction even slightly, when one passes away there will be signs that one has gained freedom in the after-death state, including earth tremors, rainbows, images on the bones in one's cremated remains, and the two kinds of relics.³ Such events occur frequently, even in current times, so people who perceive them directly can feel confident that such attainment has occurred.

Simply writing out volumes of tantras and keeping them with one is said to have remarkable benefits and advantages, unlike any others. As *Heaped Jewels* indicates:

Therefore, people who keep
this tantra of secrets with them
receive empowerment into the dynamic expression
of self-knowing awareness.

By merely keeping this tantra with one,
one becomes an emanation of Vajradhara.

Those who read this tantra
will experience the entire meaning of the view.

Anyone who writes out this text
will enjoy the speech of all buddhas.

Therefore, it should be held sacred.⁴

Moreover, the tantra *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon* explains:

Those who keep this tantra of mine with them
will attain results that benefit them in this world,
as well as the level of certain experience;⁵
they will also enjoy the richness of the three kayas.

Merely by keeping this same tantra with them,
without meditating, they will fall into a state of meditative
stability;

without studying, they will understand teachings;
without being taught, they will be familiar with spiritual
instruction;

without receiving explanations, they will naturally understand
the tantras;

and without practicing the stage of development, they will behold
deities directly.

Therefore, with respect to this and other tantras,
any extremely fortunate practitioners⁶ [182b]
who keep these with them will attain siddhis.

Emulate the deeds of buddhas!

Dredge the pit of the lower realms of rebirth from its depths,
and bring beings onto the path of supreme bliss!

Having gained confidence through familiarity with awareness's
own manifestations,

discover the fearlessness of soaring in basic space!⁷

II. AN EXPLANATION OF THE APPROACH

My explanation of the unsurpassable approach has two parts: a general discussion of the nature of this approach and a detailed explanation of its authenticity.

A. The Nature of the Approach

This discussion has five aspects: how the ground of being abides naturally, how ordinary beings experience confusion, how the way of abiding remains utterly lucid even as there is confusion, how one undertakes practice based on the way of abiding, and how the consummate fruition is ensured.

I. HOW THE GROUND OF BEING ABIDES NATURALLY

As to the primordial ground of being—naturally occurring timeless awareness itself, not subject to restrictions or extremes—its essence is empty, like space; its nature is lucid, like the sun and moon; its responsiveness is pervasive, like their light. These three aspects are essentially inseparable, abiding constantly as the nature of the three kayas and timeless awareness within basic space, which is without transition or change. This primordial ground, embodying the very heart of dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya—in that its essence is empty, its nature lucid, and its responsiveness pervasive—is not anything whatsoever that pertains to either samsara or nirvana. Yet from the standpoint of its providing an open dimension in which these can occur, it is referred to as “basic space, supremely and completely pure by its very nature.” This mode is discussed even in the sutras:

Beginningless basic space [183a]
is the context of all phenomena;
because of its presence, all beings
can attain nirvana.

Furthermore, it serves as the ground from which both samsara and nirvana emerge. A song of realization says:

Mind itself alone is the seed of everything.
Everything in conditioned existence and nirvana unfolds from it.
Homage to mind, which is like a wish-fulfilling gem
that grants the fruition of one's desires.⁵

2. HOW BEINGS EXPERIENCE CONFUSION

By failing to understand that such a ground is the way of abiding, beings fall under the influence of karma and stray into confusion in one or another of the three realms, experiencing various pleasures and pains. *The Tantra Without Letters* states:

All beings of the three realms stray from the ground of being, which is not anything at all, into every possible state of confusion.⁹

According to *The Heart Essence of Secrets*:

How marvelous! Given that there is buddha nature,
one's thoughts flow as a result of karma.¹⁰
In myriad lifetimes, one's body, experiences,
environment, and suffering
are perceived distinctly, as "I" and "mine."¹¹

3. HOW THE WAY OF ABIDING REMAINS UTTERLY LUCID

When in their confusion beings stray into the six states of existence, this confusion expresses itself as ordinary body, speech, and mind. But even though the timeless awareness expressed as enlightened form, speech, and mind is not apparent, this does not mean that it is not present. The body supports subtle channels, and those channels support subtle energies and subtle essences. The vital essence of these is "the immeasurable mansion of naturally occurring timeless awareness" at the very core of each of the four chakras, or energy centers. In the heart center—"the palace of the true nature of phenomena"—the essence of timeless awareness, naturally occurring and utterly lucid, is steadfastly present, together with a "retinue"—the vast scope of timeless awareness.¹² [183b] *The Array of Inlaid Gems* states:

Supreme and naturally occurring timeless awareness,
in the precious immeasurable mansion of the heart center . . .¹³

The first step in the formation of the physical body occurs when the causal factors from the father and mother, the white and red bindu on the relative level, unite and become inseparable from the subtle energy and mind of the being who is thus conceived. With this, two extremely tiny, clear cells form, about one-tenth the size of turnip seeds; these will be-

come the convergence of channels in the navel center. From this starting point, once the body becomes fully formed and is born, and for as long as it lasts, the subtle vajra body has three channels, four chakras, and so forth. Although this description is in agreement with those found in other systems, this approach has a distinctive feature—the subtle channels and bindu of naturally occurring timeless awareness. According to the tantra *The Blazing Lamp*:

When one's body is initially growing
 while in the womb of one's mother,
 as the vital essence of the entire body¹⁴
 there is a great convergence of channels in the navel center.
 In the three syllables in this center, moreover,
 are the vital essences of one's father and mother as cause and
 condition,
 from which the resultant cells form.
 By virtue of these two aspects of the father and mother, moreover,
 there is the merging of light and dark.¹⁵

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At the very core of the bodies of all beings
 lies the precious immeasurable mansion of the heart center,
 from which come many thousands of channels.
 In particular, there are four supreme channels:
 the supreme channel called the crystal kati,¹⁶
 the one that is like a white silken thread,
 the one that is fine and coiled, and the one that is like a crystal
 tube.

Riding on subtle energy, awareness dwells particularly
 within these four channels.¹⁷

As the epitome of the processes of occurrence, function, natural
 arising,

and visionary experience,¹⁸ [184a]
 though itself timelessly without elaboration,
 it is the noble sphere of the ground of being,
 as well as the similarly noble sphere of the path.
 It is the pinnacle of all that is noble,
 is adorned with ornaments of nobility,
 and is present within the channels.¹⁹

Let me elaborate slightly on the meaning of the foregoing lines. A triad of channels is held to be located in the center of the body, parallel to the

spinal column. The right one is the white rasana channel, the left one the red lalana channel, and the middle one the light blue central channel. At the core of the central channel is found the golden kati channel, a supreme channel of completely unchanging utter lucidity. The white vital essence moves within the right channel of the triad, the red vital essence within the left channel, and the subtle energy within the central channel; these give rise to experiences of nonconceptual awareness. Three aspects of subtle energy—masculine, feminine, and neutral—flow naturally within all three channels, but because the nonconceptual neutral energy flows only slightly within the rasana and lalana channels, it is said simply that “subtle energy flows within the central channel.”²⁰ When the essences and energies enter the central channel, one experiences three states—those of bliss, clarity, and nonconceptual awareness—and three degrees of utter lucidity.²¹ When they are gathered into the channels of light, there is what is called “the experience of the inconceivable degree of utter lucidity.”²² This key point is one of great, secret significance and is a topic that is difficult to fully comprehend.²³

At the core of the central channel, within the channel of utter lucidity, abides a bindu of light—the spontaneously present ground of being. As for the four chakras, in the crown of the head is the chakra of supreme bliss, with thirty-two channels radiating out from the central channel. [184b] In the throat is the chakra of perfect enjoyment, with sixteen channels radiating out. In the heart region is the chakra of the true nature of phenomena, with eight channels radiating out. In the navel region is the chakra of emanation, with sixty-four channels radiating out. Through all the channels of these chakras flows the white vital essence, spreading from the rasana channel; the red vital essence and “blood,” spreading from the lalana channel; and subtle energy, spreading from the central channel. In the centers of the four chakras, as expressions of utter lucidity, abide spheres and rays of light within the fine channels of light. There are seventy-two thousand fine branch channels, as *The Hevajra Tantra* indicates:

It is explained that the channels
number seventy-two thousand.

Furthermore, because utter lucidity abides within them, the four supreme channels are unique. Of these four, the supreme golden kati channel is at the core of the central channel and, more specifically, connects

with the core of the heart center, where it abides permeated by the bindu of the wholly positive ground of being. Among the channels of light, that termed “channel like a white silken thread” is directed upward toward the cranial aperture.²⁴ It is permeated by the bindu that leads one along the path to the unborn nature of phenomena; it allows one to experience, and supports, the kaya of nonconceptual awareness; and it is the pathway for training in the transference of one’s consciousness at death, because it extends above the nine orifices. The fine, coiled channel serves as the support for utter lucidity at the core of each of the four chakras, where bindu as “the pinnacle of everything noble” abides, radiating five colors of light in the form of rays and tiny spheres. The channel that is like a crystal tube connects the heart center with the eyes; it is permeated by the bindu adorned with goodness [185a] and functions as the support for the arising of countless visions of the vajra continuum. Furthermore, at the core of the heart center, a radiantly clear channel of light is supported by the most subtle vital essence, and from that manifests a fine channel radiating light in all directions.²⁵ This is described as “the channel permeated by buddha nature.”

Awareness—in essence, empty; by nature, abiding as the five colors of light; and as responsiveness, pervasive as rays of light—is present as the supreme source of the kayas and timeless awareness. However, the aspect of its essence as empty dharmakaya, the pure perspective that is timeless awareness, is obscured by the basis of all ordinary experience and the eight avenues of consciousness. Its nature, lucidity as the five colors of light, is obscured by the presence of a solid flesh-and-blood body. Its responsiveness, abiding as that which allows one to experience rays of light and awareness, is obscured by karma and habit patterns. Although that awareness is present in such a way that it is extremely difficult to perceive, this does not mean that it is not present; rather, it is all-pervasive, present in every being with each individual’s body as a support. *The Two Sections* states:

Supreme timeless awareness abides in the body.

According to a song of realization:

We do not realize that timeless awareness is present in the body.

Moreover, *The Highest Continuum* explains:

Because the kaya of perfect buddhahood is pervasive,
because the state of suchness is indivisible,

and because all beings possess spiritual potential, beings are forever endowed with buddha nature.²⁶

This awareness—buddha nature—is enmeshed in the physical body, and so the term “an embodied being” is used; [185b] it is enmeshed in the net of ordinary mind—the eight avenues of consciousness—and so the term “an ordinary being” is used; it is overlaid with karma and habit patterns, and so the term “an obscured being” is used; it is obscured by what is by nature a state of nonrecognition, and so the term “a benighted being” is used. These and similar terms describe someone in a conditioned state of existence. Topics that are elusive in lower levels of the secret mantra teachings are brought to the fore and taught in this approach. Thus, primordial basic space as naturally occurring timeless awareness—buddha nature—completely permeates the body.

4. HOW ONE UNDERTAKES THE PRACTICE OF THE WAY OF ABIDING

How one undertakes spiritual practice is based on the way of abiding. Even though the above-mentioned awareness—the ground of being—is present within one at the outset, without the circumstance of guidance by a holy guru’s instructions, one will not become free, so it is necessary to receive such guidance.

a. Empowerment

The first step entails the conferral of the four stages of empowerment, as the maturing factor that serves as the basis for the path. The tantra *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

The elaborate, the unelaborate,
the extremely unelaborate, and the utterly unelaborate:
fortunate people are brought to maturity
by these four stages of empowerment.²⁷

Through the outer, elaborate vase empowerment, obscurations affecting one’s body are refined away, one’s potential for enlightened form is activated, and one is empowered to practice the stage of development. Next, through the inner, unelaborate secret empowerment, obscurations affecting one’s speech are refined away, one’s potential for enlightened speech is activated, and one is empowered to practice the stage of com-

pletion (specifically chandali, or inner heat) and the repetition of mantras, the so-called mandalas of syllables. Then, through the extremely unelaborate empowerment of sublime knowing and timeless awareness, the obscurations affecting one's mind are refined away, one's potential for enlightened mind is activated, [186a] and one is empowered to cultivate the supremely blissful state of primordial unity and to realize original purity—timeless awareness as the true nature of phenomena. Finally, through the utterly unelaborate, precious word empowerment, obscurations—which by nature constitute delusion regarding the knowable—are refined away in their entirety, one's potential for the naturally occurring state of utter lucidity is activated, and one is empowered to practice so as to directly experience the reality of spontaneous presence.

It is necessary to thus receive these empowerments in their entirety. *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart* explains:

Without one's having received the empowerments of secret mantra, even though one practices, no accomplishment will occur; to use an analogy, one will be like a boatman without oars.²⁸

According to *The Heart Essence of Secrets*:

If one has not delighted the teacher
and then received the complete conferral of the empowerments,
things like studying the teachings
will not lead to the fruition, only ruination.²⁹

Furthermore, as the tantra *Original Sacredness* indicates:

Without the conferral of empowerment, to explain the tantras
or to practice the meditation of profound suchness,
even though one well understands the significance of these,
will lead to hell. There will be no freedom.

Moreover, the explanatory tantra *The Vajra Garland* comments:

Without the conferral of empowerment, both the teacher who
explains the tantras
and the student who practices,
even though the significance of the mantra approach is
understood,
will fall into the Hell of Great Lamenting.

If one receives the empowerments in their entirety, all that one wishes for in the short term will be accomplished, and when one implements the

practices of the path, the channels of light will be purified [186b] and one will experience distinctive states of meditative absorption. Because one will have become a child of all the buddhas, one will carry on the family line of the victorious ones. One will live a long life, endowed with the enjoyment of wealth and with power and influence. All lower states of rebirth will cease to be possibilities, and one will taste the great happiness and splendor of higher states of existence. Eventually, one will fully experience the enlightened state of buddhahood. The same source states:

If the empowerments of the five heart essences are conferred,³⁰
 from that point onward, one is a child of the victorious ones;
 all lower states cease to be possibilities,
 and one will enjoy long life and abundant happiness.
 One will become a master of higher realms and of liberation.

b. Cultivating the Path

With the empowerments thus completed, one begins the meditation that is the path, the liberating factor. Although the teachings of ordinary paths speak primarily of cultivating the stages of development and completion, these are dispensed with here, for they do not go beyond meditation that involves conceptual speculation. This extraordinary path goes beyond all mental constructs and conceptualization, and brings about the direct perception of utterly lucid timeless awareness.

To elaborate, the ordinary preliminary practices give people confidence in the lower approaches and provide a stepping stone to more advanced levels of practice. Then, once practitioners have completed the extraordinary preliminary practices (including the stage of allowing their minds to settle into the genuine state), they are introduced to the main practices. Finally, once these practices and the ways in which they are implemented have been completely explained, these fortunate people meditate in extremely isolated locations, such as charnel grounds, empty valleys, or islands. [187a] As they experience the four visions in succession, all that they perceive as solid is freed within the state of utter lucidity, and buddhahood becomes fully evident as the pinnacle pure realm of awareness's own manifestations. In the best cases, this takes place in three years; in intermediate cases, five years; and in inferior cases, seven years.

In addition, with respect to awareness thus directly perceiving utter lucidity moment by moment, three points are to be considered: the way in which the basis of all ordinary experience and the three aspects of sam-

saric mind are undermined, the way in which enlightened intent is complete in the essence of timeless awareness, and the way in which the heart essence of the lower approaches is subsumed within the higher one.

i. Undermining Samsaric Mind

With authentic meditative absorption that transcends mundane experience—the unique, decisive stage that inaugurates the path to liberation—the states of mind associated with the three realms, along with the basis of all ordinary experience, are undermined. *The Supreme Amassing of the Rare and Sublime: Categories of Dharma* states:

O Shantimati, the secret principle of the enlightened mind of the rathagatas is that of freedom from ordinary mind, or conceptual mind, or ordinary consciousness. Yet this does not exclude the possibility of meditative absorption, for such is the inconceivable secret of the enlightened mind of the rathagatas.

In other words, one directly experiences meditative absorption that involves neither ordinary mind (the support that is consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience), nor the afflictive aspect of consciousness, nor consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty, nor the five sense consciousnesses. Rather, because the view is one of direct perception, there is no proliferation or resolution of all-absorbing thought patterns, and so the mind that would bring about rebirth in the realm of desire is undermined. Because one rests in the lucidity of awareness, no antidote is used to cause one to experience its clarity, and so the mind that would bring about rebirth in the realm of form is undermined. [187b] Because one rests with nonconceptual, one-pointed focus, there is no attitude of fixation within the context of the true nature of phenomena, and so the mind that would bring about rebirth in the realm of formlessness is undermined. Thus, states of mind associated with the three realms thoroughly subside.

The basis of all ordinary experience is nonconceptual, nondifferentiating, and karmically neutral, but because the above-mentioned meditative absorption constitutes innate awareness, this basis is undermined. Consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience is the aspect of simple lucidity that abides without differentiation but goes unrecognized as the essence of self-knowing awareness. However, while one is in this

absorption, one has a decisive experience of naturally occurring timeless awareness, and so consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience is undermined, for it is quite unlike pristine lucidity free of elaboration. The five sense consciousnesses clearly perceive their respective objects. However, while one is in this absorption, one perceives visual images as the visionary field of utter lucidity, and so the visual consciousness that fixates on ordinary forms is undermined. Similarly, consciousness does not extend out to and fixate on sounds and other sense objects, and so auditory consciousness and the other sense consciousnesses are undermined. At that point, there is no conceptualization, analysis, or emotional reaction whatsoever, and so consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty and the afflictive aspect of consciousness are undermined. There is complete freedom from the basis of all ordinary experience, together with the eight avenues of consciousness—that is, the states of mind associated with the three realms. Given that this freedom is none other than the peace that is the timeless awareness of buddhahood, it is the culmination of the path.

In lower systems of the secret mantra approach, the entrance of motile energy and mind from the *rasana* and *lalana* channels into the central channel initiates an experience of timeless awareness that is blissful, lucid, and nonconceptual. Although this awareness is held to be innate, the process in itself does not undermine the basis of all ordinary experience and the eight avenues of consciousness. The sensation of bliss is the nonconceptual basis of all ordinary experience (within which the coordinating mental faculty and the afflictive aspect of consciousness have not differentiated). The slight degree of simple pristine lucidity that is experienced is consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience. [188a] The manifestation of visual forms, sounds, and so forth—the five obvious kinds of sense objects—to their respective sense faculties and consciousnesses constitutes the five sense consciousnesses. If all of the foregoing are not undermined, one is not free of *samsara*, because one is not yet free of *samsaric* mind. This method of practice is no different from the process described in a source of the *Samkhya* school:

Impulse, density, and lightness
merge in equal measure at the core of the three chakras,
and so there is a lucid nonconceptual state.
Primal matter and soul become one nature;
herein lies ultimate reality,

truly reflected in the fundamental structure of the body.³¹

The movement of motile energy subsides within the central channel;

the experience is one of lucidity, nonreferential and unwavering.

This is the called "soul," suchness as a state of freedom.

It cannot be destroyed or overcome, but is eternal.

Such methods do not bring about freedom, only a particular state of meditative stability, a state of mind that brings about rebirth in the realm of formlessness. According to these lower tantric systems, the joy arising from the channels, subtle energies, and bindu "blending as one taste" is what is meant by the experience of genuine being. It is held that the motile energies and essences enter the central channel from the rasana and lalana channels and so release blockages in the central channel, with the release of each blockage leading to the experience of a corresponding quality of enlightenment. But such methods give rise to many impediments and perceptions based on confusion, because the motile energies associated with the six classes of beings enter the corresponding radiating channels. The key point, then, is that there are numerous situations in which one might go astray.

In the approach of the vajra heart essence, the subtle energies settle into a natural state of quiescence, and so need not be made to enter the central channel. When the subtle energies in the individual radiating channels have naturally become pure, the subtle energy of timeless awareness in the channels of light is inherently lucid and in its natural state. [188b] One perceives the pure visions of timeless awareness, consisting of enlightened forms, light, pure realms, and so forth, rather than manifestations of confusion. It is posited that there is "freedom" once the power of the channel of light within the central channel has increased, gradually causing the blockages in the latter channel to dissolve into light. The qualities of enlightenment associated with the spiritual levels are experienced as awareness's own manifestations.

With the first two blockages in the channel being freed into light, one experiences some twelve hundred pure buddha realms within a field of light that is perceived externally.³² One is able to send forth rays of light to these realms and "reach" them by embracing them as awareness's own manifestations. If one moves one's body, one hundred pure realms quake and become vivid. Inwardly one can, for example, enter and come out of one hundred nonconceptual states of meditative absorption in which

one experiences the true nature of phenomena.³³ For these reasons, this approach is remarkably superior to the lower ones. In fact, these other approaches seem to have a serious limitation, for if one practices with samsaric mind, the result will still be samsaric mind, because of the ineluctable connection between cause and result.³⁴

In the highest approach, the key point is as follows: While on the path, one is free of samsaric mind, and so one swiftly attains the fruition in one's immediate circumstances. Nowadays, those who assert that buddhahood comes from ordinary mind misunderstand this key point; theirs is not a valid description of the path, for there is a substantial discrepancy between timeless awareness and ordinary mind. The tantra *Summarizing the Definitive Meaning* states:

Listen, then, to this quintessential summation.

In the very heart of naturally occurring dharmakaya,
the eight avenues of consciousness are absent, so there is freedom
from ordinary mind.

So long as ordinary mind fixates on things in all their variety, [189a]
there is what we call "my mind."

Ordinary mind is the root of flaws,
and so one does not awaken to buddhahood through ordinary
mind.

.

Ordinary mind is the root of samsara.

Given that sense objects manifest in all their variety,
ordinary mind fixates on concepts in all their variety.
Therefore, ordinary mind is the cause of samsara.

.

All fools who do not perceive the definitive meaning
claim that phenomena are nothing other than mind.
How mistaken, therefore, are their bewildered minds!
Foolish meditators are ruined by meditating in a benighted state.
Turn away from this "teaching" on what ordinary mind thinks
about!

.

All who are deluded by their failure to recognize awareness
claim that dharmakaya itself is ordinary mind.
Therefore, they do not understand what is meant by the words.
Rare are those who know the definitive meaning rather than just
the terms.

Thus, enlightenment will not come about through ordinary mind.
 To hold that buddhahood comes from ordinary mind
 is like befriending a barren woman's child.

To claim that sensory appearances are mind
 is like taking brass to be gold.

When one awakens from nonrecognition, one is rid of ordinary
 mind.

Therefore, unchanging dharmakaya is free of reification;
 it is not ordinary mind, but rather the kaya of timeless awareness.

The expanse of enlightenment, never separate from that reality,
 abides as ongoing meditative absorption free of ordinary mind.

And so the secret instruction particular to this approach is to distinguish between timeless awareness and ordinary mind, and then remain within the enlightened intent of naturally lucid timeless awareness, just as it is. That is, ordinary mind expresses itself as dualistic conceptualization and analysis of the objects it perceives; it abides as the basis for the states of mind associated with the three realms. [189b] It is what gives rise to the distortions associated with nine levels (these nine are states of conceptualization and analysis, meditative stability, and formlessness).³⁵ Timeless awareness is awareness free of elaboration, which in essence is beyond these levels. Awareness abides as the aspect that is aware under any and all circumstances, and so occurs naturally, without transition or change. For this reason, it should be understood to be ultimately abiding suchness.

ii. The Completeness of Enlightened Intent

As for the way in which enlightened intent is complete in the essence of timeless awareness, there are several considerations. When, having applied the key points of practice, one has the view that is the direct perception of reality, in that instant timeless awareness arises inwardly; it is pristine, hence unwavering and free of the proliferation and resolution of thoughts. This is *trekchö*, or reaching dharmakaya in the immediacy of one's own true nature. The skillful means that bring about the seemingly external manifestation of the visions of utter lucidity is *tögal* (one's nature experienced as a state of spontaneous presence), in which the path is based on *rupakaya*. In this way, the "external" visions are experienced as the skillful means of the development stage. As a result of this key point, the completion stage (one's inner experience of unborn lucidity, in which all elaborations subside) becomes fully evident as sublime knowing, free

of restrictions or limitations. In a single instant of cultivating trekchö and tögal, all is complete—skillful means and sublime knowing, the stages of development and completion, dharmakaya and rupakaya, appearances and emptiness, as well as the development of merit and the experience of timeless awareness.

At that point, the five kayas, as well as the aspects of timeless awareness, are also complete. There is dharmakaya, in that there is a one-pointed state free of elaboration; sambhogakaya, in that there is natural lucidity without reification; nirmanakaya, in that things arise as sense objects in all their variety; bodhikaya, in that the eight avenues of consciousness have been undermined; [190a] and vajrakaya, in that there is no transition or change in basic space.

Of the five aspects of timeless awareness, there is timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena, in that there is freedom from the elaborations of any conceptual framework; mirror-like timeless awareness, lucidity that is unobscured; timeless awareness as equalness, abiding in the context of “equal taste”; all-discerning timeless awareness, the distinct manifestation of the five colors of light; and timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment, in that there is freedom from the dualistic framework of perceived objects and a perceiving subject. Each of these aspects of timeless awareness also abides as the respective nature of each of the five dakinis.

Thus, the enlightened intent of buddhahood—the reality of the kayas and timeless awareness as a unity beyond union and separation—is complete in a single instant.

iii. How the Lower Approaches Are Subsumed Within the Higher

As for the way in which the heart essence of the lower approaches is subsumed within the higher approach, there are several considerations. When one is abiding in any moment of utter lucidity, the enlightened intent underlying the views of the three approaches of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva is subsumed within that moment, because there is no perception in terms of personal identity or phenomena having identity. The flawless levels of timeless awareness associated with the three classes of kriya, upa, and yoga (all concerned with engaging in ritual purity) are subsumed within that moment because one’s body, speech,

and mind are experienced without the distortions of afflictive states. The enlightened intent underlying the three classes of maha, anu, and ati is subsumed within that moment because a special kind of meditative absorption becomes evident—that is, realization that integrates three factors: sensory appearances, awareness, and their nonduality.

Similarly, the power of recollection, states of meditative absorption, and the spiritual paths and levels, which are classified as experiences that result when one abides in the recognition of timeless awareness, free of distortion, are also subsumed within that moment. Given that qualities of enlightenment—meditative absorption and realization as practiced in the lower approaches—are subsumed within this approach, and given that flaws are absent, [190b] it is termed “the unadulterated approach of absolute perfection.”

When one is practicing on such a path, it is necessary to observe all of the primary and secondary samayas (which are subsumed within the principles of enlightened form, speech, and mind) just as they are described. If one does not observe them, one will develop many faults, the inevitable consequences of which are weighty, and one will linger for a long time in lower states of rebirth. The tantra *The Vajra Heart Essence, the Incorruptible Source*, states:

For perverse people who impair their samaya,
many unwanted results accrue
and all that they try to accomplish is undermined.
They linger for a long time in fire and darkness.

If these samayas are well observed, the benefits and advantages are immeasurable. *The Heart Essence of Secrets* states:

Those who uphold the sublime family of the victorious ones
are honored by the leaders of the world and their retinues.
O holy ones and sublime holy ones,
consider them to be your children or siblings, and grant them
your blessings!
They enter the very realm of the sugatas
and merge with the imperishable Samantabhadra.³⁶

5. HOW THE CONSUMMATE FRUITION IS ENSURED

The consummate fruition is ensured in the following way: Once the path of the four visions is completed, if one sees that benefit for others can

be accomplished through one's present embodiment, one continues to manifest in this form through the intention that it endure for as long as conditioned existence endures. By manifesting in this enlightened form of supreme transference, which abides like the reflection of the moon in water—having an apparent form but no coarse physicality—one ensures benefit for beings.³⁷ As is the case with the great masters Vimalamitra and Padmakara, one can demonstrate an inconceivable array of miraculous powers and categories of teachings at any given moment. [191a]

If, however, one sees that a great deal of benefit for others cannot be accomplished through one's present embodiment, one instead attains freedom in the utter lucidity of being. Within that state of freedom, the kayas and timeless awareness are spontaneously ensured on the level of primordial basic space. Even as their totality abides as the state of Samantabhadra within the pure realm of dharmakaya, within that wholly positive state there emerges the natural manifestation of sambhogakaya within Ghanavyuha, the spontaneously present sambhogakaya pure realm. The blessings of that manifestation bring about the further manifestation of the buddhas of the five families in pure realms, where benefit is ensured for bodhisattvas on the higher spiritual levels. In the realms of the six classes of beings, the respective teachers of those realms manifest in the form of sublime nirmanakaya emanations, emanations who benefit through artistry, emanations who consciously take rebirth, and so on, ensuring benefit. For as long as conditioned existence endures, uninterrupted enlightened activity takes place in keeping with each individual's perceptions. As has already been discussed, the timeless awareness of these buddhas is in full evidence and so is ever-present, with no break in its continuity.

The authority for this five-part discussion—the foregoing presentation from the primordial, universal ground of being up to and including the fruition—is the tantra *The Pearl Garland*:

Although the way of abiding is inconceivable,
timeless awareness has three aspects.

Although much is said about the specific expressions of the
ground from which confusion arises,

basically it is spontaneously present and responsive.

The kayas, awareness, and timeless awareness abide naturally.³⁸

The abiding presence is enlightened mind, at the core of the heart center.

The path is that of the four channels; the kinetic factor is subtle energy.

The factor allowing the visions to arise is that of the avenues, the eyes, and so forth.

The objective field consists of space free of sullyng conditions.

The practical application is that of trekchö and tögal. [191b]

The measure of success is the yoga that produces four kinds of confidence.

The after-death state is the uniting of mother and child.

The level of freedom itself is at the beginning.³⁹

Any reference to this level of original freedom describes nothing more than one's naturally occurring timeless awareness at the consummate point at which it is free of obscurations. One should appreciate the fact that when obscurations are involved, this level of original freedom is called "one's fundamental being"—that is, the state of suchness in which distortions are involved; but once refinement has taken place through the path, the situation is such that enlightenment—undistorted suchness—has come about.

Therefore, the description of the fruition as "freedom in the immediacy of the ground of being" is meant to refer to the nature of basic space, beyond transition or change. It is impossible to actually become free in that immediacy, because it is impossible for the ground of being to ever have become distorted. If that were possible, it could also become a state of confusion, since the basis of confusion functions in the immediacy of the ground of being.

Therefore, basic space—naturally occurring timeless awareness—is referred to as the ground when distortions are involved, as the path when they are being refined away, and as the fruition when all of these limitless distortions have been removed. It is extremely important to distinguish between the terms "the ground of being" and "the level of freedom." These days, however, such precise analyses are few.⁴⁰

B. The Authenticity of the Approach

My detailed explanation of the authenticity of this approach has two parts: the authenticity of the extensive approach of tantra and the authenticity of the most profound approach of pith instructions.

I. THE EXTENSIVE APPROACH OF TANTRA

My treatment of the authenticity of this first approach has two aspects: the essence of tantra and a detailed analysis.

a. The Essence of Tantra

“Tantra” is the sum total of the phases of ground, path, and fruition, as well as the discussions thereof and anything auxiliary to them. “Tantra as the ground” is naturally occurring timeless awareness, [192a] spontaneously present, without transition or change. “Tantra as the path” is the developmental process of gaining realization and meditative absorption through empowerments and spiritual instruction. “Tantra as realization” pertains to the qualities associated with awareness—view, meditative absorption, and so forth—from the beginning level of abiding in the direct perception of the true nature of phenomena, up to the point where freedom is gained within utterly lucid basic space. “Explanatory scripture” refers to the expression of syllables, words, and phrases—collected into volumes of texts—that present skillful means for engaging in spiritual practice according to the classes of tantra.

b. A Detailed Analysis

My detailed analysis is twofold. *The Pearl Garland* states:

How marvelous! Listen, O vajra holder!
I shall explain suchness in detail.
There is tantra as ultimate reality and tantra as scripture.⁴¹

Tantra as ultimate reality is the ground of being, the presence of awareness as the all-pervasive way of abiding. Tantra as scripture is the presentation, in distinct categories, of the skillful means for demonstrating this ground and engaging in spiritual practice, together with anything auxiliary to this.

i. Tantra as Ultimate Reality

An analysis of tantra as ultimate reality shows that it has two aspects: tantra as skillful means and tantra as the nature of being. The same source states:

As for what secret tantra as skillful means
and the nature of being are like, . . .⁴²

(a) TANTRA AS SKILLFUL MEANS

Tantra as skillful means entails a demonstration of reality as basic space. If we analyze this, we find that there is tantra as skillful means constituting what is demonstrated and tantra as skillful means constituting the demonstration. The same source explains:

The distinctions made concerning the essence of the single
ground of being
are what is demonstrated and the demonstration thereof.⁴³

“What is demonstrated” is the general content of what is actually under discussion, whereas “the demonstration” is the analysis of how this is what it is; [192b] these are ways of talking about reality and its conventional designations. Self-knowing awareness—supreme, all-pervasive, and utterly lucid—is tantra as what is demonstrated. According to the same source:

Tantra as what is demonstrated is unique and all-pervasive,
with everything ensuing from it.⁴⁴

How is it pervasive? It is pervasive in such a way that it is the inseparability of empty basic space, the originally pure nature of phenomena, and manifest timeless awareness, supreme spontaneous presence. The same source states:

Its pervasiveness has two aspects:
it is pervasive as emptiness and pervasive as lucidity.⁴⁵

The demonstration functions as the skillful means for bringing about the realization of suchness. The skillful means being referred to are trekchö (which entails supreme, timeless freedom) and tögal (which entails awareness’s own manifestations of five colors of light, as well as the “lamps,” all timelessly present as natural attributes of reality).⁴⁶ *The Pearl Garland* discusses these in the section that begins:

“Skillful means” also involve distinctions.
I will explain what the stages are
according to the particular minds of individuals.
There is natural freedom, which does not involve effort,
and practical implementation, which does . . .⁴⁷

and continues through the following:

Thus, tantra as skillful means constituting the demonstration is perfect in one's ongoing experience, without having to be created.

In that it demonstrates, it is "skillful means";
in that it abides continually, it is "tantra."⁴⁸

Furthermore, these skillful means are timelessly present as natural attributes of reality, neither uniting with nor separating from it. Thus, other than Vajradhara simply seeing what is present as being present, and speaking explicitly of it, there is no discussion of what is not present in awareness as the fundamentally unconditioned nature of being. The skillful means by which one rests imperturbably and effortlessly in awareness is trekchö, timeless freedom; the utterly lucid, natural manifestations of that awareness are experienced as one maintains the practice of tögal. [193a] Through familiarization with these, one abides in the certainty of this freedom, which is timelessly the case but simply becomes evident at this point.

The essence of what is demonstrated by the foregoing discussion is pervasive as the unity of basic space and awareness, beyond union and separation; this accounts for the explanation of the term "tantra" in the following statement:

In that it is pervasive, it is called "tantra."⁴⁹

If we analyze tantra as skillful means, we find that it has two aspects: emptiness and lucidity.

In essence, the skillful means that demonstrate reality as basic space abide as the means that bring about realization, as referred to in the same source:

As for what brings about the actual realization of these aspects, it is "skillful means," which are also pervasive.⁵⁰

As for the derivation of the term "skillful means," as was previously indicated:

In that it demonstrates, it is "skillful means."⁵¹

If we analyze tantra as skillful means in another way, we find that there are two approaches: tögal, which involves effort, and trekchö, which is effortless. As noted earlier in the same source:

There is natural freedom, which does not involve effort, and practical implementation, which does.⁵²

(b) TANTRA AS THE NATURE OF BEING

Tantra as the nature of being is essentially the nature of awareness, along with the “lamps” that are its natural radiance. The same source states:

A thorough analysis of the heart essence of tantra shows that it is endowed with the nature of the tathagatas. It cannot be known to be anything whatsoever, neither samsara nor nirvana. It is endowed with an indestructible vajra nature. The nature of the unique ground that illustrates tantra as the nature of being is identical to emptiness. This is the mother who gives birth to perfect buddhas.⁵³

If we analyze tantra as the nature of being, we find that it has three aspects: tantra as ground, tantra as the heart essence of being, and tantra as quintessence. According to the same source:

Tantra as the nature of being is as follows: ground, the heart essence of being, and quintessence.⁵⁴ [193b]

(i) *Tantra as Ground*

The essence of tantra as ground is naturally occurring timeless awareness. This is the original heart essence of utter lucidity, which is variously termed “primordial protector,” “imperturbable light,” “completely pure basic space,” “illuminator,” and “unchanging light.” It is timeless awareness, which is empty, lucid, and free of elaboration. To analyze it, we must consider three aspects: essence, nature, and responsiveness. The same source explains:

The ground is essence, nature, and responsiveness experienced as all-pervasive.⁵⁵

(ii) *Tantra as the Heart Essence of Being*

The essence of tantra as the heart essence of being is utter lucidity associated with the heart center, as well as the outwardly manifest radiance of that lucidity. As we read in the same source:

Tantra is the perfect nature that is the heart essence of being.
All sensory appearances are tantra,
in that everything comes about in connection with everything
else.

Within the natural mandala of the heart center,
the supreme heart of being is perfect without having to be created.
Therefore, it is the distilled heart of being.
It is specifically explained to be “tantra as the heart essence
of being”
because it serves as the life force of everything.⁵⁶

If we analyze tantra as the heart essence of being, we find that it has two aspects: the inner heart essence—timeless awareness—and the outer heart essence—its radiance as light.

(iii) *Tantra as Quintessence*

One perceives the essence of tantra as quintessence by coming into contact with reality as the heart essence of being. *The Pearl Garland* states:

It is called “quintessence” because it is the distilled heart of being,
elicited as the entire essence
of all buddhas united as one.
It is the distilled quintessence of awareness, empty yet lucid.⁵⁷

If we analyze tantra as quintessence, we find that it has three aspects: quintessence as the ground (which is manifest as the kayas), quintessence as the heart essence of being (which is lucid as timeless awareness), and “the quintessence of the flowers” (which arises in one’s experience as the four “lamps”).⁵⁸ According to the same source:

The supreme blissful secret of all buddhas [194a]
entails the ground, the heart essence of being, and the flowers.
Such is the very essence of those with self-knowing awareness.⁵⁹

To summarize succinctly, because this threefold nature of the quintessence demonstrates the aspect of freedom completely and without error, it is superior to everything. *The Heart Essence of the Golden Flower* states:

Having been distilled, the quintessence of all buddhas
infuses the hearts of all beings.
The heart essence of being is the continuum.
Because the vital essence of being is distilled, it is called
“quintessence.”

In addition, the tantra *Meaningful Diligence* explains:

The innermost quintessence of all the teachings
is called “the path of directly perceiving the true nature of
phenomena.”

According to the tantra *The Vajra Equal to Space*:

The ground, the heart essence of being, and the flowers:
tantra as the nature of buddhas
is distilled as the quintessence of the unique, sublime secret.
This is like a champion archer letting fly an arrow
to the far shore beyond samsara.

Thus, the foregoing aspects of tantra as the nature of being abide as the nature of the three aspects of ground, path, and fruition. *The Pearl Garland* states:

There is tantra as the nature of being,
which is ascertained to be ground, path, and fruition.⁶¹

These three aspects can also be referred to as awareness (tantra as ground), the four visions (tantra as path), and quintessence (tantra as fruition).

(c) TERMINOLOGY

Furthermore, there are what are termed “the three aspects of the vital essence.” The heart essence of being, one’s experience of timeless awareness, abides as three aspects: essence, nature, and responsiveness.

There are what are termed “the three aspects of lucidity.” Awareness is lucid as the kayas, basic space is lucid as colors, [194b] and the unity of basic space and awareness is lucid as space.

“The three kinds of confidence” are as follows: Given that the view, naturally occurring timeless awareness, is one of timeless freedom, there is the confidence that exertion is not necessary. Given that awareness’s own manifestations are the objects of timeless awareness, clearly apparent as the kayas and timeless awareness, there is the confidence that pure realms of experience need not be achieved elsewhere. And given that there is freedom from hope and fear, from acceptance and rejection, with respect to nirvana and samsara, there is the confidence based on having decided that buddhahood is not something to be achieved elsewhere.

With these kinds of confidence come “the three things that are never relinquished”: Given that awareness is never relinquished, it matures into the kayas. Given that the visions are never relinquished, there is freedom in utter lucidity. And given that realization is never relinquished, there is awakening to buddhahood as timeless awareness.

In these cases, the basis of what is purified and what brings about the purification can be subsumed under “the three kinds of perception” and “the three absences.” The three kinds of perception are perception based on confusion, pure perception, and perception of illusory manifestations in the after-death state. The first is the perception generally experienced at present by ordinary beings. If one trains in the four visions, this first kind of perception is transformed into pure perception. Even if one does not train, the manifestations of the utterly lucid ground of being arise in the after-death state.

The three absences refer to situations that occur during the unfolding of the four visions, when distortions are being refined away. Initially, because one turns away from what is counterproductive to one’s spiritual development, one’s three faculties of body, speech, and mind are freed from confusion, and so confusion is absent. Then the distortion of fixating on what is conducive to one’s spiritual development is absent, and the five kinds of subtle energy are purified in basic space. Then because one’s perception, outward and inward, is free as a state of utter lucidity, the coarse and subtle elements that condition that perception are absent.

The Pearl Garland describes these points:

Moreover, the nature of tantra as quintessence is as follows: [195a]

In that it subsumes the heart essence of being, there are the three aspects of the vital essence.

The three aspects of lucidity are permeated by cognizance.

With the three kinds of confidence and the three things that are never relinquished,

one gains certainty of the unchanging quintessence.

There are three kinds of perception and three absences.

The quintessence, because of its pure nature,
is definitively understood to be tantra.⁶¹

Thus, a great deal of explanation is devoted to tantra as skillful means, tantra as the nature of being, and their respective classifications. My analysis, however, consists of examining the essence of the single state of naturally occurring timeless awareness and distinguishing its specific

aspects, although those aspects are never ultimately separate. From the perspective of what one's fundamentally unconditioned nature actually is, we speak of "tantra as the nature of being," "tantra as the ultimate reality to be demonstrated," and "tantra as the ground of being." From the standpoint of what these aspects of tantra actually are—that is, timelessly abiding aspects of naturally occurring timeless awareness—we use such labels as "tantra as skillful means," "tantra as demonstration," and "tantra as quintessence." But this is like many names being applied to a single person; although they are many, they do not have more than one meaning. The same source states:

There is tantra as the nature of being,
 which is ascertained to be ground, path, and fruition.
 Therefore, what is called "tantra" is ensured through their
 connection.

Given that it is ensured in an utterly natural way,
 there is the term "tantra as the nature of being."
 Because the ground of being has specific aspects,
 there are the terms "tantra as skillful means" and "tantra as the
 nature of being,"
 but these function simply as labels,
 for in essence there is the single ground of being, whose nature is
 emptiness.

It is not a divided state, but unchanging.
 To give an analogy, it is like a single person
 with many names; [195b]
 whichever one you use will seem appropriate.
 Such is the case with unchanging ultimate reality.⁶²

ii. Tantra as Scripture

Eight points pertain to tantra as scripture: its essence, analysis, classification, order of presentation, specific significance, purpose, method of exposition, and authoritative texts, both primary and secondary (which are listed).

(a) ESSENCE

The essence of tantra as scripture lies in freeing an individual's mind through an array of words and their associated meaning. The term "tan-

tra as scripture” denotes the fact that these texts provide clarification through discussions expressed in syllables, words, and phrases.

(b) ANALYSIS

My analysis includes eighteen texts: The tantra likened to the ocean is *Naturally Arising Awareness*. The tantra likened to the sun is *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart*. The tantra likened to a lion is *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion*. The tantra likened to the most majestic mountain is *The Tantra Without Letters*. The tantra likened to a wheel is *The Beauty of Auspiciousness*. The tantra likened to a key is *The Reverberation of Sound*. The tantra likened to a sword is *Samantabhadra: The Mirror of Enlightened Mind*. The tantra likened to a lance is *The Blazing Lamp*. The tantra likened to refined gold is *The Array of Inlaid Gems*. The tantra likened to the connection between a mother and child is *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon*. The tantra likened to a mirror is *Adornment Through Direct Introduction*. The tantra likened to an elegant string of pearls is *The Pearl Garland*. The tantra likened to a snake freeing itself after tying itself into a knot is *The Natural Freedom of Awareness*. The tantra likened to a great garuda is *The Six Expanses*. The tantra likened to a river is *Naturally Occurring Perfection*. The tantra likened to a razor is *The Wrathful Black Goddess*. The tantra likened to a monarch is *Blazing Remains*. And the tantra likened to a treasure house is *Heaped Jewels*. These are referred to in *The Pearl Garland*:

The ocean, the sun, [196a]
 a lion, the most majestic mountain,
 a wheel, a key,
 a sword, a lance,
 refined gold, the connection between a mother and child,
 a mirror, a string of pearls,
 a snake freeing itself from a knot, a great garuda,
 a flowing river, a razor,
 a monarch, and a treasure house:
 tantra as scripture is clearly known
 through such analysis.
 By thoroughly examining these topics,
 one perceives the very essence of being.⁶³

(c) CLASSIFICATION

To explain the ways in which these tantras are classified according to their respective themes: “The three heart essences of the tantras”—*Naturally Arising Awareness*, *The Natural Freedom of Awareness*, and *The Tantra Without Letters*—are likened to a meeting between ruler and subjects. “The three vital essences of the tantras”—*The Array of Inlaid Gems* and the two *Mirrors*⁶⁴—are likened to someone reaching the summit of the most majestic mountain, because the meaning of all the tantras can be seen. “The three flowers” (which elucidate the profound import of the intent of all the tantras)—*The Pearl Garland*, *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion*, and *The Beauty of Auspiciousness*—are likened to three suns shining. The tantra *Naturally Occurring Perfection*, which is a single synopsis of all the tantras, is likened to the foundation of a fortress. *Adornment Through Direct Introduction*, which uses clear analogies and their meaning to present the visions in a complete and profound way, is likened to a beacon atop a fortress. *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon*, pertaining to timeless awareness, which is victorious in battle because it brings about freedom in the state after death, is likened to someone installing a lookout. *Heaped Jewels* and *Blazing Remains*, supplementary texts that discuss what is not fully addressed in the tantras, are likened to turrets. [196b] *The Blazing Lamp*, the tantra that brings the yogic practitioner freedom by clarifying spiritual practice, is likened to a monarch seated on the topmost level of the palace. *The Six Expanses* is comparable to one’s heart because it presents enlightened intent in a straightforward manner, and is likened to a shut door because one never joins the battle of thinking in terms of ordinary characteristics. *The Reverberation of Sound*, the scriptural source that is specific to this secret approach because it clarifies its own principles and does not let its opponents gain a foothold, is likened to a wall enclosing a given area. Finally, *The Wrathful Black Goddess*, comparable to a weapon because it annihilates antagonistic forces, is likened to a gatekeeper wearing a suit of armor. Thus, *The Pearl Garland* states:

If one understands the three heart essences of the tantras,
it is as though a meeting took place between ruler, minister, and
subjects.

If one understands the three vital essences of the tantras,
it is as though one had reached the summits of three mountains.

If one understands the three flowers of the tantras,

it is as though three suns were shining in the sky.
 If one understands the single synopsis of the tantras,
 it is as though one were firmly laying the foundation of a fortress.
 If one understands the tantra that presents the visions profoundly
 and completely,
 it is as though a fortress were well guarded from its topmost level.
 If one understands the tantra of timeless awareness victorious in
 battle,
 it is as though lookouts were installed in the four directions.
 If one understands the two great supplementary tantras,
 it is as though turrets rose up on all four sides.
 If one understands the tantra that brings the yogic practitioner
 freedom,
 it is as though a monarch were seated on the topmost level of the
 palace.
 If one understands the tantra that is like one's heart,
 it is as though the gate were shut and barred.
 If one understands the tantra that is the source specific to the
 secret approach,
 it is as though a wall were enclosing an area.
 If one understands the tantra that is like a weapon, [197a]
 it is as though there were a gatekeeper wearing a suit of armor.⁶⁵

(d) ORDER OF PRESENTATION

With respect to the actual themes that determine the order in which these tantras are presented, the same source states:

Then, as to the order of the tantras,
 the two fundamental tantras
 expound the unique essence of all phenomena.⁶⁶
 The two explanatory tantras, primary and secondary,
 expound in the manner of leaves unfolding.
 The two auxiliary tantras
 expound in the manner of stars and planets being reflected in the
 ocean.
 The two tantras that elucidate scripture and reasoning
 expound in the manner of a flower blossoming.
 The four tantras of pith instructions
 expound in the manner of fruit ripening.
 The three tantras concerning the natural abiding of enlightened
 intent

expound in the manner of eyes, which enable one to see.

The two tantras concerning the natural freedom of following
the path

expound in the manner of one's heart functioning as the seat of
memory.⁶⁷

The tantra for those skilled in ritual

expounds in the manner of a dog keeping watch.⁶⁸

The two great fundamental tantras explain that all phenomena are in essence inseparable. On the basis of the twenty-five chapters of *Naturally Occurring Perfection*, those who are inclined toward elaboration are brought to spiritual maturity through the outer, elaborate stage of empowerment. On the basis of the six chapters of *The Tantra Without Letters*, those who have been thereby brought to maturity are taught in their entirety the key points of the pith instructions, which bring about liberation.

The two explanatory tantras, primary and secondary, expound topics in the manner of a tree coming into leaf. In the discussions making up its eighty-six chapters, *Naturally Arising Awareness* clarifies the four topics of view, meditation, conduct, and fruition in an exemplary way. [197b] In its nine chapters, *The Natural Freedom of Awareness* clarifies specific issues.

The two auxiliary tantras expound topics in the manner of planets and stars being reflected in the ocean. The five chapters of *Heaped Jewels* demonstrate the natural perfection of the qualities of enlightenment. *Blazing Remains* describes the indications of successful practice.

The two tantras that elucidate scripture and reasoning expound topics in the manner of a flower blossoming. The six chapters of *The Reverberation of Sound* set forth the fundamental principles of the entire canon of tantras, while the seven chapters of *The Beauty of Auspiciousness* identify the way in which confusion is undermined.

The four major tantras of pith instructions expound topics in the manner of fruit ripening. The eight chapters of *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart* set forth pith instructions concerning direct introduction to one's true nature, empowerments, and samaya. The seven chapters of *Saman-tabhadra: The Mirror of Enlightened Mind* delineate errors and obscurations. The three chapters of *Adornment Through Direct Introduction* use analogies and their meaning to arouse conviction. The eight chapters

of *The Pearl Garland* demonstrate gaining freedom through the skillful means of various pith instructions.

The three tantras concerning the natural abiding of enlightened intent expound topics in the manner of the eyes, which enable one to see. The six sections of *The Six Expanses* demonstrate the innate purity of beings of the six classes. The four chapters of *The Blazing Lamp* discuss the four “lamps.” The four chapters of *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon* discuss the intermediate states.

The two tantras concerning the natural freedom of following the path expound topics in the manner of one’s heart functioning as the seat of memory. The thirteen chapters of *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion* demonstrate the view that is without extremes or bias. The fourteen chapters of *The Array of Inlaid Gems* demonstrate the process of following the spiritual path. [198a]

The tantra for those skilled in ritual, *The Wrathful Black Goddess*, gives extensive teachings on the activities intended to guard the teachings. It expounds these topics like a good dog keeping watch.

Thus, in the foregoing way, on the basis of their underlying intent the eighteen tantras are described as being subsumed within eight categories. With regard to these categories, without the two fundamental tantras, the situation would be similar to the root of a tree trunk being rotten, so that the branches, leaves, and fruit could not grow. Without the two explanatory tantras, the situation would be similar to there being no leaves, so that flowers could not possibly bloom. Without the two auxiliary tantras, the situation would be similar to someone without hands being unable to accomplish a manual task. Without the two tantras concerning the natural freedom of following the path, the situation would be similar to a corpse that has no heart. Without the two tantras that elucidate scripture and reasoning, the situation would be similar to there being no flowers, so that fruit could not grow. Without the four tantras of pith instructions, the situation would be similar to there being no fruit, so that practicing agriculture in the first place would be meaningless. Without the three tantras concerning the natural abiding of enlightened intent, the situation would be similar to someone without eyes being unable to see. Without the tantra for those skilled in ritual, the situation would be similar to there being no watchdog, so that enemies and thieves could gain entry.

Thus, without any of these eight categories, the necessary conditions

for this single body of teachings would not be complete. At the same time, there is no use for more categories than these, so the definitive number is eight, and the foregoing discussion verifies their order of presentation.

(e) SPECIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

The specific significance of these categories can be explained in terms of eight modes of enlightened intent. First, the enlightened intent of the fundamental texts, which are comparable to a tree's taproot in their penetrating treatment, [198b] is that of subsuming everything within the fundamental state of naturally occurring timeless awareness. Second, the intent of the explanatory texts, which are comparable to a tree's leaves in their extensive exposition, is that of connecting words with their meaning. Third, the intent of the auxiliary texts, which are comparable to a tree trunk in their syntheses, is that of the nondual unity of basic space and awareness. Fourth, the intent of the texts that elucidate scripture and reasoning, which are comparable to a tree's flowers in the distinct clarity of their exposition, is that of the direct perception of reality, the true nature of the "lamps." Fifth, the intent of the texts of pith instructions, which are comparable to a tree's fruit in their exposition of spiritual maturation, is that of basing the spiritual path on the three kayas. Sixth, the intent of the texts concerning the natural abiding of enlightened intent, which, in their exposition of the path of freedom, are comparable to eyes that enable one to see, is that of the key points of direct experience. Seventh, the intent of the texts concerning the natural freedom of following the path is that of using mindfulness and awareness on the path to gain direct introduction to the true nature of the "lamps." Eighth, the intent of the text for those skilled in ritual is that of guarding the teachings. Thus, these eight modes completely elucidate the enlightened intent of the categories.

As to the effects of exposure to such texts, first, the fundamental tantras demonstrate that everything is subsumed within awareness, with that awareness empty and free of being anything one could identify. By holding the meaning of these tantras in one's awareness, one is directly introduced to timeless awareness. By keeping them with one, one abides naturally in meditative absorption.⁶⁹ By reading them, one experiences their subject matter arising in one's mind. By expounding them, one fulfills one's needs and wants as well as those of others. By meditating on them, one dredges the pit of samsara from its depths. By studying them, one arrives at the very heart of what is meaningful.

Second, the explanatory tantras, compared to leaves unfolding, arouse the experience of timeless awareness, which is free of elaboration, by relying on words, which entail such elaboration.

Third, the auxiliary tantras demonstrate that the six avenues of consciousness are free in the immediacy of one's perception of manifest sense objects through the five sense faculties. This is comparable to planets and stars being reflected in the ocean.

Fourth, the tantras that elucidate scripture and reasoning apply the scriptures taught by the victorious ones, as well as the methods of correct reasoning, to a yogin's personal experience. [199a] This is comparable to a flower coming into bloom.

Fifth, the tantras of pith instructions awaken one to buddhahood by cutting through verbal and conceptual elaborations on the basis of key points. This is comparable to the ripening of fruit.

Sixth, the tantras concerning the natural abiding of enlightened intent lead to an ongoing flow, day and night, of the intent that goes beyond any separation of formal meditation from postmeditation. They are comparable to the eyes.

Seventh, as for the tantras concerning the natural freedom of following the path, when awareness is involved in perceiving sensory appearances, there is freedom in the immediacy of those appearances themselves, and so such involvement is a naturally awakened state. In that awareness is free in the immediacy of its perception of sensory appearances, it is naturally arising and naturally free. In that there is freedom in the nonduality of appearances and mind, there is an unrestricted state of nonduality. This is comparable to the heart.

Eighth, the tantra for those skilled in ritual utterly defeats counterproductive factors by defining the key points of practice entailing the wrathful feminine principle. This is comparable to a watchdog guarding one's interests.

By thus holding the significance of these eight categories of texts in mind, one will be directly introduced to timeless awareness. By keeping these texts with one, one will abide in meditative absorption. By reading them, one will understand their ultimate meaning. By expounding them, one will dispel the darkness in one's own and others' minds. By meditating on them, one will cause the ocean of samsara to dry up. By studying them, one will fathom their definitive meaning.

These tantras, moreover, are taught as eighteen individual texts in

response to those of lesser intellect, who delight in elaboration. They are taught in the foregoing eight categories to those of average intellect. Those of the highest acumen are taught that realization comes through an understanding of five categories: tantra as skillful means constituting what is demonstrated, tantra as skillful means constituting the demonstration, tantra as the nature of being that is the ground, tantra as the nature of being that is the heart essence, and tantra as the nature of being that is the quintessence. Those of extremely high acumen are taught that realization comes through an understanding of two aspects of tantra: tantra as scripture and tantra as ultimate reality. [199b] Those whose approach is utterly unelaborate are taught that the seventeen tantras are complete in one's self-knowing awareness.⁷⁰ As *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

One's own essence is *without letters*.

Self-knowing timeless awareness is a *blazing lamp*.

Given that the true nature of phenomena is purity, there is the *beauty of auspiciousness*.

The fearless view is the *perfect dynamic energy of the lion*.

Given that one matures in self-knowing awareness, there is *naturally occurring perfection*.

The "continuum" is a *pearl garland*.

Visionary experiences are an *array of inlaid gems*.

Given that awareness's own manifestations are demonstrated,⁷¹ there is the *mirror of the heart*.

Naturally eliminating potential error is the *mirror of enlightened mind*.

Without coming from anything or anywhere else, there is *natural arising*.

Since this occurs naturally, there is *natural freedom*.

There is oneness in basic space, yet there are *six expanses*.

Given that the qualities of enlightenment are complete, there are *heaped jewels*.

Given that self-knowing awareness is revealed, there is *adornment through direct introduction*.

Given that sensory appearances are pure, there is the *conjunction of sun and moon*.

Given that one matures in awareness, there are *blazing remains*.

These all, moreover, arise from the ground of being.

Thus, although the true nature of phenomena is inexpressible, it arises as the basis for distinct terms;⁷² but because of the complete purity of the stages these terms describe, they are perfect in the present moment of the inexpressible state.⁷³

(f) PURPOSE

Next, as to the purpose of these categories of tantras, the tantra *The Natural Freedom of Awareness* states:

The purpose is as follows:
to come to a definitive conclusion in one's personal experience of timeless awareness.
In demonstrating that purpose,
all of the tantras, explanatory commentaries, and pith instructions are in agreement.⁷⁴
Because that purpose is also to ensure authentic freedom, it can be demonstrated to be twofold.⁷⁵

(g) METHOD OF EXPOSITION

If anyone intends to expound the foregoing tantras as scripture, the pith instructions on such exegesis state that one should discuss five major themes and four methods that support them. [200a] The five themes are presented in *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon*:

If there were no explanation of their history,
this would lead to the flaw of their not being believed to be the buddhas' definitive teachings on the supreme secret.
If there were no explanation of their fundamental meaning,
this would lead to the flaw of all phenomena being thought of as infinite, separate things rather than subsumed within awareness.
If there were no explanation of the yogas,
this would lead to the flaw of spiritual approaches not being delineated,
and discussions of which was greater or lesser would be meaningless.
If there were no explanation of the words,
this would lead to the flaw of the words

that are intended to elucidate the tantras developmentally not being coherent.

If there were no explanation of their purpose, this would lead to the flaw of the effortlessness of the great perfection being meaningless.⁷⁶

The four supportive methods are presented in *The Natural Freedom of Awareness*:

With an attitude like a garuda soaring in space,
expound by giving overviews of the subject matter.

With sublime knowing that leaps like a tigress,
expound by hitting on the salient points of the subject matter.

With an attitude of inching along like a tortoise,⁷⁷
expound by considering the individual words.

With an attitude like someone stringing pearls on a cord,
expound by composing pith instructions based on the subject matter.⁷⁸

These four methods, then, consist of giving overviews of the subject matter, hitting on the salient points of the general content, expounding the meaning with words, and condensing the meaning with pith instructions.

An exposition of the tantras according to this extraordinary approach can also be based on the theme of the five aspects of excellence. In the more ordinary approaches, the text is introduced by a summary of these five aspects of excellence, followed by a detailed explanation of the actual scripture. These five aspects are the excellent teacher, teachings, occasion, audience, and environment. [200b] Furthermore, in texts of the more ordinary approaches, one does not find more than a single version of this introduction, whereas in this extraordinary approach, the transmission of the Buddha's words is preceded by two introductions. The introduction "Thus have I taught and explained at one time . . ." signifies naturally occurring awareness (which is without transition or change) demonstrating the nature of being (which involves neither acceptance nor rejection) in the ultimate realm of Akanishtha (which is the basic space of phenomena, the ground of being that is utterly lucid by nature). The introduction "Thus have I heard. At one time . . ." illustrates the point in time at which the tantra as scripture was taught in a specific place and so remains available at present to be put into practice.⁷⁹

(h) PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEXTS

According to the definitive records of the primary and secondary texts, the texts secondary to *The Natural Freedom of Awareness* are the following: *The Innermost Heart Drop of Explanation*, *The Summary*, *The Summary of the Meaning of the Terminology*, *The Wheel of Terminology*, *Background Theory*, and *The Booklet*. Thus, there are seven texts in all, primary and secondary.

The texts secondary to *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart* are the following: *The Commentary on the Meaning of the Main Source*, *The Summary of the Secret Meaning*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are four primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion* are the following: *The Supreme Heart Drop of Explanation*, *The Interlinear Gloss*, *The Explanation of the Chapter Titles*, *The Summary of the Subject Matter*, *The Commentary on Enlightened Intent*, *The Sevenfold Dispelling of Frames of Reference*, *The Array of the Pivotal Points of View*, *The Manual of Signs of Successful Practice*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are ten primary and secondary texts.

Those texts secondary to *The Tantra Without Letters* are the following: *The Blossoming Lotus*, *The Lamp That Summarizes*, *The Secret Testament*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are five primary and secondary texts.

Those texts secondary to *The Beauty of Auspiciousness* are the following: *The Mirror Illuminating the Basis of Confusion*, [201a] *The Major Compilation Concerning Confusion*, *The Summary of the Lamps*, *The Synopsis of Suchness*, *The Manual of Spontaneous Presence*, *The Manual of Original Purity*, *The Six-Leveled Wheel*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are nine primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Reverberation of Sound* are the following: *The Manual on the Key Points of the Four Elements*, *The Interconnection of Four Levels of Terminology*, *The Precious Lamp*, *The Innermost Heart Summary*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are six primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Samantabhadra: The Mirror of Enlightened Mind* are the following: *The Delineation of Spiritual Approaches*, *The Weapon of Speech*, *The Combined Divinatory Tantra*, *The Lamp Shining with Light*, and *The Synopsis of Suchness*. Thus, there are six primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Blazing Lamp* are the following: *The Definitive Origin of the Lamps*, *The Strung Garland of Pearls*, *The Innermost Heart Drop of the Summary*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are five primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Array of Inlaid Gems* are the following: *The Tenfold Array of Inlaid Gems*, *The Compendium of Mudra*, *The Deity's Fingers*, *The Concise Vision*, *The Precious Array*, and *The Great Summary*. Thus, there are seven primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon* are the following: *The Explanation of Modes of Light*, *The Precious Golden Garland*, *The Summarizing Key*, *The Great Pivotal Point of the Heart*, and *The Precious Golden Letters*. Thus, there are six primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Adornment Through Direct Introduction* are the following: *Threefold Direct Introduction*, *Placing Timeless Awareness in One's Hand*, *Practical Instruction on the Three Kayas*, *The Key to Utter Lucidity*, *Five Cycles of Timeless Awareness*, *The Flower of Awareness*, *The Lamp of Clarity*, *Refined Nectar*, *The Six Stages*, *The Summary of the Visions*, *Dispelling Frames of Reference in the View*, and *Seven Ways of Cutting Through Solidity*. Thus, there are thirteen primary and secondary texts.⁵⁰

The texts secondary to *The Pearl Garland* [201b] are the following: *The Illumination of the Pearl*, *The Synopsis of Suchness*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are four primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Naturally Arising Awareness* are the following: *The Explanation of the Combining of Words*, *The Precious Wheel*, and *The Synopsis of Suchness*. Thus, there are four primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Naturally Occurring Perfection* are the following: *The Root of Empowerment*, *The Elucidation of Empowerment*, *The Six Wheels*, *The Activity Manual for Empowerment*, *The Subtle Sphere of Empowerment*, *The Great Array of Empowerments*, *The Unelaborate Armor*, *The Key to Empowerment*, *Instruction on the Key Points of Empowerment*, *The Illuminating Summary*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are twelve primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Six Expanses* are the following: *The Six Supreme Expanses*, *The Precious Illuminating Garland*, *The Summary*,

and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, in addition to the primary text, there are four secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Blazing Remains* are the following: *The Spacious Lotus Expanse*, *The Fivefold Array*, *The Eleven Modes of Innate Abiding*, *The Arrayed Garland of the Lamps*, *The Synopsis of Suchness*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are seven primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *Heaped Jewels* are the following: *The Wheel of Sublime Knowing*, *The Four Necessities*, *Cutting Tongues of Flame*, *The Summary*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are six primary and secondary texts.

The texts secondary to *The Wrathful Black Goddess* are the following: *The Six Combined Sessions*, *The Combined Flow of Meditation Sessions*, *The Inner Record of Mantra*, *The General Summary of the Stages of Approach and Accomplishment*, *The Manual of Signs of Successful Practice*, *The Manual of the Authentic Measure of Practice*, *The Chapter on the Accomplishment of the Goal*, *The Sixfold Preparation of Substances*, *The Practice of the Single Form*, *The Accomplishment of Various Activities*, *The Secret Commentary*, and *Secret Background Theory*. Thus, there are thirteen primary and secondary texts.

With respect to the seventeen authoritative tantras of the supreme secret, [202a] as well as *The Wrathful Black Goddess*, the actual sources are the primary tantras, and the concise explanations written by various masters of awareness are the secondary texts. This is known as “the authoritative listing of the tantras, the mothers and their children.”

2. THE MOST PROFOUND APPROACH OF PITH INSTRUCTIONS

The authenticity of the most profound approach of pith instructions pertains to both its profound and extensive aspects.

a. The Profound Pith Instructions

The profound instructions are set forth in the five *Precious Letters*, which are collections found in *The Four Extremely Profound Volumes*.⁸¹ The order of texts is given in the index entitled *Adorned by the Sun*, as follows:

There are nine primary and secondary texts in *The Golden Letters*

collection, including *The Only Child of the Teachings*, *The Ascertainment of Key Occasions for Offerings*, and *The Testaments*.

There are eighteen primary and secondary texts in the *Copper Letters* collection, including *The Sixteen Elaborate Sections*, *Secret Background Theory*, and *The Manual of Key Points*.

There are three primary and secondary texts in *The Conch-Shell Letters* collection, including *The Shining Lamp*, *Background Theory*, and *The Manual of Key Points*.

There are five texts in *The Inlaid-Gem Letters* collection, which are secondary texts within the *Copper Letters* collection. These texts include *The Instruction on the Key Points of Subtle Energy*, *The Instruction on the Key Points of Passion*, *The Most Concealed Hidden Fragment*, *The Manual of the Authentic Measure of Practice*, and *The Manual of Signs of Successful Practice*.

There are eighteen primary and secondary texts in *The Turquoise Letters* collection, including *The Twelve Major Headings*, *The Cherished Heart of Being*, *The Torch of Metaphor*, *The Determination of Imminent Death*, *Cheating Death*, *The Heart Essence of View*, and *The Precious Instruction on Key Points*.

Thus, these are called the five *Precious Letters* in four volumes. That is, *The Golden Letters*, *The Turquoise Letters*, and *The Conch-Shell Letters* are separate volumes, [202b] whereas *The Copper Letters* and *The Inlaid-Gem Letters* are combined into a single volume. These four volumes were revealed as *termas*; the texts were not given to King Trisong Detsen or any of his ministers and subjects, but were concealed as *termas* in the uplands of Chimpu.⁸²

Other tantras and pith instructions were translated by five individuals: King Trisong Detsen, his son Prince Muné Tsenpo, and his three subjects Nyang Ting-ngé-dzin Zangpo, Kawa Paltsek, and Chokro Lui Gyaltzen.⁸³ They were then hidden as *termas* in the temple of Zhai Lhakang.⁸⁴ By practicing them, Nyang reached the state of passing away without leaving any physical remains,⁸⁵ while the other two subjects attained rebirth in naturally occurring *nirmanakaya* pure realms. There is a statement indicating that these teachings “were not bestowed on anyone other than the two, the king and the minister.” Some who are ignorant of history use this to support the contention that there were literally no recipients other than these two, the king and Nyang. This is totally incorrect, for the majority of tantras and explanatory commentaries were translated by Kawa

and Chokro, and Muné Tsenpo concealed *Fragment of the Quintessence* and *Fragment of Magic* in the cliff of Zang-yak Drak. How could they have done so if they had not received these Nyingtik teachings? Those who are ignorant have truly taken such statements, which are found in the colophons of a majority of texts, far too literally.

b. The Extensive Pith Instructions

There are 119 texts of pith instructions in the extensive category. Among them are the following:

The Collected Fragments of Numerous Pith Instructions

The Small Brown Volume

The Mirror Illuminating the Basis of Confusion

The Manual on the Key Points of the Four Elements

The Lamp That Shines

The Key to Utter Lucidity

The Cycle of the Vase of the Knowable [203a]

A Record of the Neophyte's Meditation

The Cycle of Examination of Terminology

The Practical Instruction on the Three Kayas

The Trilogy of Innate Abiding

The Compilation Concerning Confusion

The Supreme Sphere of the Secret

Extracts from the Golden Records

The Great Instruction on the Path

Placing Timeless Awareness in One's Hand

The Major Commentary on Difficult Points

The Mirror of the Secret

Naturally Abiding Meditative Stability

The Epitome of the Sun of the Secret

The Concise Vision

The Origin of Mind at Rest

The Seven Ways of Cutting Through Solidity

The Nine Ways of Surpassing Ordinary Experience

The Six Supreme Expanses

The Concise Path of Conduct

The Golden Array of View

The Spacious Lotus Expanse

The Deity's Fingers
The Golden Lily
Cutting Through the Flow of Memory
Taking Obvious Appearances as the Path
The Lamp of Clarity
Stirring Up the Lion's Dynamic Energy
Primordial Yoga
The Four Meanings of Enlightened Intent
Demonstrating the Vajra Path
The Extraordinary Wheel
The Great Garuda Soaring in Space
Dispelling Frames of Reference in the View
The Stages of the Guru
The Flow of Honest Words
Cutting Through the Basis of Confusion
The Six Mental Reference Points
The Wheel of Meditation
The Key to Empowerment
The Activity Manual for Empowerment
The Unelaborate Empowerment Ritual
The Root of Empowerment
Distinguishing Among the Kinds of Empowerment
The Instruction on the Key Points of Empowerment
The Sixfold Wheel
A Detailed Analysis of Samaya
The Great Compendium of Empowerments
The Instruction on the Key Points of Gaining Power [203b]
The Flower of Awareness
The Supreme Scriptural Transmission of Mind
The Fundamental Pith Instructions
The Eighteen Essentials of Scripture
The Six Stages
The Oral Transmission of Mind: Instructions on Meditation
The Synthesis of the Most Secret Teachings
The Hidden Sun
The Tenfold Array of Inlaid Gems
The Abridged Essence of Scripture
Refined Nectar

The Compendium of Three Scriptures
Majestic Pith Instructions
 The Turquoise Letters
 The Conch-Shell Letters
 The Copper Letters
 The Inlaid-Gem Letters
 The Golden Letters
The Great Pivotal Point of the Heart and The Lesser Pivotal
 Point of the Heart
Meditative Stability: The Cycle of Sleep
Great Miraculous Letters and Lesser Miraculous Letters
The Treasury of Dakinis
Supreme Transference
The Chakra of the Subtle Channels
The Delineation of the Levels of Awareness
Entrance into the Inner Sanctum of Timeless Awareness
The Great History
The Secret Testament
The Delineation of Spiritual Approaches
The Manual of Secret Terminology
The Interconnection of Four Levels of Terminology
The Armor of the Teachings
The Unchanging Sphere
Changing the Shape of Things
Making the Fruition Evident
Entering the Dove's Nest
Precious Clarity
Spontaneously Present Timeless Awareness
The Wheel of Sublime Knowing
The Weapon of Speech
The Five Cycles of Timeless Awareness
An Explanation of Modes of Light
An Analysis of the Key Points of the Elements
The Definitive Origin of the Lamps
The Compendium of Mudra
The Fivefold Array
Focus on the Vast Range of "A": An Overview of Subtle
 Energy

The Threefold Direct Introduction
The Eleven Modes of Innate Abiding
The Supreme Fundamental Sphere
The Abode of Awareness
Meditative Stability of the Eyes

In addition to these 106 texts, [204a] there are thirteen treatises, such as *Blossoming Lotus*, that expound the tantras but are not included in the foregoing list of pith instructions.⁸⁶ Thus, there are 119 texts in total. These are counted as texts that are secondary to the tantras, but as for the tantras themselves, there are no more than eighteen—the seventeen tantras and that of the guardian deity of the teachings. There are various pith instructions that are considered secondary texts; these are secret pith instructions that derive from the tantras. Some contend that Vimalamitra added these texts as supplements after the fact, but this is a spurious claim.⁸⁷ These instructions are inconceivable. I have given no more than a listing of their titles; for the numbering of their respective sections, one should consult the authoritative index of the primary and secondary texts.⁸⁸

In the collection of teachings that I compiled in fifty-one sections, *The Innermost Heart Drop: The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, I have elucidated these profound and extensive pith instructions to a great extent, setting forth their meaning in a few words with the key points summarized. For the benefit of future generations of fortunate individuals, I compiled this collection, sealed with my prayers of aspiration, as the fulfillment of and answer to all of their wishes.

As well, I have written quite a number of miscellaneous works on certain key points, such as *The Golden Casket*, *The Union of Buddhas in Equalness*, *The Fully Fledged Wings of the Great Garuda*, *The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, *The Vase of Nectar*, and *The Most Secret Heart Drop*.

In the final lines of the colophons of these works, I have signed a number of names: Longchen Rabjam (He of the Supreme Vast Expanse), [204b] Longsel Drimé (Stainless One of the Lucid Expanse), Dorjé Ziji (Vajra Splendor), Dorjé Sempa (Vajrasattva), Drimé Özer (Stainless Light Rays), Lodrö Chokden (One Endowed with Sublime Intelligence), Tsultrim Lodrö (Disciplined Intellect), Ngaki Wangpo (Lord of Speech), Pema Ledrol (Lotus Free of Karma), Natsok Rangdrol (Natural Freedom of Myriad Variety), Samyépa (One from Samyé Monastery). Because these

are the names I use, it is easy to find my pith instructions. They ensure the spontaneous accomplishment of greatness, inspiring my fortunate students and planting victory banners in the ten directions, so that these spiritual methods will spread and flourish, enduring for a long time without fading from sight.



From *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Limitless Range of Spiritual Approaches*, this is the eighth chapter, on the wish-fulfilling web of the vajra heart essence.

Colophon

Thus, on the basis of what is sacred—these vast spiritual teachings, the wealth of the three planes of beings¹—within the precious mansion of my mind, well endowed with the wish-fulfilling heart essence of sutra and tantra, I have served this feast of a variety of spiritual approaches, illuminating the virtue and excellence of the dharma's vivid array.

Through this may all beings arrive at the Isle of Liberation, and may the feast of the dharma increase.

Flowing from the heart of the clouds of my study of profound and extensive teachings, may the positive influence of these teachings, whose nature is that of a nectar-like rain, soothe the torment of afflictive states for the multitude of beings of the three planes, and may the precious and sacred dharma flourish in the ten directions.

From the laden clouds of intelligence flashes the lightning of my study of the teachings, causing the thunder of profound meaning to resound in all directions. [205a]
May the virtue arising from this, the abundant and soothing rain of peace and happiness, bring full harvests of twofold spiritual development for all beings without limit.

Aroused by the sunlight, may the lotus grove of my fortunate intellect

be a delightful garden of an enormous array of spiritual methods—the philosophical systems of my own and others' traditions.

In this garden of superb elegance, a place that nurtures a clear intellect,

please ensure that the feast is served to all beings who are motivated.

This precious lake strewn with flowers is a display that satisfies all wishes.

For you who seek to reach the far shore of this vast, deep lake of intelligence, which pervades all of space,

and who have embarked on one of these paths, I have clarified their nature somewhat in this text.

This text is unerring and will ensure that the excellence of the glorious Padma's activities continues.

This *Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems*, the entirety of my own and others' traditions,

is a feast drawn from my extensive studies

and a key to the precious trove of the Buddha's excellent speech.

Simply to read it will clarify all that is meaningful.

For my fortunate young students, who are very wise

and motivated by these spiritual methods,

I have set this forth well, so that they will be inspired to attain buddhahood.

It is a mirror with which to view the sutras and tantras;

it clearly reflects their entire meaning, vast and profound.

So extensive is the illumination of these precious spiritual methods

that it lights up the entire Isle of Liberation.

This text is a treasure house containing all of the various spiritual approaches.

It clarifies the entire meaning found in my own and others' philosophical systems. [205b]

It completely dispels the blinding darkness of ignorance.

It completely opens the eye of one's mind to what can be known.

This text is the heart essence of the unsurpassable spiritual approach.

Once they understand the distinctions between higher and lower,

people with great discernment will undertake the most sublime spiritual endeavor.

This will help them to swiftly reach the citadel of liberation.

I, Drimé Özer, a yogin of the sublime spiritual approach of the heart essence, am endowed with an all-embracing vision, dwelling in the land of a vast study of many teachings that derive from the learned and accomplished Nagarjuna's development of the tradition of the great seer of the past—this excellent and immeasurable path.²

May this well-written and precious treasury, which grants all wishes, be a jewel crowning the heads of intelligent beings.

The sun and moon adorn all lands in this world with their light, bringing beauty with their full and brilliant orbs. [206a]

Their glory, and that of this precious treasury, will endure in order to enrich this world.



This concludes the text entitled *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems: A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*. I, the author, Drimé Özer, am a yogin of the sublime spiritual approach. I have extensively studied the meaning of the Sugata's excellent speech—the sutras, tantras, scriptural transmissions, logical reasoning, and pith instructions—and mastered the methods of a vast range of philosophical systems, from both my own and others' traditions, embodying a variety of spiritual approaches. The text was composed at a place blessed by the naturally occurring master Padma. Good fortune! Good fortune! Good fortune!

Notes

Introduction

1. Brahma and Indra, two of the most important gods of the Brahmanical pantheon, are accepted by Buddhists as powerful gods in the realm of samsara. According to some accounts, after Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment, he initially decided not to teach, thinking that others would not be able to appreciate his message; Indra and Brahma urged him to do so, however, offering him a golden wheel and a conch shell (symbols of spiritual power).

The Sanskrit term *kinnara* refers to nonhuman beings, such as gods or demons, who took on human forms in order to join those gathered to hear the Buddha's teachings; the Sanskrit term *nāga* refers to a class of beings, part human and part serpent, who figure prominently in Buddhist lore owing to their control over the elements and ability to influence human affairs.

2. "Ghanavyuha" here refers to a pure sambhogakaya realm. The pure realm of dharmakaya, which is simply the direct recognition of buddha nature, is not manifest. The pure realm of sambhogakaya consists of awareness's own manifestations; the term "manifestly perfect buddha" is a reference to this manifest realm.

The four times are past, present, future, and the "unchanging time of the true nature of phenomena," i.e., the timeless state that transcends linear time.

3. The Sanskrit term *tathāgata* (literally, "one gone to suchness") is an epithet for a buddha.
4. The three degrees of enlightenment are that of an arhat attained by shravakas, that of an arhat attained by pratyekabuddhas, and that of buddhahood attained by bodhisattvas. Those who achieve the first two attain only partial enlightenment; those who achieve the third attain complete enlightenment, or buddhahood.
5. The source text reads: "They occur interdependently with the merit in one's own mind."
6. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 9, ll. 124–31. This fundamental tantra of the cycle *The Web of Magical Display* is the foremost of the eighteen major scrip-

tural sources of the mahayoga approach. *The Web of Magical Display* was originally a large text that the Indian master Vimalamitra divided into a cycle of eight titles.

7. In Mahayana cosmology, the form of Vairochana called Himasagara has innumerable realms in every pore. In Himasagara's hands, which are folded in the lap, is a single mote, within which are countless universes. In the center of these is the greater universe known as "Basis Whose Center Is Adorned with a Flower," which consists of an ocean of scented water, in the center of which is a lotus flower. On this flower are stacked twenty-five universes. The thirteenth is our universe, "Difficult to Renounce," so called because it is difficult for us to divorce our minds from afflictive states. Scriptural sources for this cosmology include the sutras *The Garlands of Buddhas* and *The Reunion of Father and Son*.
8. Here "Akanishtha" refers to the "quasi-nirmanakaya sambhogakaya," in which sambhogakaya buddhas manifest in the perceptions of bodhisattvas on the tenth spiritual level. "Vajrapani" refers not to one of the eight great bodhisattvas of the Mahayana approach, but to an emanation of the sambhogakaya buddha Vajradhara who is in no way separate from Vajradhara and who was responsible for codifying the tantras.
9. "Others" refers primarily to Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara; like Vajrapani, they are emanations of, and not separate from, Vajradhara.
10. Vipashyin was the first of these one thousand buddhas.
11. Shakyamuni is the buddha of our age and the fourth of the thousand buddhas to appear; Adhimukta will be the last.
12. Vimalamitra was an Indian master who taught and translated texts in Tibet in the eighth century. His contemporary Padmakara, or Guru Rinpoche, was largely responsible for bringing the Buddhist teachings to Tibet. Nagarjuna was one of the most influential teachers of the Indian Buddhist tradition and codified the Madhyamaka system of Buddhist philosophy; Longchenpa discusses this system in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1

1. "Spiritual development," or "twofold spiritual development," as it is sometimes called, is generally described as a process of developing merit on the relative level and deepening one's experience of timeless awareness on the ultimate level.
2. This third line is not found in the version of the source text available to us.
3. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 4, v. 110bd. Here "Shakyamuni" refers to Mahashakyamuni.
4. The five mind-body aggregates, which constitute the sum total of an individual's experience, are form, sensation, discernment, formative factors, and consciousness. See Mipham Rinpoche, *Gateway to Knowledge*, vol. 1, pp. 17–35.
5. Vajrasana (Vajra Seat) is the site of present-day Bodhi Gaya in northern India.
6. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 6, v. 24ab. The rhinoceros's solitary habits made it a traditional metaphor for pratyekabuddhas, who live alone or in small isolated communities.

7. Ibid., ch. 4, v. 118.
8. Here “Akanishtha” refers to a pure sambhogakaya realm. See Introduction, note 2.
9. This is one of the states of absorption that lead to rebirth in the realm of formlessness, so called because beings reborn there (as a result of cultivating the corresponding state of meditative absorption in the preceding lifetime) have no form visible to others, but are only “states of mind.” The state of “nothingness” is the third of the four states of this realm and is so named because the mind of a being in this state remains in a trance in which it cannot conceive of anything whatsoever.
10. The Sanskrit term *sugāta* (literally, “one gone to bliss”) is an epithet for a buddha.
11. According to this interpretation, the Buddha left his body by the bank of the Nairanjana River while his mind was in the pure realm of Akanishtha, where he was empowered by the buddhas of the ten directions.
12. This line is not found in the version of the source text available to us.
13. “Bodhimanda” means “Center of Enlightenment,” another name for Vajrasana. Mara is the personification of forces and circumstances that hinder one’s attainment of enlightenment: the legends of the Buddha’s enlightenment depict it as a battle of wills between the Buddha and Mara.
14. Buddhajñana, *The Sphere of Freedom*, ll. 435–49.
15. This corresponds to the above-mentioned “empowerment with great rays of light.” It eliminates what are referred to in the sutra tradition as “subtle cognitive obscurations,” which in the Vajrayana are called “the habit patterns of transition through the three subtle stages of experience.” The terms “sun” and “moon” refer to two of the stages, which culminate in the third, “eclipse,” in which the last traces of these habit patterns are overcome. Such terminology is associated with the advanced yogic disciplines of the Vajrayana approach.
16. Here the term refers to the pure “quasi-nirmanakaya” realm mentioned in the Introduction, note 8.
17. Here “immaculate abode” refers to a naturally present, pure nirmanakaya realm, also called Akanishtha. It is called “naturally present” because it manifests effortlessly in the perceptions of all who experience it; it is not, however, considered “awareness’s own manifestation,” being rather a state that manifests in response to other beings’ perceptions. This realm, which consists of light, is accessible to spiritually advanced bodhisattvas and to highly realized yogins of the Vajrayana approach. It is above the seventeenth, and highest, level of the realm of form in samsara, and so is often grouped with the form realm (and referred to as “Akanishtha in the realm of form”), but in fact is not considered to be part of samsara. It is often mistaken for the Akanishtha that is the fifth of the five immaculate abodes of the form realm within samsara (and thus the highest of the seventeen levels of the form realm). However, as Longchenpa notes in *The Dragon’s Roar of Pure Melody: An Overview of the Significance of the Mantra Approach*, the latter Akanishtha cannot be the one intended in this case, because according to this interpretation one cannot awaken to buddhahood within sam-

sara. Even though Shakyamuni awakened to buddhahood at Bodh Gaya, the actual site, known as Bodhimanda, which is much subtler, is not considered to be part of samsara. And, of course, Longchenpa states that in awakening to buddhahood at Bodh Gaya, Shakyamuni did so only "in the manner of one awakening" (i.e., he seemed to undergo a process of awakening in order to provide others with an example, not because he himself needed to undergo it).

18. "Akanishtha in the realm of form" refers to the naturally present, pure nirmanakaya realm referred to in note 17.
19. Here "immaculate abodes" refers to both the immaculate abode that is not considered to be part of samsara (Akanishtha in the realm of form) and the five immaculate abodes that are part of the realm of form. See note 17.
20. Here "Akanishtha" refers to a pure sambhogakaya realm.
21. The first reference to Akanishtha is to a pure sambhogakaya realm. The second is to the immaculate abode of Akanishtha that is above the realm of form. The idiom "to awaken to buddhahood as Vajradhara" is to be understood here in the sense of "awakening to complete enlightenment"; it means to experience for oneself the state of primordial unity. A more provisional sense of the idiom is the manifestation, in other beings' perceptions, of the form of the sambhogakaya buddha Vajradhara with specific attributes.
22. In Buddhist cosmology, there are three orders of universes: A one-thousand-fold universe consists of one thousand world systems similar to our own, each with a central mountain surrounded by four major continents (here translated as "worlds"). The intermediate-sized universe mentioned in the citation, a two-thousand-fold universe, consists of one thousand universes of the first order, i.e., one million world systems. A "three-thousand-fold universe" consists of one thousand intermediate-sized universes, or one billion world systems.
23. In addition to the zenith and nadir, the six directions include the four cardinal directions. "Other dimensions" refers to universes such as those in Vairochana Himasagara's pores.
24. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 3, ll. 2-4. The "five kinds of ordinary beings" refers to the six classes, with those of the gods and demigods conflated.
25. The source text reads: "those who have gone in these ways."
26. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 2, vv. 53c-56d.
27. The five noble ones studied under the same spiritual teacher as the future Buddha Shakyamuni and followed him when he left that teacher in order to advance in their practice. They left the future buddha in disgust at his apparent lack of ascetic rigor, but after his enlightenment became his first students, to whom he taught the four noble truths.

A term more accurate than "the four noble truths" might be "the four truths of spiritually advanced beings." They are not truths that are evident to ordinary beings, but are seen to be so by those who are spiritually advanced, i.e., who have attained the path of seeing in any of the three approaches of shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, or bodhisattvas.

28. Vasishtha was a sage during the ancient Vedic period of Indian history, but here

the name is most likely a reference to the Buddha's great-great-grandfather, which would make the "descendants of Vasishtha" kinsmen of the Buddha. See Roerich (trans.), *The Blue Annals*, p. 13.

29. Varanasi.
30. *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations* is an enormous compendium of the Abhidharma teachings of the Vaibhashika system of Buddhist philosophy, said to have been compiled shortly after Buddha Shakyamuni's passing by some five hundred arhats, including the Buddha's close student Upagupta. It was first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, from which a Tibetan translation has been undertaken only recently. Thus, Longchenpa seems to be citing a source that quotes *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations* rather than a translation of the text itself.
31. *The Commentary on "The Hundred Thousand Stanzas"* is probably a reference to the two-volume commentary by the Indian Buddhist master Damsh-trasena.
32. The ordinary retinues consisted of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. An arhat, "one who has vanquished the inner foe," is someone who has attained the fruition of the Hinayana path; see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of this path and its fruition.
33. The term "afflictive states" denotes states of mind that cause one to commit negative actions, which lead to experiences of physical and mental distress. Some of these are emotional states (desire, anger, etc.), while others are misguided beliefs (such as a belief in the reality of the perishable mind-body aggregates) or habit patterns such as laziness and inattentiveness. A more detailed treatment can be found in Chapter 3, where Longchenpa discusses the bases of mental states according to the Vaibhashika system.
34. The term "fields of experience" refers to a model involving twelve factors: the five physical sense faculties of vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch; the mental faculty, which coordinates the sense data received through the senses; and the six kinds of objects of these faculties (forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile sensations, and mental objects such as ideas and concepts).

The model termed "components of perception" comprises eighteen factors: six "outer" components (the objects of the five senses and of the coordinating mental faculty); six "inner" components (the six faculties themselves, which are called "supports" of consciousness); and six avenues of consciousness that these faculties support (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile consciousness, plus the coordinating mental faculty, a conceptual mode of consciousness that organizes sense data into a coherent worldview and creates concepts and ideas concerning that world).

There are twenty-two controlling factors: the five senses, the mental coordinating faculty, life force, the masculine and feminine genders, five kinds of sensations (mental and physical pleasure, mental and physical pain, and neutral sensations), ordinary positive faculties (faith, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime knowing), and three faculties that pertain to

spiritually advanced beings (the promotion of omniscience, the gaining of omniscience, and the mastery of omniscience).

For a discussion of these topics, see Mipham Rinpoche, *Gateway to Knowledge*, vol. 1, pp. 36-50, 61-79.

35. The Adzom Chögar and Dergé editions of the *Treasury* read: "I manifest to beings as a universal sovereign."
 36. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 4, vv. 74-5. In the source text, these verses include two more lines and read as follows:

The sound of an echo
 occurs within someone's consciousness;
 it is nonconceptual and unfabricated,
 and not located externally or internally.
 Similarly, the enlightened speech of the Tathagata—
 nonconceptual and unfabricated—
 occurs within someone's consciousness,
 but is not located externally or internally.

37. This sentence refers to a classification of the four noble truths as taught from three points of view: (1) their essence, which is the acknowledgment of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path to its cessation; (2) their purpose, which is the recognition of suffering as such, the elimination of its origin, the full experience of its cessation, and cultivation of the path to its cessation through meditation; and (3) their fruition, which is the recognition of suffering but without the belief that it exists as some "thing" to be recognized, the elimination of its origin without the belief that it exists as some "thing" to be eliminated, the full experience of its cessation without the belief that it exists as some "thing" to be fully experienced, and cultivation of the path through meditation without the belief that the path exists as some "thing" to be cultivated.
38. There are three sutras entitled *The Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana*: see Sources Cited. "An additional two" can be taken to refer to either two months or two years, depending on which of the following interpretations one adopts.
39. The ordinary sources are those followed by the shravaka schools; the extraordinary sources are those of the Mahayana.
40. Traditionally, someone born even a short time before the new year was considered one year old at birth, and two when the new year started; similarly, a year was added to the age of someone who died after the new year.
41. According to most accounts of the Buddha's nirvana, Drona was asked to serve as a mediator when the various factions of the Buddha's students could not agree on the division of his remains; as a brahmin rather than a committed Buddhist, Drona was able to make an impartial decision.
42. The four teeth were the eighth portion of the Buddha's sacred remains.
43. The Trayastrimsha, or "Realm of the Thirty-three" (i.e., thirty-three major gods of the Vedic system of ancient India), is situated on the summit of Sumeru and ruled by Indra; it is the second lowest of the six levels of gods in the realm of desire.

44. The eighth portion was not entirely in the human world because three of the teeth were taken to the realms of the Trayastrimsha gods, the rakshasa demons of Kalinga, and the nagas of Ravana.

Chapter 2

1. As Longchenpa's discussion makes clear, the term "Buddha" in this context does not refer simply to the historical nirmanakaya buddha Shakyamuni; the sambhogakaya and dharmakaya are also authentic sources of the Buddha's words. The shastras are treatises written by qualified masters who explained the meaning of the Buddha's teachings in order to edify and guide practitioners.
2. An epithet of Buddha Shakyamuni (or any buddha), "Bhagavat" means "Fortunate One" or "Glorious One" and has often been translated as "Blessed One." The equivalent Tibetan term (*bcom ldan 'das*) carries a richer meaning. A buddha is one who has "conquered" (*bcom*) the forces that bind one to samsara, has "accomplished" (*ldan*) excellent qualities, and has "transcended" (*'das*) the limitations of both samsara and mere personal salvation.

Here "Akanishtha" refers to Akanishtha in the realm of form, mentioned in Chapter 1.

3. In the sutra teachings, "the lords of the three families"—Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, and Vajrapani—are among the eight great bodhisattvas in the retinue of every nirmanakaya buddha such as Shakyamuni. In the present context, that of the Vajrayana teachings, they are emanations who are not separate from the expounder of the tantras, whether Buddha Shakyamuni or the primordial buddha (usually referred to as Samantabhadra or Vajradhara, who expounded tantras considered to predate the historical Buddha). In the tantras, these emanations are part of the naturally manifest retinue that appears in the sambhogakaya realm of Akanishtha. In the sutras, these bodhisattvas are peaceful manifestations; in the Vajrayana, the emanations may appear in either peaceful or wrathful forms.
4. In the Vajrayana teachings, Guhyapati (Lord of the Secret Approach) is considered a form of Vajrapani responsible primarily for codifying the tantras.
5. Here "Akanishta" refers to Akanishtha in the realm of form.
6. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, sec. 1, ll. 45-8.
7. After the Buddha's parinirvana, certain beings described as "children of the gods" criticized his followers for failing to practice his teachings and for thus contributing to their disappearance from the world.
8. The Three Compilations, those of Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, present the Buddha's words according to the sutra tradition.
9. These were ten instances in which the Vaishali monks had relaxed or altered the Buddha's proscriptions concerning the conduct of monks. They claimed that after a monk had committed an act contrary to the teachings, he could purify himself by clapping his hands and uttering the nonsense syllables "Hulu hulu!" or, alternatively, by causing the rest of those in his chapter to rejoice in his action.

They said that it was permissible for a monk to till the earth like a householder, for they reasoned that the earth was for all to use. They allowed monks to drink alcohol if they fell ill, as long as they sipped it from a jar. They maintained that adding salt to food made the food acceptable to eat at inappropriate times (i.e., after midday). They maintained that once a monk had finished his meal, it was all right for him to eat again once he had traveled about half a krosha (a distance defined as approximately one thousand yards). They claimed that once a monk had finished a meal, there was no need to discard the leftovers; having touched them with two fingers, he could eat them after midday. They said that it was acceptable to drink a mixture of equal measures of milk and yogurt after midday. They said that it was not necessary to patch a new sitting mat with a square the width of the Sugata's hand span taken from one's old one. And they said that it was acceptable for a monk to handle offerings of gold and silver if he first placed an alms bowl decorated with flower garlands on a small stand attached to the head of a novice monk and had the offerings put in the bowl. These monks proclaimed that such behavior was in accord with the Buddha's instructions. In order to refute their ideas and purge the teachings of these distortions, the arhat Yashas and the rest of the seven hundred arhats declared that these allowances were not found in the sutra teachings and should be rejected. The offending monks were expelled.

10. For a reference to Yashas, see Roerich (trans.), *The Blue Annals*: "At that time there was a [king] called Aśoka . . . who obtained an increasing faith in the Doctrine of the Blessed One, and Ārya Yaśa became his spiritual preceptor" (p. 24). Upagupta was the fourth in a succession of seven arhats who were entrusted with the transmission of the Buddha's Hinayana teachings; they maintained this transmission for the first centuries after the Buddha's passing. These seven were Kashyapa, Ananda, Shanakavasin, Upagupta, Dhitika, Krishna, and Mahasudarshana.
11. The number of cloth strips was determined by a person's height, which affected the length of garment required.
12. The level of the Abhasvara gods is the sixth of the seventeen that make up the realm of form.
13. This refers to any regional dialect considered a debased or corrupted form of Sanskrit.
14. Ananda, Upali, and Mahakashyapa were able to recall the compilations of Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, respectively, because they had attained the power of complete recall.
15. Valid cognition, a branch of the Buddhist teachings, corresponds roughly to the Western field of epistemology. It acknowledges three valid sources of knowledge—direct experience, deductive reasoning, and scriptural authority—which enable one to eliminate confusion about what is ultimately valid. Direct experience is a nonconceptual and unconfused state of awareness in the present moment, such as the first instant of sensory perception or the awareness of advanced spiritual practitioners in meditation. Deductive reasoning involves an unconfused state of awareness that draws accurate conclusions from authentic

- indications to ascertain an object hidden from one's direct perception. Scriptural authority entails reliance on an authentic and trustworthy scriptural source.
16. The training in mind is also referred to as the exalted training in meditative absorption.
 17. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 4, v. 74ab.
 18. These formative factors, which are discussed more fully in Chapter 3, are considered distinct from the other three "bases of the knowable": forms, mind, and mental states.
 19. The afflictive aspect of consciousness is experienced by all beings who are not spiritually advanced. It constitutes the perpetual sense of an "I" or self that derives from a distorted perception of the consciousness termed "the basis of all ordinary experience." This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
 20. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 1, v. 25.
 21. *Ibid.*, ch. 8, v. 39. These three activities are related to the two major divisions of the Buddhist teachings: the scriptural (which is discussed and upheld, or taught) and the experiential (which is put into practice, or realized, by the individual).
 22. In the format of the five paths discussed in Chapter 4, the first four—the paths of accumulation, linkage, seeing, and meditation—still require learning, or training. The fifth, also called the path of consummation, is the point at which no more learning is required: it is the consummation of the processes of eliminating counterproductive factors in one's makeup and realizing all that is positive.
 23. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, sec. 7, ll. 67–8.
 24. A younger contemporary of the Buddha, King Ajatashatru conspired with his mother to usurp his father's throne.
 25. *The Heart Essence of Sublime Knowing* is commonly referred to as *The Heart Sutra*.
 26. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 3, ll. 32–5.
 27. In the cause-based approach, the spiritual path is based on factors that act as causes, contributing to a process that eventually culminates in enlightenment. The term is synonymous with "the paramita approach" and "the dialectical approach"; the latter term derives from the fact that one employs logic and reasoning to arrive at conclusions concerning the ultimate and relative nature of the "characteristics" of things.
 28. The fruition-based approach involves methods (such as the visualization of deities) that are based on an acceptance that the fruition of the path, or enlightenment, is already present, albeit latent, in the practitioner. The term is synonymous with "the secret mantra approach" and "Vajrayana."
 29. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 1, v. 26cd.
 30. *Ibid.*, v. 26ab.
 31. See note 35 on the six ornaments and eight sublime ones.
 32. Chandragomin was an Indian teacher and poet who wrote largely on grammar and other secular subjects; Shantideva was the author of the well-known treatise *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*. The bodhisattva of supreme compassion is Avalokiteshvara.
 33. Shriguptra and his student Jnanagarbha were Indian teachers in the line of

monastic ordination that became known in Tibet as “the lowland tradition.” They were also proponents of the Svatantrika branch of the Madhyamaka system of Buddhist philosophy; Jnanagarbha, who was a teacher of the eighth-century abbot Shantarakshita (invited to Tibet by King Trison Detsen), wrote a Svatantrika treatise entitled *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*. See Roerich (trans.), *The Blue Annals*, p. 34, and Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism*, pp. 252–3. Shakyamati was the author of commentaries on valid cognition and the sutra *The Ten Spiritual Levels*; see Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism*, p. 260.

34. Outer subjects address how the mind relates to the external world (through language, perception, etc.), whereas inner subjects are concerned with the working and nature of mind itself.
35. The six ornaments and eight sublime ones were important figures in the Indian tradition of Buddhism. Nagarjunagarbha (or simply Nagarjuna) was the original codifier of the Madhyamaka system of Buddhist philosophy. Asanga was a master of the Abhidharma teachings who codified *The Five Treatises of Maitreya*. Vasubandhu (said to be Asanga’s younger brother) was the author of *The Treasury of Abhidharma*. Dinnaga and Dharmakirti were the principal codifiers of the Buddhist science of valid cognition. Gunaprabha was a major commentator on Vinaya, the Buddhist monastic codes. Aryadeva was Nagarjuna’s principal student and an author of works on Madhyamaka. Chandragomin was the author of an important work on Sanskrit grammar. Virā, a famous poet also known as Ashvaghosha, converted to Buddhism after being defeated in debate by Aryadeva and is known for his biography *The Deeds of the Buddha*.
36. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 14, v. 4. The “circumstances” are those in which an individual incurs a moral fault; “restoration” refers to the reinstating of one’s formal ordination; “candidates” are those considered for ordination; “historical precedents” are accounts of situations in the life of the Buddha in which he established specific rules for his followers; “detailed analyses” refer to different groups of moral faults, depending on their severity (five major groups are recognized in the monastic code); and “clear moral guidelines” refer to discussions of whether something is a moral failing.
37. *Ibid.*, v. 3ab. The locations are the details provided in the sutras concerning the places and times at which the Buddha taught a given topic; the characteristics are found in discussions such as those concerning relative truth as distinct from ultimate truth; the categories are analyses such as those of the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception; and the deeper meanings are the profound implications of the Buddha’s enlightened intent that are brought out in his discourses.
38. *Ibid.*, v. 3cd. In Abhidharma, there are teachings, such as the four noble truths, that “direct one” toward nirvana; teachings that “provide details” by analyzing the categories found in the sutras (such as those of the mind-body aggregates) as to which phenomena are composite and which are not, which are morally positive and which are negative or neutral, which are subject to deterioration and which are not, etc.; teachings that “prevail over objections” by providing argu-

ments that counter philosophical objections raised by non-Buddhists; and teachings that “bring understanding” by leading one to a deeper understanding of the implications of the sutra teachings.

39. In Buddhist contexts, realism and nihilism are the two extremes of belief systems that contradict the true nature of phenomena. Realism is the view that phenomena truly exist as they are perceived—i.e., that they are not simply mental constructs, but can be established to exist in some ultimate sense by virtue of their own independent nature and specific characteristics. Nihilism is the view that, even on the relative level, nothing exists beyond the immediate scope of our senses—e.g., that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between our actions and experiences, or no continuity of consciousness between past and future lifetimes.
40. Not all of the Buddha’s teachings can be treated in the same way. Teachings that convey provisional meaning accommodate the perspective of ordinary beings and speak in terms they are familiar with, whereas teachings that convey definitive meaning are given from the perspective of the ultimate nature of reality, transcending ordinary words and concepts. Teachings in which the Buddha’s intent is straightforward can be taken quite literally, whereas those in which the intent requires interpretation must be understood in the light of such interpretation.
41. Rather than give a strictly grammatical etymology, Tibetan commentators often analyze a Sanskrit term to interpret how the term is to be understood in a particular context.
42. The three realms of existence are those of desire, form, and formlessness; the last two are often referred to as “the higher realms.”
43. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 5, v. 18.
44. *Ibid.*, v. 19.
45. These qualities relate to the three exalted trainings of Mahayana practice: discipline, meditative absorption (or mind), and sublime knowing.
46. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 18, v. 10.
47. The preceding verse from *The Ornament of the Sutras* discusses the ten characteristics of a Mahayana master; this verse from *The Vajra Array* describes the characteristics of a Vajrayana master.
48. There are several variant lists of these eight analogies, based on the complete list of twelve. The twelve are a magical illusion, a reflection of the moon in water, a hallucination, a mirage, a dream image, an echo, a castle in the sky, an optical illusion, a rainbow, a flash of lightning, a bubble of water, and a reflection in a mirror.
49. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 5, vv. 6, 15cd.
50. *Ibid.*, v. 21. Longchenpa may be referring to an early translation of this work from Sanskrit into Tibetan. In the version available to us, the first two lines of this passage read: “Any denigration, by those deluded by afflictive states, of spiritual superiors / and any contempt for the teachings they speak are all the result of opinionated views.”
51. The Hell of Endless Torment is one of the eight hot hells described in the Bud-

- dhist teachings. Although not a state of eternal damnation (but rather the long-lasting karmic result of extremely negative actions), it is the lowest state in samsara, entailing the greatest degree of suffering possible.
52. These five acts are matricide, patricide, killing an arhat, inflicting physical injury on a buddha, and creating a schism in the sangha. They are termed “acts of immediate karmic retribution” because those who have committed them and not purified themselves of the karma incurred will experience at death immediate rebirth in a hell realm, without the usual interval of the after-death state.
 53. The source text reads: “a lack of wholesome interest.” In either case, this refers to a lack of the three kinds of faith, based on awe, the desire to emulate buddhas, and conviction.
 54. The source text reads: “one embodies the obscurations that come from a lack of the sacred dharma.” In either case, the point is that because one has not received the teachings, one is unable to appreciate their value and profundity.
 55. The *Treasury* reads: “fixating on the provisional meaning.”
 56. In this context, “those who have defeated the inner foes” are buddhas.
 57. *Ibid.*, vv. 22–4.
 58. This is a well-known citation from an unspecified sutra; it is quoted by Shantarakshita in his treatise on valid cognition entitled *The Summary of Suchness*.
 59. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 5, v. 18.
 60. “Fruition” refers to any of the four fruition states defined in notes 62 and 63: that of an arhat, a nonreturner, a once returner, or a stream winner.
 61. Prajapati was the Buddha’s stepmother, who raised him when his mother, Maya-devi, died soon after his birth; the Buddha’s attendant, his cousin Ananda, intervened on her behalf to convince the Buddha to allow the ordination of women. The monastic tradition of early Buddhism was misogynist in large part because of the male-dominant worldview of the Indian culture in which it first flourished.
 62. An arhat has removed all factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation that are associated with rebirth in any of the three realms of samsara. A nonreturner has removed all factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation that are associated with rebirth in the realm of desire, and hence will not be reborn in that realm. A once returner has removed most of the factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation that are associated with rebirth in the realm of desire, but will be reborn one more time in that realm. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of these levels of accomplishment on the shravaka path.
 63. A stream winner has removed the factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing, but not those to be eliminated on the path of meditation. See Chapter 4.
 64. In such discussions, “year” does not always mean the same unit of time; the definition changes even from one section of Buddhist teachings to another (nor has it been the same in all cultures throughout history). This makes the task of correlating these dates with the Western calendar difficult.

It is not clear why Longchenpa selected the Fire Male Horse year as his benchmark. The verses he cites later in the chapter suggest that he was basing his calculations on contemporary astrological sources. The year he refers to was part of the fifth sexagesimal cycle of the Tibetan calendar, during which Longchenpa

lived (the next Fire Male Horse year did not occur until several years after his death); it corresponds to the period from early 1306 to early 1307, i.e., two years before the year of Longchenpa's birth, the Earth Male Monkey year, which began in early 1308.

65. This accounts for the total, in each case, of 4,500 years.
66. The Fire Female Ox year corresponds to 797 C.E. Other Tibetan sources give dates several decades earlier for Trisong Detsen's ascent to the throne, and 797 as the year in which his eldest son, Muné Tsenpo, succeeded him.
67. The Iron Male Tiger year corresponds to 930 C.E.
68. The Fire Male Dragon year actually corresponds to 956 C.E., not 957.
69. "Fifty-six years later" refers to 1012 C.E. Loden Sherab lived from 1059 to 1109, Drakjor Sherab lived in the eleventh century, and Nyima Sherab lived from 1139 to 1208.
70. This corresponds to 1336 C.E. (the Fire Male Rat year) of the fifth sexagesimal cycle, not 1306 (the Fire Male Horse year). The historical sources available to Longchenpa may have been vague or inaccurate, as early Tibetan records often are.
71. These are epithets of Buddha Shakyamuni.
72. This verse makes use of traditional numerical symbols. The "number of fire" is 3 (traditionally, the three kinds of fire are the mythical fire found in the southern ocean of the human realm, the fire of the sun, and ordinary fire); the "number of arrows" is 5 (in that Kamadeva, the Indian analog of Cupid, shoots arrows that arouse five kinds of desire); the "number of the moon" is 1 (in that there is but a single moon); and the "number of tastes" is 6 (in that the Abhidharma teachings classify tastes as sweet, sour, bitter, astringent, hot, and salty). Thus, the number of years that the Buddha's teachings had already endured is $(1,000 \times 3) + (100 \times 5) + (10 \times 1) + (6) = 3,516$. The "number of orifices" is 9 (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, anus, and urethra); the "number of nagas" is 8 (in that there are eight great leaders among the nagas); and the "number of the great Vedas" is 4. Thus, the number of years remaining is $(100 \times 9) + (10 \times 8) + 4 = 984$.
Judging by the language employed, these verses are most likely taken from a Tibetan text on Indian astrology; such texts employ various systems of calculating the duration of the Buddhist teachings. Longchenpa seems to have selected this passage, with its total of 3,516 years, as the primary basis for his discussion; this would explain his previous mention of the Fire Male Horse year as the benchmark date.
73. The upholding of "the signs . . . of the nirmanakaya" refers to the fact that individuals (such as Longchenpa himself) who embody the qualities of the nirmanakaya continue to manifest; the upholding of "the . . . attributes of the nirmanakaya" refers to the wearing of monastic robes. The "practice of rituals" refers to the Buddhist monastic tradition.
74. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 3, ll. 65-7.
75. In the future, the role of the monastic community in maintaining the Buddhist tradition will become less central.
76. The idiom "not dependent on time" (literally, "not earlier or later") has the fol-

lowing implications: The sambhogakaya source of nirmanakaya emanations is ever-present and unchanging, and the distinct nirmanakaya emanations who manifest do so in response to the needs of individual beings. Although many beings may encounter the same nirmanakaya and that encounter may seem to have a temporal sequence in their collective perception, in essence a manifestation takes place for each individual.

77. The moon's reflection can be prevented from appearing in a vessel of water if the vessel is covered or the water rendered too turbid to reflect the image clearly, but the circumstances that prevent it from appearing are specific to the vessel, not to the moon. Similarly, nirmanakaya emanations manifest from their sambhogakaya source according to specific conditions that affect the one perceiving these emanations, but the emanations themselves are not affected by such conditions.
78. "Sovereign lord" refers to the sambhogakaya source of nirmanakaya emanations (comparable to the moon in the sky in the analogy), which is "constant" (beyond time) and "pervasive" (beyond space). "The abode of Akanishtha" here refers to Akanishtha in the realm of form.

Chapter 3

1. The existing situation in the world of both gods and humans remains the same, in that beings are merely reborn in more favorable circumstances, without any opportunity to gain liberation from samsara.
2. These are known as "the two kinds of identity," the attribution of a "self" inherent in the individual personality and an identity inherent in any given phenomenon, as something constant, unitary, and with autonomous existence. See also note 153.
3. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 3, l. 1. This verse indicates that the unsurpassable secret mantra approach incorporates all of the principles underlying the four lower approaches.
4. The two approaches are those of sutra and tantra.
5. The three approaches are those of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva.
6. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, sec. 7, ll. 67–8.
7. The term "spiritual approach" (*theg pa*) has more specific implications than "philosophical system." The latter can apply to Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist systems and is defined as "a set of conclusions reached through reasoning," whereas the former can "carry" (from the Tibetan verb *degs pa*) one toward liberation and omniscience.
8. Although the twofold division usually refers to non-Buddhist versus Buddhist systems, in this context the division appears to be between the outer approach of the sutras and the inner approach of the tantras. The threefold division comprises the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches (together constituting the foundational approach), the Mahayana (the intermediate approach), and the six classes of tantra (together constituting the greater approach). In the Nyingma

- tradition, the model is one of nine spiritual approaches (“the nine *yanas*”). The eight “lower” approaches—*shravaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva*, *kriya*, *upa*, *yoga*, *mahayoga*, and *anuyoga*—are based on ordinary mind (*sems*); the ninth, *atiyoga*, is based on timeless awareness (*ye shes*).
9. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 13, l. 1.
 10. One holds the ten kinds of positive actions in high esteem because one is aware that they contribute to one’s well-being.
 11. The four states of meditative stability are stages on one’s path from the realm of desire toward liberation from *samsara*, although they still fall within conditioned existence. If one attains such a state and remains absorbed in it, one will take rebirth in a corresponding state among the gods of the form realm. The first of the four states has five characteristics: discursive examination and analysis (antidotes that eliminate negative factors associated with the realm of desire—specifically, emotional reactions of attachment and aversion, as well as dissatisfaction and suffering); joy and well-being (the benefits of developing this first state); and one-pointed meditative absorption. The second state has the last three characteristics, but discursive examination and analysis are replaced by an extremely lucid awareness that exposes their limitations and eliminates them by freeing the mind of afflictive states and instilling a deep sense of confidence in the value of moving beyond the first state. The third state also has five characteristics: equanimity, mindfulness, and alertness (antidotes to the flawed joy that characterizes the first two states); the well-being that comes from physical and mental pliancy; and one-pointed meditative absorption. The fourth state has four characteristics: mindfulness and equanimity (antidotes to the flawed well-being that characterizes the three lower states); the experience of equanimity that is the benefit of attaining this fourth state; and one-pointed meditative absorption.
 12. The two non-Buddhist views are those of realism and nihilism. This enumeration is developed in the cycle *The Heart Drop of the Dakini*, compiled by Longchenpa.
 13. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, much of the classical criticism of non-Buddhist systems of Indian philosophy was based on Tibetan translations of very early Indian sources. Even by the time Longchenpa was writing in the fourteenth century, there had been many new developments in Indian thought, but his analysis was of necessity based on works of the more ancient period.
 14. This is a reference to the Buddhist teachings in general, which are termed “inner” because they place more emphasis on explaining the inner development of the mind than on discussing the external world.
 15. The source text has “holders of extreme views” rather than “*Samkhyas*.”
 16. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 6, v. 121.
 17. According to traditional Buddhist cosmology, after a universe forms, the first human beings to appear live for an incredibly long time; the human life span then undergoes a cyclic process of decrease and increase until the universe disintegrates. Buddha Shakyamuni appeared when a majority of humans lived to be one hundred years of age.

18. Kapila is traditionally thought to have attained a profound level of meditative absorption that brought him to the highest state in conditioned existence.
19. Pantanjali-putra was the author of *The Discourse on Union*; the Yoga system is closely associated with the Samkhyas.
20. These three refer not to separate systems, but to slightly variant theories.
21. The soul is the subjective perceiver, and primal matter is the object perceived.
22. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 6, v. 121.
23. Although the terms are used somewhat interchangeably here, "soul" denotes a being's personal soul, whereas "spirit" refers to a more universal principle that, like a passive spectator, watches the display created by primal matter.
24. This theory accounts for the above-mentioned name of the adherents of this system, "Positers of Three Attributes."
25. In this context, the term *nga rgyal* (usually translated as "pride") is a translation of the Sanskrit *abāṃkara* (literally, "I-making"); it refers to the conceit, or deeply ingrained concept, of an individual self.
26. The conceit of self as a result of impulse is associated with the attribute of aversion; that of the elements is associated with attraction; that of specific manifestations is associated with ignorance.
27. The Samkhyas hold that the major elements have the qualities of the rudimentary components from which they evolve.
28. Here "nature" is another term for "primal matter."
29. The eleven faculties and the five rudimentary components.
30. Longchenpa is citing a Tibetan translation of Ishvarakrishna, *The Source Verses of the Enumerators* (the earliest source of the Samkhya system), v. 22. See Radhakrishnan and Moore (eds.), *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p. 434.
31. The twenty-four objects of knowledge are primal matter and its twenty-three manifestations; "the rest" refers to both kinds of primal matter—the natural cause of things and the resultant manifestation—taken as one.
32. Although they are also results that derive from nature, or primal matter.
33. Ishvarakrishna, *The Source Verses of the Enumerators*, v. 3. See Radhakrishnan and Moore (eds.), *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, p. 427.
34. For the Samkhyas, cause and result (like milk and the yogurt that comes from it) are not separate, because everything comes originally from primal matter.
35. An example of "temporary subsidence" is the disappearance of waves from the surface of the ocean.
36. As indicated earlier, the other attributes are pain and indifference.
37. Ishvarakrishna, *The Source Verses of the Enumerators*, vv. 57, 59. See Radhakrishnan and Moore (eds.), *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, pp. 443-4. The point here is that although primal matter is not sentient, it nevertheless produces things.
38. In this context, "fundamental factor" is equivalent to "object of knowledge."
39. Maheshvara is a name for Shiva.
40. Uma is a name for the wife of Shiva.
41. A being has consciousness only by the will of Maheshvara.
42. Uluka is a name for Kanada. He was so called because of a legend about an owl

- alighting on a lingam and answering "yes" to six questions posed by Kanada; these answers formed the basis of Kanada's philosophy.
43. An example of "proximity" is one's body, which is considered "a substance that is proximate" (literally, "not other"); although these seven attributes are conceptual constructs, according to the Shaivite system they are substantial entities.
 44. These twenty-five secondary attributes, which are more accurately considered specific manifestations or expressions, are held to be created by Maheshvara, not invented by the human mind.
 45. For example, "tree" versus "pine."
 46. The idiom "included in the scope of a being's experience" implies something of which one is directly conscious but which is not simply within one's mind; for example, if one's finger is cut, one feels pain, so the finger is included in the scope of one's experience, but if one's hair is cut, one has no sensation of pain, so the hair is not included.
 47. These attributes arise from the interaction between the soul and the conceptual mind.
 48. Jina was also known as Vardhamana Mahavira (599-27 B.C.E.).
 49. Exhaustion is the state in which karma is no longer operative.
 50. Brihaspati is the god of the planet Jupiter.
 51. In this verse, Valmiki, the author of the *Ramayana* epic of ancient India, is addressing his daughter.
 52. This line is a reference to an Indian fable in which a swindler fabricates wolf tracks.
 53. These axioms are discussed in the subsection below on the Mahayana concept of the Three Jewels.
 54. Entrance into the stage of a stream winner requires passing through the "anticipatory phases" of the path of linkage and the first fifteen of the sixteen steps of the path of seeing. Entrance into the stage of a once returner requires removing any of the first six factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation. Entrance into the stage of a nonreturner requires removing the seventh to the ninth factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation. Entrance into the stage of an arhat requires eliminating all of the afflictive states entailed in the four states of meditative stability.
 55. The stage of dwelling in the fruition state of a stream winner involves dwelling in the realization of the sixteen steps of the path of seeing, although the factors to be eliminated on that path have not been entirely removed. Dwelling in the fruition state of a once returner entails the removal of the first six factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation. Dwelling in the fruition state of a nonreturner entails the removal of all nine factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation. As Longchenpa notes, an additional stage, that of dwelling in the fruition state of an arhat, entails the elimination of all nine afflictive states associated with even the pinnacle of conditioned existence.
 56. Although the qualities of enlightened form, speech, and mind are natural attributes of one's buddha nature, they are latent; one takes refuge so that they will eventually become evident.

57. This text is Longchenpa's extensive commentary on his source verses, *Being at Ease in Mind Itself*. A translation of this commentary by Ives Waldo, *The Great Chariot: A Treatise on the Great Perfection*, is forthcoming.
58. "Corruptible" refers to whatever is produced by, or produces, afflictive states.
59. Dharmatrata, *Didactic Aphorisms*, ch. 1, v. 3a.
60. *Ibid.*, v. 3d.
61. The secret mantra approach is discussed in Chapters 5 through 7.
62. The paths of the cause-based approaches are discussed in Chapter 4.
63. This is a standard tetralemma, or fourfold argument, used by Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophers alike, although the conclusions vary. Here the question is being asked from a non-Buddhist perspective, based on the assumption that the self ultimately exists.
64. This line of reasoning is based on the conventional logic used by the lower Buddhist systems, as distinct from the Madhyamaka logic that is used to investigate ultimate reality.
65. Substantial entities are things such as forms and sounds that are not merely imputed, but can perform functions.
66. In this context, forms are not exclusively visual or tactile objects, but include objects of all five senses—visual forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile sensations—as well as the physical body and its sense organs.
The tenets of the Vaibhashika system are challenging, in that they seem quite intricate on the surface; once one is familiar with the underlying logic, however, the system is relatively straightforward. Until recently, one of its primary sources, *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations*, existed only in Chinese translation, although brief citations of it appear in Tibetan commentaries; it is currently being translated into Tibetan from the Chinese. The other main source of the Vaibhashika system is Vasubandhu's *The Treasury of Abhidharma*.
67. The term "visible" implies that such forms are perceptible to the visual consciousness of ordinary beings. "Physically obstructive" implies that when two such forms (or even the particles of which they are composed) come into contact, they cannot pass through, but instead block, one another.
68. The Vaibhashikas (like the Sautrantikas) do not believe that the particles that combine to form obvious matter are in contact with one another. The term "real entity" is more or less equivalent to "substantial entity" and refers to anything that can perform a function, i.e., all forms, consciousnesses, and distinct formative factors.
69. The sense faculties are not the sense organs in question, but more subtle factors that are the supports for their respective sense consciousnesses.
70. According to the Vaibhashikas, when someone takes a vow, that person's mind acquires a quality (an invisible, intangible form) that alters its makeup. This form may involve "ordination," such as taking a vow to refrain from killing for the rest of one's life; "the antithesis of ordination," such as taking a vow to kill for the rest of one's life; or "partial ordination," such as making a commitment for a shorter period of time or subject to certain restrictions.
71. From the Vaibhashika point of view, inanimate objects in the external world

(such as a cup) are composed of eight kinds of particles. The physical body, with its tactile sense faculty, is composed of nine kinds of particles, the foregoing eight plus the particles of the tactile faculty itself. The remaining sense faculties are composed of ten kinds of particles, the foregoing nine plus the particles of the particular faculty.

72. For the Vaibhashikas, ultimate reality consists of two factors—minute indivisible particles and irreducible moments of consciousness—and is arrived at when the mind reaches the limit to which these factors can be analyzed.
73. The *Treasury* reads: "As with a vase or water, there is no existence on the relative level."
74. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 6, v. 4.
75. In this context, the terms "mind" and "consciousness" are for the most part synonymous. "Coordinating mental faculty" is a translation of the term *vid*. According to Herbert Guenther, "Buddhism developed a functional, rather than a static, interpretation of mind, and described it by three different terms: *sems*, *vid*, and *nam-(par) shes-(pa)*. Of these terms, the last one denotes man's perceptions; the middle one the co-ordination of the data of his senses and his 'thoughts.' The first one describes man's responsiveness and indicates the fact that all awareness is intentional or relational, from a subjective pole to an object of some sort; in other words, it names the bipolar structure of immediate experience, because this faculty's function is that of 'the co-ordination of the data of [one's] senses and [one's] 'thoughts'" (*Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice*, p. 91). Given that *vid* has both a conceptual and a nonconceptual mode, it would be misleading to translate it as something like "conceptual consciousness."
76. The five sense consciousnesses are, strictly speaking, nonconceptual; visual consciousness, for example, perceives forms but does not generate concepts about them.
77. The Sautrantikas maintain that the sense consciousnesses perceive their objects, whereas the Vaibhashikas maintain that it is the sense *faculties* that perceive.
78. Here "vision" refers to the visual faculty, which is tangible but not visible and whose physical support is the eye, which is both visible and tangible.
79. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 1, v. 42.
80. These are known as the five integral factors, which are necessary for any act of cognition.
81. These are known as the five mental functions for ascertaining objects. Like the five integral factors, they are involved in any act of cognition.
82. These are known as the eleven positive mental states.
83. These are known as the six primary afflictive states. Belief in the reality of the perishable aggregates is the belief that these aggregates constitute a permanent self or soul.
84. These are known as the twenty secondary afflictive states.
85. These are known as the four variable mental states, because they can function in situations that are ethically positive, negative, or neutral. Conceptualization is the function that determines what an object is essentially, where as analysis determines its specific characteristics or properties.

86. That is, although consciousness, or mind, as the primary factor and a mental state as the secondary factor can be distinguished from one another, they have common qualities.
87. That is, two mental states of a similar type cannot come about simultaneously. States of a dissimilar type can; for example, as mentioned in notes 80 and 81, the five integral factors and the five mental functions for ascertaining objects are involved in every cognitive act.
88. The Vaibhashikas hold that consciousness directly perceives its objects; the Sautrantikas, on the other hand, maintain that consciousness perceives only the data of a given object that derive from the previous moment, while the object itself is always imperceptible in the present moment of consciousness.
89. In this context, "reflexive consciousness" refers to the function of consciousness that is aware of perception taking place. For example, when the nonconceptual visual consciousness sees a flower, it is this reflexive function that is aware that seeing is taking place, and so forms a link between the nonconceptual visual consciousness and the conceptual consciousness that knows, "I am seeing a flower." The Vaibhashikas do not accept that there can be reflexive consciousness; the Sautrantikas accept that there can be.
90. These are factors that have no congruence (of time, etc.) with mind or mental states, yet are evident in certain situations. The Vaibhashikas accept that these patterns are substantial entities. In *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, Vasubandhu lists fourteen such factors; Longchenpa's list follows the discussion of twenty-four factors found in Asanga's *Compendium of Abhidharma*. However, the traditional lists differ slightly from the one given here. Vasubandhu's fourteen factors are acquisition, nonacquisition, equality, the meditative stability of cessation, the meditative stability of a trance state, the trance state itself, the faculty of life force, production, deterioration, duration, impermanence, groups of words, groups of phrases, and groups of letters. Asanga's list of twenty-four adds the following factors: the ordinary state of being, continuity, differentiation, connectedness, speed, sequence, time, location, number, and grouping.
91. The meditative stability of cessation is a state in which the obvious levels of sensation and cognition are arrested and which is devoid of even the desire present in the state of "nothingness" (the third of the four states in the realm of formlessness). It is based on a former aspiration to rise above the pinnacle of conditioned existence and rest in a state of peace. Unstable aspects (and even some stable aspects) of mind and mental states are arrested, and seven avenues of consciousness (excluding consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience) have ceased. For the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas, this and the following two formative factors are cases of the mind being nonexistent, because they do not accept the existence of a basis of all ordinary experience. The Chittamatrins' critique of this position is given later in the chapter.

The meditative stability of a trance state is devoid of the desire present on the third of the four levels of the realm of form, but not of that desire found in the higher realm of formlessness. Unstable aspects of mind and mental states, including the six outwardly directed avenues of consciousness, are temporarily arrested.

The trance state itself comprises the mind and mental states of an individual who, having achieved the meditative stability of a trance state, has been born among the gods associated with the fourth state of meditative stability, who are themselves in this trance state. As soon as one takes rebirth among these gods, the stirring of one's mind and mental states ceases—a situation that lasts for many eons.

The listing of "the faculty of life force" seems to be an error in all three editions of the *Treasury*. Normally another formative factor, similarity or commonality, is listed here. In his treatment of the Sautrantika system, Longchenpa discusses this formative factor after discussing the faculty of life force (p. --); he also refers to it on p. 95. However, one does encounter variant lists in the traditional literature, and some Vaibhashika authors maintain that such lists are simply representative, there being endless possibilities of distinct formative factors.

The ordinary state of being is that of someone who has not yet attained any of the paths of a spiritually advanced person. These paths are those of seeing, meditation, and no more learning in any of three approaches, those of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, or bodhisattva.

Continuity also denotes "entrance," as in the act of entering a building.

Normally, the two formative factors of correspondence and connection are taken as one, and another factor, speed, follows. This seems to be an error in the *Treasury*.

92. This discussion of time hinges on the Vaibhashika position that past, present, and future are substantial entities. The past exists, so something in the past has not ceased to be; the future exists, only we have yet to experience it. The Vaibhashikas accept simultaneous production (i.e., a phenomenon of the present moment moving into the future moment) and disintegration (a phenomenon of the past moment ceasing in the present moment); every phenomenon undergoes such moment-by-moment production and disintegration.
93. Here the term "compounded phenomenon" does not designate a formative factor, but any phenomenon, like a cup, that is "put together" through causes and conditions. A cup (which is compounded of eight kinds of particles—the four primary ones of earth, water, fire, and air and the four secondary ones of color, odor, taste, and tactile sensation, which are bases of forms) is affected by eight other factors of production, deterioration, etc. (which are distinct formative factors, not bases of forms). "Impermanence" refers to the disintegration of something.
- One of the Madhyamikas' critiques of this system is that concepts such as "production of production," "deterioration of deterioration," and so on lead to an ad infinitum situation (production of production of production, etc.), but for the Vaibhashikas only the first such factor is required (e.g., the production of production, in that it accounts for the process of production beginning).
94. The rest of the four phenomena are the aging of aging, the duration of duration, and the impermanence of impermanence.
95. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 2, v. 46ab. "These" in the first line refers to the four phenomena of production, duration, aging, and impermanence. See Pruden (trans.), *Abhidharmakośabhaṣyam*, pp. 240–1:

46a. They have in their turn characteristics termed arising-of-arising, duration-of-duration, etc.;

Four primary characteristics are as described above.

The four secondary characteristics . . . are arising-of-arising, duration-of-duration, old age-of-old age, and impermanence-of-impermanence.

All conditioned things are conditioned by these primary characteristics; these, in their turn, are conditioned by the four secondary characteristics.

You say that each of the primary characteristics should have, exactly as the *dharmā* that it characterizes, four characteristics, and thus following; you do not understand that these are the activity, the operation . . . of the different characteristics.

46b. The primary characteristic refers to eight *dharmas*, the secondary characteristic to one *dharmā*.

When a *dharmā* arises—which we will term the principal *dharmā* or *muladharmā*, a mind or a mental state—nine *dharmas*, including it, arise together: the principal *dharmā*, four primary characteristics, and four secondary characteristics. The first primary characteristic, primary arising, causes the principal *dharmā*, plus three primary characteristics (duration, old age, and impermanence), plus the four secondary characteristics, to arise: in all eight *dharmas*. It does not cause itself to be produced: it arises through the secondary characteristic arising-of-arising . . . in the same way a hen lays many eggs and each egg causes the birth of only one other chicken . . . in the same way primary arising causes eight *dharmas* to arise, whereas arising-of-arising causes only one *dharmā* to arise, namely primary arising.

It is the same for the other primary and secondary characteristics. Duration-of-duration causes primary duration to last, which in turn causes the principal *dharmā* to last, as well as the three primary characteristics and the four secondary characteristics comprising duration-of-duration. The same for primary old age and impermanence which cause eight *dharmas* to age and to perish, and which age and perish themselves through the secondary characteristics which correspond to them, old age-of-old age and impermanence-of-impermanence.

96. For example, from the present to the past.
 97. As it does for the Mahayana systems.
 98. As it does for the Sautrantika and Mahayana systems. "Habit patterns" are the result of the latent energy of the mind becoming habituated to various external objects, whether positive, negative, or neutral.
 99. As it does for the Mahayana systems.
 100. "Incorruptible state of 'acquiring' an absence" pertains to phenomena, such as the truth of the path and states of cessation, that do not undergo degeneration as a result of other factors.

- to the consciousness, governed by the appropriate sense faculty. In each successive moment, the mind experiences those data from the preceding moment, while the contact continues to provide the data for the next moment.
117. For the Sautrantikas, an imperceptible object is equivalent to the inanimate matter that is the “stuff” of sense perception. They maintain that when one sees a table, there can be no connection between the inanimate matter and the visual consciousness; therefore, what the consciousness perceives is in fact the data of the sense object, not something with substantial existence (i.e., the object that must, by its very nature, remain imperceptible to consciousness). The process of the mind perceiving an object is similar to that of a reflection appearing in a mirror; otherwise, they maintain, the mind would burn when fire was seen.
118. Like the Chittamatrins, the Sautrantikas state that sense objects are “self-manifesting,” but whereas the Chittamatrins say that objects do not exist outside the mind that perceives them, the Sautrantikas describe them as data in the mind that arise externally.
119. These lines do not appear in the version of the source text available to us.
120. The two aspects are the imperceptible object and the sense data of that object.
121. Shantarakshita, *The Source Verses of the Ornament of the Middle Way*, v. 20. In this context, the Vaibhashikas hold that it is the sense faculty, not the sense consciousness, that perceives an object; they therefore maintain that consciousness does not entail sense data. The Sautrantikas (and many of the Chittamatrins) hold that consciousness does entail sense data, for consciousness perceives the sense data of the object generating those data.
- The Source Verses of the Ornament of the Middle Way* is written from the perspective of Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamaka. According to Shantarakshita, the Prasangika Madhyamaka system presents ultimate reality in the definitive sense; the Svatantrika Madhyamaka system presents ultimate reality in a more provisional sense; the Chittamatra system presents relative reality in a definitive sense; and the Sautrantika system presents relative reality in a more provisional sense. The Chittamatrins do accept that there can be consciousness without sense data, e.g., consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience or the supernormal state of perception in which one can be aware of someone’s mind, although that mind presents no sense data to one’s consciousness.
122. That is, the perceived object and the perceiving subject are essentially identical, since consciousness involves both consciousness of an object and the subjective perceiver of that object. The Vaibhashikas accept only consciousness of objects as valid; they do not accept that there can be reflexive consciousness, which requires no objective frame of reference (consciousness of something else). The Sautrantikas and Chittamatrins accept both consciousness of objects and reflexive consciousness as valid forms of consciousness. The Sautrantikas hold that consciousness of objects comes about because of the data presented by objects that remain imperceptible to consciousness, whereas the Chittamatrins hold that no external objects exist and that these data are like dream images, presenting themselves to consciousness as a result of habit patterns.

obvious forms of matter. The refutation of the Vaibhashika position given in the text exposes the internal contradictions of this position by exploring its two possible (and logically absurd) implications. In order for indivisible particles to amass, either no particle involves spatial division (in which case, no amassing in three dimensions would be possible) or every particle involves such division (and would thus by definition be divisible and not a real entity even by the Vaibhashikas' own standard).

110. The Sautrantika and Mahayana systems maintain that if there were no such reflexive function, one would have to ask others if one were seeing a color, feeling pain, etc.
111. The term "sensory attributes" here refers to such attributes as color and shape. The following point is being made: If the inability to see an invisible spirit in the first place means that one cannot see any other attributes of the spirit, then by analogy if there were no reflexive consciousness in the first place, there would be no consciousness of anything else (e.g., sense objects).
112. The Vaibhashikas maintain that the production, aging, duration, and impermanence (i.e., disintegration) of a phenomenon are substantially existent entities separate from the phenomenon itself, and they deny any alternative. The Sautrantikas point out that, by this very denial, the notion that the impermanence (for example) of a phenomenon is substantially separate from that phenomenon means that that phenomenon is, by default, permanent. The Vaibhashikas' own logic would require that they come to such an obviously erroneous conclusion.
113. Indiscernible forms are intentions that manifest in one's conceptual consciousness and cannot be detected by others. Examples include vows of individual liberation, vows of meditative stability observed by beings in the realm of form, and vows that are not subject to deterioration (i.e., that transcend the three realms and apply to spiritually advanced beings). Vows are based on the mental attitude "I will not commit such and such an action"; when one loses this attitude of renunciation, one breaks the vow.
114. The Sautrantikas include these indiscernible forms in the category of consciousness.
115. Governing conditions exert control over any result; the sense faculties are governing conditions in that they cause their respective kinds of consciousness to function. Referential conditions cause consciousness to arise in the form of a sense datum; that datum comes into being with reference to an external sense object, such as a visual form or sound. The third condition necessary for perception to take place, the immediate condition, is an unobstructed avenue of consciousness. Immediate conditions affect the congruence between mind and mental states, ensuring that once a mental state has ceased, a similar state immediately comes about in the future moment.
116. This discussion concerns how the Sautrantikas account for the moment-by-moment continuity of something like seeing a flower. In the first phase, or moment, three factors—object, sense faculty, and consciousness—come into contact; in the second moment, data similar to the object present themselves

101. This is cessation that is at least temporarily free of afflictive states, arrived at through the pristine cognition that realizes the nonexistence of any personal identity.
102. This is cessation that is at least temporarily free of afflictive states, not because the latent potential for such states has been arrested through an analytical process, but because the necessary causes and conditions for something to come about are not complete, and so the result does not come about.
103. That is, all positive aspects of mind and mental states that derive from consciousness focusing on the truth of the path.
104. The source text reads: “are subject to deterioration.”
105. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 1, vv. 4ac, 5ac.
106. Although these four axioms are central to Buddhist thought and are accepted by all systems of Buddhist philosophy, their interpretation has led to different conclusions. Longchenpa is stating that the Vaibhashika interpretations of the first and third axioms are somewhat lacking. To account for the impermanence of compounded phenomena, the Vaibhashikas need to posit a distinct formative factor (impermanence), which they consider a substantial entity, acting on a given phenomenon to make it exhibit impermanence. As for the axiom that all phenomena lack identity, the Vaibhashika system leads to a realization of the nonexistence of personal identity. However, the Mahayana systems lead, in addition, to the realization that any identity attributed to a phenomenon has no inherent existence.
107. This refutation is the Sautrantika critique of the Vaibhashika position.
108. It is untenable for the Vaibhashikas to assert that these formative factors are substantially existent—i.e., have an independent existence that does not rely on any other circumstances—when in fact (according to the Sautrantikas) they are only nominally existent—i.e., established to be merely concepts and terms that can be applied, not autonomous entities.
109. Gampopa, *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (trans. Guenther), p. 208:

The Vaibhāṣika declares: Atoms by nature are spherical, undivided, singular and exist physically. A mass of them is an object (of perception) such as colour-form and so on. When massed together there are intervals between each one. . . . Atoms must be singular or plural. If singular they must have spatial divisions or not. If so they must have an eastern, western, southern, northern, upper and lower part. With these six parts their claim to singularity collapses. If they have no spatial divisions, all material things ought to be of a nature of a single atom. . . . If you assume that there are many, there must have been one which by accumulation formed the mass. But since you cannot find a single atom physically, neither many atoms nor a single physical object having the nature of one can be found.

The Vaibhashikas maintain that these minute particles are indivisible and that their aggregation (with space between each pair of particles) produces

123. Unlike other systems of Buddhist philosophy, the Sautrantika system does not maintain that “objects are mind.”

The last two lines of the source text (*The Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*, v. 457bc, by the Indian master Dharmakirti) read: “Therefore, consciousness is distinct / from the experiences of all mental images.” The first two lines are not found in the version of the text available to us. In his commentary on *The Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*, Mipam Nampar Gyalwa of the Nyingma school identifies three philosophical views that the text discusses: the inauthentic level is that of ordinary people in the world, who do not investigate their experience at all; the slightly more authentic level is that of the Sautrantikas; and the completely authentic level, which Dharmakirti considers the consummate view, is that of the Chittamatrins.

124. The image of a double moon is a traditional example of delusory perception, for it is merely a visual distortion created by pressing the eyeball. The Sautrantikas consider substantial entities, which they define as capable of performing a function, to be ultimately real; things that cannot perform a function, such as the appearance of two moons, they consider to be only relatively real.
125. The Sautrantikas accept that ordinary kinds of perception are not erroneous, because the data conform to the objects that present them, which for the Sautrantikas are “true” in that they are ultimately real entities that can perform functions. The Chittamatrins and Madhyamikas hold that sense objects themselves are false, in that they do not exist as they seem to in our perceptions.
126. Objects have both general characteristics, which are the result of data arising in conceptual consciousness in a vague or imprecise way, and specific characteristics, which present themselves to a given faculty. “Direct perception” refers to a nonconceptual process. The mind has two modes, or functions. The conceptual mode is contradictory to direct perception. The nonconceptual mode functions in conjunction with any and all of the nonconceptual sense consciousnesses, and thus accounts for one’s ability to experience all five senses simultaneously. In his treatise *Valid Cognition: A Treasury of Reasoning*, Sakya Pandita compares the nonconceptual mode (which does not evaluate its objects) to a mute with good eyesight, who can see but not speak about what he sees, and the conceptual mode to a skilled speaker who is blind. It is the reflexive function of consciousness, which experiences the fact that perception is taking place, that forms the link between the two. According to the sources of valid cognition and Abhidharma, one proof of this nonconceptual mode is that one can have the feeling that one is perceiving the six kinds of objects—seeing forms, hearing sounds, smelling odors, tasting flavors, feeling tactile sensations, and thinking thoughts—all at once; this can happen only because this nonconceptual mode of mind arises simultaneously with each of the five nonconceptual sense consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile).
127. As indicated in the text, generic ideas—mental images generated by memories of what one has perceived through the senses—do not entail distinctions such

as time, location, and nature. For example, the mental image of "vase" does not indicate its temporal status, where it is located, or what it is made of.

Buddhist epistemology takes two kinds of conceptual thought into account. First, there is conceptual thought that combines the verbal designation of an object and the mental concept of that object, such as when an adult sees a table and knows it to be "a table." Second, there is conceptual thought that is potentially capable of bringing together the verbal designation and the mental concept without necessarily doing so, such as when a small child sees a table but does not know it specifically to be "a table."

128. Precise experience is the direct perception of a sense object through the non-conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty, as opposed to the perception of the sense data of the object with the conceptual mode of that consciousness. The term "imprecise" in this context would indicate cognition that involves concepts.
129. That is, the three categories of form, mind, and mental states. Although the Sautrantikas recognize the same formative factors as the Vaibhashikas, they consider these factors to be only nominally existent as concepts.
130. These three states are the meditative stability of cessation, the meditative stability of a trance state, and the trance state itself.
131. In addition to continuity, the factors being referred to are differentiation, correspondence and connection, speed, number, sequence, location, time, and grouping.
132. This refers to groups of letters, words, and phrases.
133. This refutation is the Mahayana critique of the Sautrantika position.
134. For the Sautrantikas, obvious forms of matter, consisting of aggregations of particles, are not substantially existent; they arise only in consciousness. On a more subtle level, minute indivisible particles exist in and of themselves.
135. Although the Sautrantikas do not overtly claim that generic ideas are real entities, they do accept that they are concepts, and for them concepts have their own characteristics, and so are real entities.
136. This discussion hinges on the definition of sound as what is heard by the ear but does not necessarily entail an expression of meaning. Sounds produced by inanimate matter do not express meaning; only conceptual consciousness can assign meaning, as in "This is the sound of a conch shell being blown."
137. The Sautrantikas postulate that obvious forms of matter and experiences (i.e., the sum total of one's experience of samsara) share the nature of a single consciousness. The Chittamatrins argue that the inevitable consequence of such a position would be that things we plainly experience to be separate (suffering and happiness, or obvious forms of matter and the consciousness that perceives them) are not, in fact, separate. The Sautrantikas hold that suffering and happiness, like obvious forms of matter, are real entities.
138. The Sautrantikas do not formally take the position raised in this rebuttal, but the Chittamatrins maintain that the Sautrantikas' logic would lead to this obviously absurd conclusion. According to the Chittamatrins, one perceives

obvious forms of matter as a result of habit patterns causing such data to arise in one's consciousness.

139. The sense object is the condition that provides the frame of reference, the sense faculty is the governing condition, and the unobstructed avenue of consciousness is the immediate condition.
140. The Chittamatrins consider the Sautrantikas' reasons for positing an imperceptible object to be arbitrary and thus invalid. If, as the Sautrantikas maintain, a sense object in the physical world continues to be imperceptible to the conceptual consciousness, which apprehends only the data presented by that imperceptible object in the preceding moment, one could not possibly prove the existence of such an object, any more than one could empirically prove the existence of an invisible spirit.
141. As in the Barhaspatya system discussed earlier in the chapter.
142. As mentioned earlier, the Sautrantikas do accept that there are various avenues of consciousness, but they do not accept the basis of all ordinary experience, as do the majority of Chittamatrins; for the Sautrantikas, mind effectively ceases in states of meditative stability and unconsciousness, and so (according to the Chittamatrins' critique) they must accept numerous cases of mind existing, then not existing (i.e., ceasing to function), and then existing again. The Chittamatrins maintain that, in such states, the obvious functioning of mind ceases, but the more subtle factor—the basis of all ordinary experience—continues: this is how they explain the situation of an arhat, whose mental continuum is arrested during states of cessation induced by meditation but reasserts itself once that state has passed.
143. According to the Chittamatrins, for something to be a real entity of the perceptual process, it must meet certain criteria: specifically, it must be subject to such distinctions as location and time, which generic ideas are not. The Sautrantikas' position is that generic ideas, which lack such distinctions, have the same ontological status as objects perceived by the sense consciousnesses. The Chittamatrins object that this would disrupt the connection between any given moment of the perception of an object and the immediately succeeding moment of cognition of that perception. One implication of this Chittamatra critique of the Sautrantikas is that the conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty (which is able to cognize past, present, and future, and thus conceive of a generic idea) would have to function as though nonconceptual (like the sense consciousnesses, which are capable of perceiving only in the present moment).
144. Materialist philosophers such as the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas think that sound itself is the conveyor of meaning.
145. A word-based idea arises in the conceptual mind on the basis of words used in speech (as when one thinks about the word "vase"). A generic idea arises on the basis of one's own perceptions (as when one thinks about the image of a vase).
146. The connection involved is between an object perceived by a nonconceptual

- sense consciousness and the sense data of that object perceived in the next moment by the conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty, or between a sound and the word-based idea connected with it.
147. The Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas accept both indivisible particles of matter and irreducible moments of consciousness as ultimately real; followers of the pratyekabuddha approach accept only the latter as ultimately real; the Chittamatrins hold that reflexive, naturally lucid consciousness free of dualistic perception is ultimately real. The differences between the views of the pratyekabuddha approach and the Chittamatra system are subtle and difficult to grasp.
148. The shravaka schools referred to here are the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika systems.
149. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 2, v. 8.
150. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 20, vv. 61–2.
151. Nagarjuna, *The Precious Garland*, v. 390.
152. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 11ab.
153. Realization of the lack of identity of phenomena has two aspects: realization that phenomena perceived as objects lack an independent nature and realization that the phenomenon of mind as the perceiving subject lacks an independent nature. The latter aspect is not to be confused with the realization that the seeming self of the individual personality lacks an independent nature.
154. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 9, v. 19.
155. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 1, v. 33.
156. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 5, v. 28.
157. “All-knowing awareness” here refers to the sublime knowing of the lack of identity of the individual personality; this leads to nirvana, the “thorough pacification” of suffering.
158. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 1ab. This text speaks of three kinds of knowledge: the aforementioned all-knowing awareness, also termed “knowledge of the ground”; “knowledge of the path”; and “omniscience” on the level of the fruition. Knowledge of the ground is realization in the Hinayana sense, i.e., the direct realization that all phenomena subsumed within the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception lack identity. Knowledge of the path is knowledge on the spiritual paths that still involve learning, i.e., the first four of the five paths. Omniscience is the timeless awareness of all things, which is exclusive to buddhahood; it is the consummate and instantaneous knowledge of the real nature of things and of things in all their variety.
159. Here “display” implies the capacity to function or engage in activity.
160. *Ibid.*, ch. 8, v. 34bc.
161. In his commentary on the ninth chapter of Shantideva’s *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, Mipam Nampar Gyalwa notes that the Sanskrit term *Madhyamaka* (Tib. *dBu ma*) can be interpreted in two ways. The common meaning is a “middle way” that lies between two extremes (in this case, the philosophical extremes of realism and nihilism); in this interpretation, the

term is taken to mean the “middle way” or “centralist approach” (the term *dBu ma* being taken as equivalent to *dBu s*, “center”). Mipam argues that a more profound meaning of the term is that of a freedom from any limitation or a transcendence of all reference to limit or center: in this interpretation, the Tibetan term *dBu* is honorific for “head,” i.e., “what is above everything else” or “superior.”

162. The tenets of the Chittamatra system are complex, and only a thorough study of the rather massive source literature would lead to a comprehensive understanding of the system, although many issues seem to have eluded resolution even for the Chittamatrins themselves.
- The Chittamatra system employs reasoning, but the approach is not as intricate as that of the Sautrantika system; in the former, if the root issue is refuted, all that derives from it falls apart, whereas in the latter, each point must be dealt with in turn. The Chittamatra sources are vague on certain issues, resulting in a number of areas in which their position is inconclusive, and the variant theories held by different authors in the tradition make it the most difficult system to classify.
163. For the Chittamatrins, imputation is a purely adventitious process. Something that they say is “imputed” does not exist before a conceptual label is applied to it; in fact, it does not exist at all, even on the level of conventional designations, let alone on the ultimate level.
164. This includes the imputation of things like generic ideas that manifest in the thought process.
165. Dependence pertains to things that are empirically verifiable. Such things are substantially existent and are brought about through causes and conditions other than the things under discussion; they then serve as bases for imputation and are aspects of the basis of all ordinary experience.
166. In other words, “physical embodiment” refers to all that is included within a being’s continuum of consciousness.
167. An example of a pure realm of experience is the Realm of Bliss associated with the buddha Amitabha.
168. For example, the ability to perceive a pure realm depends on the degree of timeless awareness that a bodhisattva on the tenth spiritual level experiences in meditative equipoise.
169. The absolute is the true nature of phenomena as it can be confirmed by correct reasoning. It is ultimately real, uncompounded, not imputed, and a pure state of nonconceptual consciousness devoid of dualistic perceptions of object and subject.
170. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. 50cd. “Before” refers to the state of an ordinary being, “later on” to the state of a buddha. The second line of the source text reads: “the unchanging nature of phenomena.”
171. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 10, vv. 22a, 3^{ab}. The source text reads: “still, suchness—though in every way invariable—has become ‘purified.’”

172. This is the more familiar sense of the term *kun g zhi*. It is undifferentiated in the sense that it is not yet committed to any particular avenue of experience and that it facilitates all individual acts of sensation and cognition. It is ethically neutral in that it is neither harmful and negative, nor beneficial and positive.
173. The Chittamattra system has a number of subdivisions. The primary distinction is between those who hold that sense data are valid and those who hold that they are false. The Chittamatrins who consider sense data to be valid fall into three groups: those who posit "the nonduality of mind and its myriad perceptions," those who posit that mind and its objects are like "the two halves of an egg," and those who posit that there are "an equal number of subjective states of perception and objects perceived." (The last-named are thought to be the most evolved of the Chittamattra philosophers.) The Chittamatrins who consider sense data to be false fall into two groups: those who accept a flawed aspect of the basis of all ordinary experience that supports a multiplicity of habit patterns and those who do not accept this, but rather hold that ultimately the ground of all experience is flawless. Those Chittamatrins who hold to the so-called flawless position do accept that there is this ultimate ground of all experience, but do not accept that it has an impure ("flawed") aspect that supports a multiplicity of habit patterns.
174. A distinction is made between the basis of all ordinary experience and consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience. According to Chandrakirti, the basis itself is comparable to the ocean, abiding deeply, while the consciousness is comparable to the waves rising and falling on the surface. The Chittamatrins who hold the "flawless" position accept that this level of consciousness (the nonconceptual mode of mind) exhibits a quality of lucidity, however rudimentary. It is this lucidity that accounts for supernormal states of perception; its pure analog is the mirror-like quality of timeless awareness, just as the pure analog of the basis of all ordinary experience is timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena. For those Chittamatrins who hold the "flawed" position, the basis of all ordinary experience (as a distinct aspect of consciousness) is a blank, unconscious state.
175. That is, they do not accept the existence of sense objects, simply their appearance within the scope of reflexive consciousness.
176. The afflictive aspect of consciousness is one of the eight avenues of consciousness. It is experienced as the ongoing conception of an "I," which is a misconstruing of consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience, is obscured by afflictive states, and is karmically neutral. This aspect of consciousness is primarily responsible for the reinforcement of karmic patterns. It is not completely eliminated until the eighth spiritual level of the bodhisattva path.
- The three mental poisons are desire (or attachment), aversion, and ignorance; the five poisons are these three plus envy and pride.
177. For the other Chittamatrins who accept sense data as valid, the afflictive aspect of consciousness is considered the eighth avenue.
178. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 1, v. 17ab. "The six" is a ref-

erence to the nonconceptual modes of consciousness, i.e., the five sense consciousnesses and the nonconceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty. The phrase “immediately after the six have ceased” refers to the second moment of perception, once the first moment (in which any or all of the five nonconceptual sense consciousnesses have perceived their objects) has passed.

179. This is held to act as a support for the five nonconceptual sense consciousnesses.
180. One of the four variable mental states, conceptualization is investigation on an obvious level; it is consciousness of a rudimentary sort that uses attention (one of the five integral factors) and discernment (one of the five mental functions for ascertaining objects) to perceive only the generalities of the object on which it focuses. Another of the four variable mental states, mental investigation is a more precise kind of conceptualization; it uses attention and discernment to perceive the particulars of its object.
181. That is, the six nonconceptual modes of consciousness do not actually cease, but continue, moment by moment, to provide “raw material” for the succeeding moment of conceptual consciousness; “cessation” is a way of talking about the situation from the point of view of a given succeeding moment.
182. The unchanging absolute corresponds to the basic space of phenomena; the unerring absolute, to timeless awareness. The unerring absolute as “the incorruptible spiritual path” refers to the timeless awareness experienced in meditative equipoise by spiritually advanced beings; some commentators also include the timeless awareness these beings experience in the postmeditation phase.
183. The term “situational paradigms” is a way of referring to distinct formative factors.
184. Roughly speaking, Chittamatrins who consider consciousness to entail sense data correspond to those who consider sense data to be valid, whereas those who consider consciousness to be devoid of sense data correspond to those who consider sense data to be false. According to the former, any of the eight avenues of consciousness can involve sense data.
185. Such objects manifest only to the conceptual mode of consciousness.
186. Deceptive appearances are manifestations that seem to be sensory appearances but are in fact only sense data in the mind.
187. Those of the first group correspond to Chittamatrins who posit that there are an equal number of subjective states of perception and objects perceived. Those of the second group correspond to Chittamatrins who posit the nonduality of mind and its myriad perceptions. Those of the third group correspond to Chittamatrins who posit that mind and its objects are like the two halves of an egg; they maintain that sense objects and the consciousness perceiving them are a single entity, but comparable to two halves of an egg in that one aspect—objects—matches exactly the other aspect—consciousness perceiving them.
188. Although these Chittamatrins accept that these particles are the bases of forms, such as visual objects, they accept that they seem to exist on the relative level, whereas they do not even seem to exist on the ultimate level. Shakyamati is

the author of a major commentary on Dharmakirti's *Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*.

189. These Chittamatrins maintain that mind has two manifestations—its expression as the perception of objects and its expression as the perception of a subject—and that there must be an equal number of “subject-oriented” and “object-oriented” states.
190. More precisely, it is the sense data that the consciousness perceives.
191. That is, there can be many objects, but only a single consciousness perceiving them. The quality of similarity or dissimilarity applies to a given sense consciousness and its respective object. The term “multiple things of like nature” here is equivalent to “many separate consciousnesses”; “single things of like nature” is equivalent to “a single consciousness.”
192. The statement that “multiple things of dissimilar nature do not occur” is to be interpreted as follows: If a separate consciousness existed for each part of a whole sense object—say, the colors red, yellow, white, etc.—this would be a case of “multiple things of dissimilar nature occurring.” In fact, according to these Chittamatrins, only a single “thing of like nature” is necessary, i.e., a consciousness that apprehends a multicolored field. These are the Chittamatrins who do not accept that there is a basis of all ordinary experience. From the Nyingma point of view, it is necessary to accept this basis in order to account for states of unconsciousness.
193. These are Chittamatrins who do accept that there is a basis of all ordinary experience.
194. This verse is not found in the version of the source text available to us. The last line refers to the state of gods whose minds are devoid of perception, for whom the six avenues of consciousness are arrested.
195. A distinction is made between (1) the state of perceiving in terms of identity, a function of the afflictive aspect of consciousness, which is obscured and ethically neutral and which prevents the attainment of liberation, and (2) the basis of all ordinary experience, which is unobscured and ethically neutral and which does not prevent the attainment of liberation.
196. Karmic potential is maintained within the basis of all ordinary experience.
197. As indicated earlier, the five integral factors are contact, ideation, sensation, perception, and attention; sensation as a factor in our experience can be one of pleasure, pain, or indifference; consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience allows one only the vaguest impression of the world; the details of things are perceived by the individual sense consciousnesses.
198. “Vajra-like state of meditative absorption” refers to the meditative state that marks the final extent of the tenth spiritual level on the Mahayana path of meditation, beyond which lies the fruition of buddhahood.
199. Although the avenues of consciousness that derive from it can function in a negative way (leading to a lower state of rebirth and embodiment in samsara) or in a positive way that is corruptible (in that it leads to an impermanent state of higher rebirth and embodiment), the basis itself is not committed to either

- mode. This accounts for the ethically neutral quality of the basis of all ordinary experience.
200. An example of patterns producing results in keeping with causes is the manifestation of a universe of higher and lower states of rebirth and the beings in those realms as a result of collective and individual karmic causes. The habit patterns referred to allow for the experience of pure perception.
201. The foregoing paragraph is a discussion of the basis of all ordinary experience that supports a multiplicity of habit patterns and that basis as the complete maturation of karma; this is analogous to a cause-and-effect relationship.
202. The text literally reads, "so they recited the following," which implies that the Chittamatrins would study and memorize this passage as a way of familiarizing themselves with the characteristics of consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience.
203. The "taking of rebirth" refers to the animate universe of beings taking rebirth in physical forms; the "perpetuation of environments" refers to the inanimate universe of environments experienced by those beings. The Chittamatrins speak of "habit patterns of environment, contents, and embodiment." "Environment" refers to habit patterns that give rise to the inanimate physical universe; "contents," to those that give rise to animate life forms; and "embodiment," to those that give rise to beings' experience of the mind-body aggregates, fields of experience, and components of perception.
204. As noted earlier, consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience involves only vague impressions of sense data. It itself is an avenue of consciousness, but the karmic potential for each of six avenues of consciousness (the five sense consciousnesses and consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty) is latent in the basis of all ordinary experience.
205. What is eliminated is the basis of all ordinary experience, which perpetuates the habit patterns of samsara, not the ultimate basis of all experience, which is the way of abiding. The definition of an arhat here is that of the Chittamatrins, not that of the Madhyamikas.
206. This term refers to the seventh of the eight avenues of consciousness, functioning as an intermediary between consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience and the other six avenues (the five sense consciousnesses and consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty).
207. The afflictive aspect of consciousness entails perceiving in terms of identity, which is "self-occurring" in that it occurs in and of itself within the context of the basis of all ordinary experience.
208. "Bodhisattvas" refers to Chittamatrins as followers of the Mahayana approach.
209. That is, consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty, since the five sense consciousnesses are, in fact, simply aspects of a single consciousness.
210. Generic ideas about the specific aspects of an object do not manifest, because it is the primary factor of mind that apprehends the generic ideas about an object and the attendant mental states that apprehend the specific aspects of that object. These Chittamatrins see no contradiction in the notion that although a sense object manifests clearly, its specific aspects do not. Generic ideas are

- not involved in the functioning of the distinct avenues of nonconceptual sense consciousness (visual, auditory, etc.): only reflexive consciousness is. The sense consciousnesses can perceive the specific aspects of an object whether or not the conceptual mode of consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty is experiencing the generic ideas about that object, because the sense consciousnesses do not require this coordinating faculty to perform their specific tasks.
211. That is, a single cognitive act can have a conceptual and a nonconceptual component. These Chittamatrins hold that there is a single cognitive act for each object, for even though there can be a multiplicity of objects, they all have an aspect in common: they clearly manifest in consciousness. That mind and mental states occur together involves no contradiction, because they are substantially the same entity, or cognitive act, unlike fire and ice, for example, which are distinct entities that function in mutually exclusive ways. Whether or not entities are substantially the same depends on whether their specific characteristics define them as different real entities. The Chittamatrins accept that mind and mental states are substantially identical, in that they are different aspects of what is in essence a single cognitive act.
212. Such antagonism can take two forms. There is the antagonism between two things that cannot remain together for long, such as fire and ice, and the antagonism between things that cannot exist in one another's presence, such as fire and water. Similarly, the undermining can be of two kinds: one thing can impair another or totally annihilate it; in the context of logic, "undermining" refers to disproving a given position.
213. Even though the Chittamatrins who profess that there is a single avenue of consciousness use the term "overcome" in such cases, for them it is simply the case that these two consciousnesses (the erring and the unerring) cannot function simultaneously, just as fire and water, youth and age cannot. These Chittamatrins assert that it is simply a matter of something that was, in essence, flawed becoming something that is, in essence, its antidote.
214. This objection would be raised by other Chittamatrins, who accept six or eight avenues of consciousness.
215. The Chittamatrins who profess that there is a single avenue of consciousness do accept that there are provisionally eight avenues of consciousness, but they do not accept that they are separate things, as do the other Chittamatrins.
216. Dharmatrata, *Didactic Aphorisms*, ch. 33, v. 7. This quotation is cited in support of the Chittamatrins who profess that there is a single avenue of consciousness. The phrase "acts alone" implies that the mind is the sole factor that continues into the next lifetime.
217. In such contexts, "primary factor," "consciousness," and "mind" (*sems*) are synonymous and are often used in combination ("primary factor of consciousness," "primary factor of mind").
218. Those who hold this position are the Vaibhashikas and at least some of the Sautrantikas. The mental states previously discussed are the five integral factors, which are present wherever there is mind.
219. Those who make this contention are the Vaibhashikas, Sautrantikas, and even

- some Chittamatrins. The foregoing paragraph refers largely to divisions of opinion among the Sautrantikas, all of which are refuted by the Chittamatrins.
220. The “six conceptual things” are the primary factor of mind and the five integral factors.
221. The overall impression perceived by the primary factor of mind is not what is perceived by its attendant mental states.
222. The foregoing objection would be raised by the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas.
223. An object’s essence is its generic quality (a vase) as distinct from its specific characteristics (a large, golden vase).
224. The foregoing objection is one that would be put forward on the basis of Vaibhashika and Sautrantika tenets; what follows is the Chittamatra refutation of this objection.
225. That is, they occur at the same time but are substantially different.
226. Implicit in the Chittamatrins’ defense against the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas is the argument that the latter accept congruence of time as part of the fivefold congruence between mind and mental states, so their objection to the Chittamatra position contradicts their own tenets.
227. Because the primary factor (of mind or consciousness) would have occurred before the attendant mental states came about, its specific features would also have manifested in the moment prior to these attendant states.
228. Again, the Chittamatrins are pointing out that the objection of the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas contradicts their own tenets.
229. Because the attendant mental states would have occurred before the primary factor of mind came about, their essence would also have manifested in the moment prior to this primary factor.
230. The term for “mutual support” can be translated literally as “something to be benefited and something to provide benefit.” In most Buddhist philosophical systems, it is axiomatic that there can be no true connection between things that are simultaneous, neither the connection that entails being one and the same thing, nor that of one thing deriving from another. The primary factor of mind and its attendant mental states support one another in the perceptual process, the former perceiving the object in essence and the latter its specific features. If mind and mental states occurred at the same time (but were substantially separate), neither could support the other, because each would have “already happened.” This discussion hinges on the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika insistence that the bases of mind and mental states are separate substantial entities that exhibit fivefold congruence.
231. Again, the objection raised in the foregoing paragraph is based on Vaibhashika and Sautrantika tenets. The next two paragraphs constitute the Chittamatrins’ rebuttal; the process in this section is one of the hypothetical Vaibhashika and Sautrantika opponents slowly being painted into a corner with their own logic.
232. The Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas both accept that in a state of meditative stability—whether a true state of cessation or a trance state—both mind and mental states are temporarily arrested.
233. That is, by the primary factor of mind functioning alone in the moment before

- the attendant mental states occur; this is the first implication of the foregoing objection. Here, the term "consciousness" is equivalent to "primary factor of mind."
234. That is, no factor responsible for perceiving the specific features that is distinct from the primary factor of mind is required. Here the term "distinct factor" is equivalent to "specific factor" or "mental state."
235. This paragraph presents the second implication of the foregoing objection.
236. This is the aforementioned belief that mind and mental states are inseparable from one another.
237. "Particular object" refers to the sum total of the perception of a sense object—its presence, shape, color, and other properties taken together.
238. For the Chittamatrins, since such different states can arise within a single mind, they cannot be established to be substantially different from mind.
239. Again, these factors are distinct in that they are neither inanimate matter nor mind and mental states. Whereas the Vaibhashikas maintain that these factors are substantial entities that are different from inanimate matter and mind, the Sautrantikas do not. The Chittamatrins maintain that they are associated with either (or both) inanimate matter and consciousness (i.e., mind).
240. That is, a state that is something other than the basis of all ordinary experience.
241. The three listed previously (see the section on the Vaibhashikas) are space, the cessation of consciousness owing to discernment, and the cessation of consciousness independent of discernment. For the Vaibhashikas, these are substantial entities; the Sautrantikas maintain that they are not.
242. These are refutations from the Madhyamaka point of view.
243. The contradiction here is that, on the one hand, these Chittamatrins define the examples given in the text as imputed phenomena (and hence nonexistent as such) but, on the other hand, consider them actual entities of consciousness ("dependent" on consciousness), since they accept consciousness as both truly existent and entailing sense data.
244. The Chittamatrins accept what they term "lucid, aware consciousness" as truly existent; hence, a real entity of consciousness would also be existent.
245. Such as a cloth of many colors, the cloth being the substantial entity and the colors its numerous characteristics. The latter position is held by some non-Buddhist philosophers, who maintain that entities with numerous characteristics are established to be substantial entities. According to the Madhyamikas, the Chittamatrins would be unable to refute that position.
246. There would be a consciousness for each particle, so that the whole object could not be perceived, only its individual parts, since a single consciousness could not perceive more than one particle at a time.
247. These Chittamatrins accept that naturally lucid reflexive consciousness is ultimately real and posit an uninterrupted succession of irreducible moments of such consciousness.
248. Rather than "fire," the Dergé edition of the *Treasury* erroneously reads "formlessness."
249. This objection is one that would be raised by the Madhyamikas.

250. For these Chittamatrins, objects perceived externally are entities of one's inner consciousness and nothing more.
251. Indivisibility would entail an inability to forge such connections, because some later phase (i.e., division) of a given preceding moment would have to be connected to some initial phase (i.e., division) of the following moment.
252. "Temporary" is equivalent to "impermanent."
253. This refutation is from the Madhyamaka perspective.
254. For the Chittamatrins, all real entities are impermanent.
255. The Chittamatrins would argue that for there to be consciousness at all, it must be reflexive, just as to have a flame is to have light from that flame.
256. To call the Madhyamaka system "the most sublimely profound secret" is to acknowledge the "self-secret" profundity of its conclusions, as distinct from the deliberate secrecy enjoined in the Vajrayana teachings. That profundity can best be appreciated through some acquaintance with the Hinayana systems. The Madhyamikas use many of the terms found in the sources of those systems, but do not consider the things so termed to be ultimately real.
257. Neither of these systems accepts that phenomena truly exist; they take their names from the types of argumentation they use to convince philosophical opponents of this. Those who follow the Svatantrika system accept the conventional existence of phenomena, but employ a threefold process of logical reasoning that is "autonomous" (i.e., constitutes proof in and of itself) to convince others that phenomena do not truly exist on the ultimate level. Those who follow the Prasangika system do not accept that phenomena exist in any way, even on the conventional level; proponents of the strictest form of the system address opponents' theories simply by pointing out flaws in those theories (i.e., the consequences they entail), without taking any specific position themselves.
258. The first group, that of Svatantrikas "who distinguish appearance from emptiness," represents part of the so-called lower branch of the Svatantrika system, which posits that ultimate truth is quantifiable. The second group, that of Svatantrikas "who use reasoning to establish illusoriness," is also a lower branch of the Svatantrika system, which posits that both ultimate and relative truth are illusion-like. In addition, there is also a group that belongs to the so-called higher branch, exemplified by the Indian masters Jnanagarbha, Shantarakshita, and the latter's student Kamalashila. Both Shantarakshita and Kamalashila taught in Tibet in the eighth century.
259. These four positions are found in many source texts of the lower systems. The first three are flawed from the Madhyamaka point of view; the fourth, according to Longchenpa, is flawed from the Prasangika perspective but is the inevitable conclusion reached by the Svatantrika Madhyamikas.
260. That is, the two levels of truth, merely mental constructs, are identical aspects of an identical essence.
261. Like the qualities of compoundedness and impermanence that apply to a vase; these are aspects, or qualities, that pertain to the single thing that is the vase, but do not exist as things in their own right.
262. This position requires one of a pair to be "real" and the other to be "unreal";

- e.g., to say that a pillar and the horns of a hare are separate is true by virtue of the fact that the latter do not exist in the first place, not because these are two different things.
263. Here what is cognized "through direct experience" refers to visual forms, sounds, etc., experienced through the senses.
264. Literally, "would be empty of separateness."
265. Since the two levels of truth would be identical, to have cognized one would entail having cognized the other.
266. In discussing these four positions, Longchenpa follows a slightly different order than that of his initial list.
267. *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing* is a class of sutras, not a single text. In this citation, the illusion-like quality of phenomena is assigned to the relative level of truth, not the ultimate.
268. An unqualified negation is a simple denial that *x* is the case, without anything further being implied; a traditional example is the statement "The identity of an individual personality does not exist." A qualified negation, on the other hand, while denying that *x* is the case also implies that *y* is the case; a traditional example (the subject of which is the Buddha's cousin Devadatta, who tried to kill the Buddha) is the statement "The fat Devadatta does not eat during the day," which explicitly denies that he eats during the day, but implicitly suggests that he eats at night (because he is fat).
269. For these Svatantrikas, the statement that "ultimate truth exists within the scope of one's awareness" is equivalent to the earlier statement that ultimate truth is an object of consciousness.
270. The term *kun rdzob* is translated in this volume as "relative."
271. The term *don dam* is translated in this volume as "ultimate."
272. Longchenpa discusses the fourth and fifth topics in the analysis in the reverse order found in his initial list.
273. Jnanagarbha, *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*, v. 12.
274. Valid relative phenomena do not "bear up under mental examination" in the sense that if they are examined as to their true nature, they prove to be empty and thus without any independent nature; if they are not so examined, they appear to manifest in a straightforward way. An example of something manifesting according to its type is a barley plant growing from a barley seed.
275. These are traditional examples of what is erroneous on the relative level. The illusion of a hair falling across one's field of vision is caused by an eye disease; as mentioned earlier, the image of a double moon is produced by pressing one's eyeball to distort one's binocular vision. Although such things can manifest in one's experience, they are erroneous in that they serve no further function.
276. This distinction between a quantifiable and an unquantifiable aspect of the ultimate is found in the writings of Indian Svatantrika masters such as Bhavaviveka (Bhavya):
- Bhavya considered the important objection that since the ultimate truth transcends the discursive intellect, it follows that no verbal formulation can possibly express it. How therefore is it possible even to talk

about the two truths, distinguishing ultimate truth in opposition to the relative? If the ultimate cannot be talked about, how can it be distinguished from anything at all? In response, Bhavya draws a distinction between two kinds of ultimate truth. On the one hand, he says, there is the ultimate that is “world-transcending” (*'jig rten las 'das pa*). This is the ultimate truth in itself, the completely ineffable state beyond conceptual elaboration, which can only be experienced but never expressed. On the other hand, there is an ultimate that Bhavya describes as “pure worldly wisdom” (*dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes*), which, in the context of the division of the two truths, is the counterpart of the relative and is the object of thought and word. It is “the ultimate that can be talked about.” These expressions run parallel to another, better-known distinction, which first appears in another text also attributed to Bhavya, between the “ultimate truth in itself” (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*) and the “approximate ultimate” (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) or “concordant ultimate” (*mthun pa'i don dam*). (Padmakara Translation Group, *The Adornment of the Middle Way*, pp. 11–12)

In his commentary on *The Ornament of the Middle Way* (a Svatantrika-oriented treatise by the Indian master Shantarakshita), Mipam Rinpoche notes, “The sūtras sometimes teach the inconceivable and inexpressible uncategorized ultimate [i.e., *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*], free from all extremes of existence, nonexistence, and so forth. At other times, their teaching is ‘no form, no consciousness,’ the categorized ultimate’s [i.e., *rnam grangs pa'i don dam*] mere existential negation” (Doctor [trans.], *Speech of Delight*, p. 151).

277. The first two lines of this citation correspond for the most part to Jnanagarbha, *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*, v. 9ab. The last two lines are not found in the version of the source text available to us.
278. The mental investigation referred to here is specifically that which is based on the realization of emptiness.
279. Philosophical materialists profess that things have true existence. Here “materialists” is a reference not to the proponents of the Barhaspatya system of India discussed earlier in this chapter, but to those of the earlier systems of Buddhist philosophy, especially the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika systems. In contrast, the Madhyamikas state that all phenomena lack finite essence.
280. Here “materialists” refers primarily to the Chittamatrins.
281. That is, as the negation of production.
282. That is, in their classification of things on the conventional level.
283. These are referred to as proponents of Sautrantika Svatantrika Madhyamaka.
284. These are referred to as proponents of Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamaka.
285. Literally, “are empty of being both objects in the external world and entities of consciousness.”
286. That is, proponents of Sautrantika Svatantrika Madhyamaka.
287. That is, proponents of Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamaka.
288. This is one of the five major lines of reasoning employed by the Madhyamaka system; these are discussed below.

289. As distinct from their emptiness.
290. Because one has already realized the emptiness of all phenomena in general, one has by extension realized the emptiness of any specific phenomenon and need not be concerned with particular cases.
291. The term “vajra shards” derives from the image of shards as weapons that can destroy a rock face, just as this reasoning destroys the erroneous position of materialists.
292. This threefold process, which Longchenpa adopts, is one of several used by logicians of the Nyingma school. A parallel process employed by the Sarma schools uses different terminology and a different order: “the properties of the subject under discussion,” which corresponds to Longchenpa’s second step, “proving the properties of the subject under discussion”; “the consequent entailment,” which corresponds to Longchenpa’s first step, “establishing a line of reasoning”; and “the reverse entailment,” which corresponds to Longchenpa’s third step, “ascertaining what is entailed.”
293. Nagarjuna, *The Precious Garland*, v. 69.
294. Each supposedly irreducible moment must have an initial phase (connecting it to the final phase of the preceding moment, an interim phase (the moment proper), and a final phase (connecting it to the initial phase of the following moment); otherwise, there could be no connection between these discrete, irreducible moments, and the flow of linear time would not be possible.
295. This is, of course, a purely conventional line of reasoning, not the actual Svatantrika tenet being put forth.
296. Dharmakirti, *The Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*, ch. 1, v. 167ab. “The Lord of Reasoning” is an epithet for Dharmakirti, a renowned Indian Buddhist logician. The source text reads: “that itself is considered to be what is ultimate.”
297. Such a negation precludes the possibility of some quality pertaining to something under investigation. For example, one’s realization that a vase under investigation is impermanent precludes the possibility of thinking that the vase is permanent.
298. The understanding referred to is that nothing truly exists, or that all phenomena are empty. The phrase “do not manifest” here means “cannot be established to have an independent nature”; the phrase “do manifest” means “can be established.” In this paragraph, Longchenpa is critiquing the Svatantrika position concerning the status of relative phenomena.
299. That is, cannot be established to exist in the ultimate sense.
300. That is, logical reasoning from the perspective of ultimate reality.
301. One’s naive assumption about phenomena is that they exist in their own right.
302. The Svatantrika interpretation of the quantifiable aspect of the ultimate still falls within the realm of conceptual elaboration.
303. According to the Prasangika critique of the Svatantrika position on the two levels of truth, the latter’s assertion that things “do not exist” on the ultimate level is simply a form of nihilism, and their assertion that things “somehow exist” on the relative level is simply a form of realism.

304. In establishing the unborn nature of phenomena to be ultimate truth, the Svatantrikas have merely negated the notion that the nature of phenomena is something born; they have not negated all other conceptual elaborations.
305. In the source text, these lines read:
 When there is unborn suchness, mind is also free of birth.
 At that point, on the basis of these facts, it is as though one cognizes the other.
 The mind takes the form of whatever it perceives, cognizing its object thoroughly,
 and so it is appropriate to use such conventional expressions.
 Thus, one can speak of seeing, or beholding, the true nature of phenomena, although there is nothing to be seen in a dualistic sense.
306. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 11, vv. 13, 17. Here “kaya” refers to dharmakaya as timeless awareness. This is consummate timeless awareness, which is the totality of buddhahood and knows all aspects of the knowable, both the real nature of things and things in their multiplicity.
307. For ordinary beings, all mental states are states of confusion. For those who have attained any of the spiritual levels, although meditative equipoise is free of confusion, postmeditation experience is still largely a state of confusion, albeit somewhat refined.
308. The presence of a fire can be correctly inferred from one’s perception of smoke. Even for ordinary beings, both direct perception and inference are cases of the valid aspect of relative truth.
309. According to the Prasangika definition, the two aspects of the relative level—valid and erroneous—correspond, respectively, to the postmeditation experience of spiritually advanced beings and the habitual experiences of ordinary beings.
310. *Ibid.*, ch. 6, v. 24. In the source text, these lines read:
 False perception is held to be of two kinds:
 that of the faculties being either clear or flawed.
 The consciousness of those with flawed faculties
 is held to be erroneous with respect to consciousness based on excellent faculties.
311. Unlike the Prasangikas, the Svatantrikas consider such a basis for classification to be an aspect of the knowable.
312. *Ibid.*, v. 38cd.
313. *Ibid.*, v. 28ac.
314. Nagarjuna, *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing*, ch. 18, v. 9. The source text reads: “these are the characteristics of suchness.”
315. Although the timeless awareness of buddhahood is nondual, in the language used to describe nirvana, timeless awareness is a quasi-subject experiencing basic space as a quasi-object.
316. Postmeditation has two aspects: one in which the experience of meditative

- equipoise is maintained, and another in which there is only the perspective of the illusion-like nature of phenomena. For the Prasāngika Mādhyamikas, the first constitutes what is ultimately true, the latter what is only relatively true.
317. *Ibid.*, ch. 4, v. 8.
318. The *Treasury* reads: “Because one sees the multiplicity of entities in an erroneous or a valid way.”
319. The source text reads: “as many entities as there are, they are apprehended in two ways.”
320. Chandrakīrti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 6, v. 23.
321. Such classifications of the relative level of truth have the value of conveying meaning that leads to realization of the ultimate level.
322. *Ibid.*, v. 25. The source text reads:
 Ordinary people in the world cognize whatever is perceived as objects
 by the six intact faculties.
 It is true enough according to those in the world.
 They classify the rest as erroneous.
323. *Ibid.*, v. 29. The source text reads:
 Under the influence of an eye disease, one discerns all manner of
 erroneous things,
 such as a hair hanging across one’s field of vision.
 Someone with perfect vision sees the epitome of what is just so.
 In this context, understand this to be suchness.
324. Just as something cannot be produced without also being impermanent, there cannot be an ultimate level of truth without a relative one and vice versa.
325. In this context, “the domain of formative patterning” is synonymous with “the relative level.”
326. This is a universal principle, not a comparison of one level of truth with the other.
327. The source text reads: “as many entities as there are, they are apprehended in two ways.”
328. *Ibid.*, v. 23.
329. Jñānagarbha, *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*, v. 15.
330. The implication is that only timeless awareness can fully appreciate and validate ultimate truth.
331. Shāntideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 9, v. 34.
332. Nāgārjuna, *Sixty Verses on Reasoning*, v. 1.
333. Nāgārjuna, *The Precious Garland*, vv. 212–13.
334. Chandrakīrti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 6, v. 8cd.
335. *Ibid.*, v. 14ab. The source text reads: “Suppose that something comes about by reliance on something else; / well, then, pitch-black darkness could come about from tongues of flame.”
336. The Cārvākas are proponents of the nihilistic Barhaspatya system discussed earlier.

337. *Ibid.*, v. 100.
338. That is, the Charvakas might object that the world's being uncaused does not entail its not being perceived.
339. Nagarjuna, *The Refutation of Arguments*, v. 29.
340. Aryadeva, *Four Hundred Verses*, ch. 16, v. 25.
341. Rather than “ignoble views,” the source text simply has “views.”
342. Nagarjuna, *Sixty Verses of Reasoning*, vv. 46–7.
343. *The Lamp of the Middle Way*, by Bhavaviveka, quotes Nagarjuna's writings extensively.
344. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 6, v. 81ab. This is addressed primarily to the Chittamatrins, for whom dependence is a real entity, as discussed previously.
345. Such words are only labels imposed by the ordinary mind.
346. Once a phenomenon has been assigned a label, everyone must use it to avoid misunderstanding and chaos, but this gives rise to the error of imputing that the phenomenon *is* what it is called.
347. Nagarjuna, *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing*, ch. 7, v. 34.
348. The source text reads: “One cannot demonstrate the meaning of ultimate reality. Without comprehending the meaning of ultimate reality, . . .”
349. The verse cited is actually found in *ibid.*, ch. 24, v. 10.
350. The source text reads: “do not completely understand the profound state of suchness.”
351. *Ibid.*, ch. 24, v. 9.
352. Jnanagarbha, *Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*, v. 2.

Chapter 4

1. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 6, v. 5.
2. “Individual liberation” in this context refers to ordinations that pertain to the foundational, or Hinayana, approach, in that they are observed primarily to aid one's own spiritual development.
3. The vows of a female aspirant are an intermediate step between the ordination of a novice nun and full ordination. There is no corresponding ordination for men.
4. A practitioner who has taken the twenty-four-hour vow of abstinence makes a commitment to observe for that period of time four primary vows (to refrain from killing, stealing, lying, and sexual conduct) and four secondary vows (to refrain from using intoxicants, wearing personal adornments such as jewelry, occupying high seats or thrones, and eating solid food after midday). In many Buddhist traditions, these temporary vows are regularly observed on auspicious days of the lunar cycle by laypeople who hold no other more binding ordination.
5. “The principles of cause and effect” is a translation of the term *gnas dang gnas ma yin pa* (what is or is not suitable or to be expected); it refers to the laws of physics by which the universe functions in our ordinary experience, where certain causes predictably lead to certain results.

6. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 4, v. 55.
7. These four paths are those of accumulation, linkage, seeing, and meditation; all five paths are described in greater detail later in this chapter.
8. The four anticipatory phases of the path of linkage are termed “meditative warmth,” “the peak experience,” “patient acceptance,” and “the highest mundane experience.” These phases anticipate the path of seeing, which is a decisive breakthrough, or shift, from the path of ordinary individuals to that of spiritually advanced beings.
9. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 6, v. 70. According to Vasubandhu’s commentary on this text, the usual order—the path of seeing, followed by that of meditation—is reversed here to bring it into line with a passage in one of the sutras.
10. The term “meditative warmth” derives from the warmth generated by rubbing two sticks together, which signals that a fire (analogous to the timeless awareness experienced on the path of seeing) will soon ignite. Meditative warmth involves both calm abiding and profound insight, bringing with it the experience of external objects having no ultimate existence in their own right.
11. The groupings referred to in this paragraph are collectively known as the thirty-seven factors that contribute to enlightenment.
12. *Ibid.*, v. 9d.
13. The eight mental images (which may be purely imaginary or may arise from the actual observation of corpses during a meditation exercise) are a decomposing corpse, a swollen corpse, a maggot-ridden corpse, a corpse in an advanced stage of putrefaction, a corpse scattered in pieces, a corpse being cremated, a corpse devoured by wild animals, and a disintegrating corpse.
14. In the shravaka approach, one comes to realize that one’s personal identity does not truly exist; the lack of identity of phenomena begins to be appreciated in the pratyekabuddha approach and is fully realized only in the bodhisattva approach.
15. *Ibid.*, v. 14cd.
16. *Ibid.*, v. 17bcd.
17. Rather than “cessation,” the *Treasury* has “lack of identity,” but this simply reiterates the fourth aspect of the first truth. The term in the traditional list of the sixteen topics is “cessation”; indeed, the first topic in each of the truths is the truth itself. Given the demands of internal consistency in this section, the term “cessation” is preferred here.

Thus, the sixteen aspects are as follows: Four topics concern the truth of suffering: impermanence, the fact that things do not last, but come about moment by moment owing to circumstances; suffering, the fact that one is constantly subject to suffering in any of three forms (overt suffering, suffering that results from change, and the subliminal suffering entailed in the mind-body aggregates); emptiness, the fact that phenomena have no inherent existence as constant, unitary, and autonomous entities; and the lack of identity, the fact that the mind-body aggregates do not constitute a constant, unitary, and autonomous self.

Four topics concern the universal origin of suffering: the fact that all things in essence have causes, in that karma and afflictive states produce the suffering

of samsara; the fact that these causes are the universal origin of suffering, in that they produce all the experiences of beings in the three realms; the fact that such results are produced relentlessly, in that karma and afflictive states continuously produce suffering; and the fact that they are perpetuated by conditions, in that karma and afflictive states produce the mind-body aggregates, for example, which then further support the production of suffering.

Four topics concern the cessation of suffering: cessation, the fact that once afflictive states are eliminated, they do not reoccur; peace, the fact that such cessation entails the absence of suffering; the ideal situation, in that one will no longer be reborn in any of the three realms or experience their attendant suffering; and disengagement, the fact that one is liberated from samsara and attains the blissful state of nirvana.

Four topics concern the path: the path itself, in that there is a process whereby one moves from the state of an ordinary being to that of a spiritually advanced being; the logic of this process, in that it serves as an antidote to the afflictive states, which are ultimately unjustifiable; the proven attainment to which the process leads, in that one's ordinary mind is brought to a more authentic state of being; and the certainty of release, in that the path frees one from samsara while leading one to the state of nirvana.

18. These five strengths have the same names as the five governing powers: confidence, diligence, mindfulness, meditative absorption, and sublime knowing.
19. *Ibid.*, v. 18c. The source text reads: "From that, patient acceptance; / the two are similar." The similarity referred to is that between one's experience of the first two degrees of the phase of patient acceptance (the weak and moderate degrees, discussed in the following section) and those of the peak experience.
20. Each of the phases is divided into weak, moderate, and strong degrees.
21. That is, the four topics pertaining to the path in the two higher realms.
22. Twenty-eight plus twenty-four plus twenty plus sixteen plus twelve plus eight plus four plus three plus two plus two.
23. This is the onset of the path of seeing; a distinction is drawn between the initial understanding of a phenomenon (such as the truth of suffering), the patient acceptance born of that understanding, and the patient acceptance born of subsequent understanding. See the later discussion of the process of elimination on the path of seeing.
24. *Ibid.*, v. 28cd.
25. There are four kinds of antidotes: those that bring about elimination (by preventing the reinforcement of the afflictive states), those that serve as the foundation of the spiritual path, those that extend the processes of elimination and attainment, and those that bring about disenchantment with samsara.
26. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, v. 1.
27. *Ibid.*, v. 4ab. All ten factors are eliminated in the realm of desire through the direct perception of the truth of suffering; seven factors (omitting the first, second, and fifth of the five belief systems) are eliminated in both of two cases, through the direct perception of the truth of the universal origin of suffering

- and that of the cessation of suffering; and eight factors (omitting the first two of the five belief systems) are eliminated through the direct perception of the truth of the path.
28. That is, the ten factors eliminated through direct perception of the truth of suffering, plus the seven eliminated through direct perception of the truth of its universal origin, plus the seven eliminated through direct perception of the truth of its cessation, plus the eight eliminated through direct perception of the truth of the path.
 29. Because, with the absence of anger, the figures are nine, six, six, and seven, totaling twenty-eight.
 30. That is, thirty-two factors to be eliminated in the realm of desire, plus twenty-eight to be eliminated in each of the realms of form and formlessness.
 31. That is, there are eighty-eight factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing as it pertains to all three realms of samsara.
 32. That is, ninety-four factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing as it pertains to the three realms.
 33. As mentioned earlier, this constitutes the onset of the path of seeing.
 34. Patient acceptance of the understanding of the truth of suffering entails an awareness of suffering as it is experienced in the realm of desire. This acceptance ushers in an actual understanding of suffering, in that one experiences the freeing of one's mind from those aspects of suffering. Patient acceptance that brings a subsequent understanding of suffering entails an awareness of suffering as it is experienced in the two higher realms (of form and formlessness). This acceptance ushers in a subsequent understanding of suffering, in that one experiences the freeing of one's mind from those aspects of suffering. Each of these four steps removes certain factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing. The same progression applies to the remaining three truths.
 35. The literal translation is "all at once"; the phrase refers to those whose spiritual development takes place in leaps and bounds, rather than in a slow, methodical manner.
 36. *Ibid.*, v. 33. In this context, the term "flaws" refers to the nine degrees of strength in the factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation, and "positive qualities" refers to the application of antidotes.
 37. The four states of meditative stability lead to rebirth in corresponding states in the realm of form. The names of the four states that make up the realm of formlessness describe the increasingly subtle subjective experiences of beings reborn there. "State of cessation" refers to a state of meditative equipoise in which all mental activity ceases; it leads to rebirth on the highest level in the realm of formlessness, the pinnacle of conditioned existence.
 38. Some factors to be eliminated on the path of meditation are the result of conceptual frameworks and belief systems, whereas others are innate, with even animals being subject to them.
 39. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, v. 5a.
 40. That is, anger is absent.

41. The most obvious of the obvious, etc.
42. Anger is absent in the two higher realms, which account for eight of the nine states, each of which entails a group of nine degrees of the factor in question.
43. *Ibid.*, v. 5ac.
44. *Ibid.*, ch. 6, v. 77.
45. In this volume, the term *ye shes* (Skt. *jñāna*) is translated in the context of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha paths as “pristine cognition” and in Mahayana, Vajrayana, and Dzogchen contexts as “timeless awareness.”
46. *Ibid.*, v. 67ab.
47. *Ibid.*, ch. 7, v. 7ab.
48. Once the universal origin of suffering has been eliminated, there is nothing more to eliminate; once the cessation of suffering is made evident, there is nothing more to make evident; and once the path has been applied to one’s experience, there is nothing more to apply.
49. *Ibid.*, v. 7cd. The source text reads “This is held to be mind.”
50. Here the shravaka interpretation of “nirvana”—personal salvation from suffering—is intended.
51. Dharmatra, *Didactic Aphorisms*, ch. 26, v. 15. The source text reads:
 The body has disintegrated, sensation is allayed,
 perception has ceased, formative factors are pacified,
 and consciousness has subsided;
 for such a one as this, suffering is at an end.
52. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 3, v. 94d.
53. These aspirations reflect the solitary pratyekabuddha’s preference for pursuing spiritual development alone, without a teacher or companions, and interacting as little as possible with students.
54. Nāgarjuna, *The Source Verses on Sublime Knowing*, ch. 18, v. 12.
55. Vasubandhu, *The Treasury of Abhidharma*, ch. 6, v. 24.
56. The four aggregates of mind consist of these three plus the aforementioned aggregate of consciousness.
57. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 2, v. 7.
58. “Spiritual potential” is a translation of *rigs* (Skt. *gotra*; literally, “family” or “type”). In Mahayana contexts, it is a synonym for “buddha nature.”
59. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. 62ab.
60. “Fundamental being,” a synonym for “buddha nature,” is a translation of *khams* (Skt. *dhātu*; literally, “stratum,” “constituent,” or “element”).
61. *Ibid.*, v. 155.
62. The revised Adzom Chögar and Dergé editions of the *Treasury* read: “Because it is associated with karma and afflictive states.”
63. *Ibid.*, v. 25.
64. *Ibid.*, v. 156.
65. The two stanzas referred to are the first and third verses of *ibid.* (vv. 152–3) cited in this discussion of the nature of spiritual potential.
66. *Ibid.*, v. 50.

67. Ibid., v. 52. "Components of experience" is a rendering of *dbang po* (faculties); here it refers in a broader sense to all the components of an ordinary being's experience—the mind-body aggregates, the sense faculties and their objects, etc.
68. Ibid., v. 53.
69. Ibid., vv. 54-6.
70. These qualities are enumerated at the end of this chapter.
71. The paragraphs in quotations are from *The Garlands of Buddhas*.
72. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. 27.
73. Ibid., v. 40.
74. Ibid., v. 41.
75. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 4, v. 11cd.
76. Ibid., v. 5. The source text reads: "are explained to be definite indications of spiritual potential."
77. Ibid., v. 13.
78. Ibid., v. 4cd.
79. The phrase "both existent and nonexistent" refers to the fact that the kayas (as the supporting factors) and aspects of timeless awareness (as the supported factors) exist in the sense that they constitute buddha nature, but do not exist within the dualistic framework of samsara versus nirvana.
80. Ibid., v. 4.
81. The cause of disengagement is defined as a cause that brings about a result through the removal of factors; e.g., the dispelling of cloud cover "causes" the sun to shine. In the context of this passage, it is the cause of the removal of all factors to be eliminated on the spiritual paths and levels, such as the removal of afflictive states through the functioning of sublime knowing on the path of meditation.
- Dharmakaya can be differentiated into its aspects as jnana-dharmakaya (dharmakaya as timeless awareness) and svabhavikakaya (dharmakaya as the essence of being itself). Jnana-dharmakaya is the consummate timeless awareness entailed in the totality of buddhahood, serves as the support for the twenty-one aspects of inexhaustible timeless awareness discussed in the Prajnaparamita literature, and is the timeless awareness of omniscience that combines knowledge of things as they really are and knowledge of things in all their multiplicity. Svabhavikakaya, one of the seventy topics discussed in the Prajnaparamita literature, is the kaya of ultimate basic space, endowed with twofold purity, being totally pure by nature and totally pure by virtue of adventitious obscurations having been removed.
82. As indicated in note 81, this is a way of referring to dharmakaya.
83. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, vv. 150-3.
84. These analogies are found in Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 4, vv. 9-10:

Know that spiritual potential is comparable to the properties of gold;
 it is the source of what is immensely positive,
 is imbued with immaculate timeless awareness,
 and is the true source of spiritual powers.

Know that spiritual potential is comparable to the properties of the finest jewel,
 for it is the cause of supreme enlightenment,
 is experienced as supreme timeless awareness and exalted states of meditative absorption,
 and is the true source of benefit for many beings.

85. The nature of basic space, which is the all-pervasive ground of being, and the aspect of basic space that serves as the ground for the arising of things.
86. The tenth spiritual level is referred to as “the very threshold of enlightenment” because one is poised to awaken to buddhahood with the next step.
87. That is, the aspect of naturally abiding spiritual potential, or basic space (corresponding to dharmakaya), and that of perfectly developed, or increasingly evident, spiritual potential, which is the manifest aspect (corresponding to the kayas and timeless awareness).
88. *Ibid.*, ch. 10, vv. 22a, 37ab.
89. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. 5.
90. The Sarma (new) schools of Tibetan Buddhism discuss cause and effect primarily from the standpoint of something being developed and something developing it. The position of the Nyingma school, as exemplified by the works of Mipam Nampar Gyalwa, allows for a cause-and-effect relationship based on a process of disengagement, e.g., a sickle cutting through grass, which “results” in disengagement of the grass from further growth. In this sense, one may say that the removal of clouds in the sky “causes” the sun to shine in a purely incidental way, not that the clouds are the primary cause of the sun’s shining.
91. *Ibid.*, ch. 5, v. 1a.
92. *Ibid.*, ch. 1, v. 46.
93. The approaches of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva.
94. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*. ch. 1, v. 40cd.
95. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, vv. 48–9.
96. *Ibid.*, vv. 86, 95.
97. Nagarjuna, *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena*, vv. 3–7. In this poem, Nagarjuna discusses the manifest aspect of buddha nature; in his other works, he emphasizes the aspect of emptiness.
98. *Ibid.*, vv. 9–15.
99. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, vv. 100–1. The source text reads: “One who dwells at the furthest limit of unobscured being / and is the embodiment of compassion ensures that they are free of obscuration.
100. *Ibid.*, vv. 103–4.
101. The *Treasury* reads: “ripened fruit encased in husks.”
102. “What is victorious” refers to buddha nature.
103. The source text reads: “of the afflictive states present in ordinary beings.”
104. *Ibid.*, vv. 106–7.
105. The source text reads: “A god with completely pure clairvoyance.”
106. The source text reads: “in ordinary beings immersed in afflictive states.”
107. *Ibid.*, vv. 109–11.

108. Ibid., vv. 113-14.
109. Ibid., vv. 116-17.
110. Ibid., vv. 119-20.
111. The source text reads: "The fact that she bears someone ensures her a protector."
112. Ibid., vv. 122-3.
113. The *Treasury* erroneously reads: "Similarly, sublime enlightened ones accurately see that undistorted factors."
114. Ibid., vv. 125-6.
115. Although the meaning is not substantially changed, the versification in the *Treasury* is different from that in the source text. It is possible that Longchenpa was citing an earlier Tibetan translation of *The Highest Continuum* than the one currently used.
116. The *Treasury* reads: "Having been summarized, these nine kinds of afflictive states."
117. The source text reads: "arhats, those still learning, and those who have intelligence."
118. Ibid., vv. 131-4.
119. Ibid., vv. 135-43.
120. Ibid., v. 145.
121. Ibid., v. 147.
122. Ibid., v. 146. The "utterly flawless basic space of phenomena" is a reference to self-knowing timeless awareness; the "causal aspect" is a reference to fundamental being. The terms "profound" and "myriad" refer, respectively, to the scriptural and experiential aspects of the dharma.
123. Ibid., v. 149.
124. That is, buddhas.
125. The faith referred to is "the firm conviction, based on intellectual evaluation," mentioned in the text above, that sustains one on the paths of accumulation and linkage. "Those without eyes," also referred to in the text, are those who lack this faith.
126. Ibid., v. 154.
127. These beings are not as highly developed as buddhas, who are spiritually advanced beings of the highest degree.
128. Ibid., ch. 2, v. 33cd.
129. In this passage, "ordinary beings" refers to practitioners who are still on the path of accumulation or linkage.
130. Ibid., v. 157.
131. Ibid., v. 156.
132. Ibid., vv. 159-61.
133. The source text reads: "fixating on what is inauthentic, disparaging what is authentic."
134. Ibid., v. 158.
135. The source text reads: "Therefore, they will fixate on what is not authentic."
136. The source text reads: "in actuality, these flaws have no identity."
137. The source text reads: "one disparages authentic qualities."

138. Ibid., vv. 162-6.
139. Ibid., vv. 167-8.
140. *The Lamp on the Path*, v. 20.
141. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 19. The source text reads: "To arouse bodhichitta is, for the sake of others, / to want complete and perfect enlightenment."
142. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 1, v. 15.
143. In Buddhist texts, the Sanskrit *sendhapa* serves as an example of a term with varying connotations. The traditional anecdote concerns a king who calls out "sendhapa" to his courtiers, by which he may mean, e.g., his sword (if he is planning to launch a military campaign) or a lute (if he wants to be entertained).
144. In the Mahayana approach, the three kinds of discipline involve restraining oneself from committing harmful actions, reinforcing one's positive qualities, and ensuring benefit for others.
145. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 5, v. 2. This fourth level of bodhichitta is also termed "the supreme innate compassion of one in whom all obscurations have been eliminated."
146. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, vv. 20-1.
147. It would be logical to expect calm abiding to be paired with profound insight; however, both the *Treasury* and the source text have "compassion." Whereas the texts of the shravaka approach emphasize calm abiding, those of the Mahayana, such as *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, tend to focus on compassion as the functional equivalent.
148. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 1, v. 16.
149. The second twofold classification of bodhichitta given previously, that of relative and ultimate bodhichitta, is not analyzed.
150. Damshtresasena was an Indian Buddhist master and author of the major commentary on *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in a Hundred Thousand Stanzas*. One who has "perceived what is true" has attained the first of the ten spiritual levels.
151. Abhayakara was an Indian Buddhist master who wrote, among other works, a commentary on *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Eight Thousand Stanzas* and a ritual for conferring the bodhisattva vow.
152. Sagaramegha was an Indian Buddhist master who wrote a commentary on Asanga's *Categories of the Spiritual Levels of the Bodhisattva*. According to Sagaramegha, bodhichitta as aspiration is aroused simply by the wish to free others from suffering.
153. Here Longchenpa is following Shantideva's presentation in *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*.
154. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 5, v. 7.
155. Ibid., v. 22.
156. The source text reads: "If they have aroused bodhichitta, in that instant."
157. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 1, v. 9.
158. Ibid., v. 6bd.
159. Ibid., v. 10.

160. Ibid., ch. 3, vv. 23-4.
161. The *Treasury* omits this line.
162. Ibid., vv. 26-7.
163. The source text reads: "As for the four flaws in that [training]."
164. Chandragomin, *The Twenty Vows*, vv. 5c-7.
165. Although one should not disparage the approaches of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha, a follower of the bodhisattva approach should never abandon it for a less complete approach.
166. The spiritual practice of one who emphasizes the removal of obscurations through meditation is superior to the practice of one who is still involved in "recitation," i.e., training by hearing and contemplating teachings. Thus, the former practitioner is more worthy of one's generosity, which is why the misguided generosity the text refers to is a violation of the bodhisattva ordination.
167. The source text reads: "Making all the effort you can."
168. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 5, v. 23.
169. "A more limited spiritual approach" refers to that of the shravaka or pratyekabuddha, because it leads only to a temporary and limited state of nirvana that is a personal escape from samsara and its suffering.
170. Chandragomin, *The Twenty Vows*, v. 8a.
171. The realization is predominantly theoretical rather than based on direct perception gained in meditation.
172. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 15, v. 3; the fourth line is from v. 17d, the fifth line from v. 22c.
173. Disencumberment is the ability to let go of any potential attachment related to one's contentment and equanimity.
174. As do arhats of the shravaka approach, who focus primarily on self-liberation at the expense of benefiting others on the relative level.
175. Ibid., ch. 6, v. 9.
176. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 8, v. 89cd.
177. Maitreya, *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes*, ch. 4, v. 1.
178. Ibid., v. 2. The four aspects are those of correct renunciation.
179. Ibid., v. 3ab.
180. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 15, v. 11.
181. There are four states of meditative stability that, if cultivated in the present lifetime, lead to rebirth as a god in a corresponding state in the realm of form. The six stages of meditative stability correspond to three phases of the first state (an introductory phase, a nominal phase, and an actual phase), plus the remaining three of the four states. Although these six stages of meditative stability also apply on a mundane level, they provide the basis for the path of linkage that leads to the transcendent state of the path of seeing.
182. Maitreya, *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes*, ch. 4, v. 6c.
183. The source text has simply "the strengths."
184. Ibid., v. 8ab.
185. Ibid., vv. 6c-7b.

186. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 19, v. 5^{cd}.
187. The quotation is from Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 27. Of the four kinds of concepts, two involve the perception of external objects, i.e., concepts concerning afflictive states and concepts concerning the state of enlightenment; the other two involve subjective internal perception, i.e., concepts concerning substantial entities and concepts concerning imputed entities. The Vaibhashika system emphasizes the former, whereas the Chittamatra system emphasizes the latter. In this context, it is the mind of a practitioner on the path of linkage that is “involved with” (i.e. is capable of entertaining) the four kinds of concepts; the reference below to “like results proceeding from like causes” refers to the conceptual mind fueled by the four kinds of concepts.
188. Longchenpa’s interpretation of this quotation is that the state of meditative equipoise experienced on the path of linkage is nonconceptual. Only then can there be a nonconceptual aspect of the postmeditation phase; if the state of meditative equipoise were conceptual, that of postmeditation would be entirely conceptual as well.
189. In Longchenpa’s index of his literary works, entitled *The Treasure Chamber of Jewels*, there is reference to *The Jeweled Staircase*, which Longchenpa describes as “source verses and a commentary that present a structural analysis of the spiritual paths and levels and discuss the general meaning of *The Five Treatises of Maitreya*.” The work is apparently no longer extant. See Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé’s history of the Dzogchen lineage, *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*, p. 135.
190. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 34^{cd}.
191. The meditation of someone who has not yet attained the path of seeing (and thus is not yet an advanced spiritual practitioner) is, by definition, mundane in that it is still to some degree theoretical and not based on a direct experience of the true nature of phenomena.
192. This refers to discursive thought concerned with both kinds of ordinary perception: that of substantial entities and that of imputed entities.
193. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 15, v. 22^{cf}.
194. *Ibid.*, v. 223^{ab}.
195. *Ibid.*, vv. 23^c–25^b. This represents the shift from perceptions of substantial entities to those of imputed entities. The source text reads: “Then all that is left is the sole distraction / of consciousness reifying a subject.”
196. This represents the removal of all concepts, whether concerning substantial or imputed entities, and signals the shift from a mundane state of awareness to a transcendent one.
197. *Ibid.*, v. 25^{cd}.
198. In addition to the removal of the factors to be eliminated on the path of linkage, there occurs the temporary suppression of the 112 factors to be eliminated on the subsequent path of seeing; all of these factors are in opposition to the five governing powers and five strengths.
199. Antidotes involving confrontation are likened to water being used to imme-

- diatey extinguish a fire; antidotes involving elimination are similar to means that ensure that the fire will not reignite; antidotes providing support stabilize the elimination that has taken place; and antidotes involving distancing ensure that the possibility of the factors that were eliminated reoccurring becomes more and more remote.
200. The weakening of obscurations indicates that one is at the point of being able to remove the factors to be eliminated on the subsequent path of seeing.
201. Meditation in the final phase of the path of accumulation is based largely on the intention to realize emptiness. On the path of linkage, meditation is based on a more specific idea of emptiness. On the path of seeing, there is true meditation entailing the direct perception of emptiness.
202. See note 34.
203. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 3, v. 11ac. The source text reads: “are embodied in the steps of patient acceptance and understanding.”
204. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 21, v. 33.
205. Maitreya, *Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes*, ch. 2, v. 19.
206. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 5, v. 14. The order of the first and last pair of lines in Longchenpa’s version of the quotation is the reverse of that in the source text. The three focal points are object, subject, and their interaction.
207. Some afflictive states are conceptual in that they are superficial and idea-based, whereas others are more instinctive. For example, a newborn’s instinctive sense of selfhood is distinct from the more conceptual sense of self-identity that arises with the naming of the child and the child’s identification with that name.
208. In the realm of form.
209. A direct cause generates a result directly; e.g., a seed produces a seedling. A contributory cause generates a result that is consistent with the cause itself; e.g., the clay from which a pot is made is the main constituent of the pot. In this case, the potential for the functioning of the factors that are to be eliminated on the path of seeing serves as a contributory cause in that it requires that the process of elimination take place.
210. Thus ensuring that there is no possibility of the reoccurrence of this potential.
211. The distinction between the first and second steps of the path of seeing is purely conventional. The transformation that occurs in the second step is not “produced” by the antidotes to the factors to be eliminated; rather, the antidotes are automatically arrested, just as the factors to be eliminated are arrested. Then, rather than suppressing them, one is “free of” the potential for these factors to reoccur.
212. These two preceding states are the initial patient acceptance that brings understanding of the four truths and the understanding itself of those truths.
213. The eight states of initial and subsequent patient acceptance (one each for each of the four noble truths) are the first step (the process without obstacles), and the eight states of initial and subsequent understanding are the second step (the process of complete freedom).

214. The antidote that involves suppression, which robs these forces of their potency, is the direct cause of the process without obstacles, as well as the indirect cause of the process of complete freedom.
215. In this case, the antidote that overwhelms the factors to be eliminated, which is the direct cause of the path of complete freedom.
216. This is the antidote that involves elimination, the path without obstacles, and the removal of the 112 factors to be eliminated on the path of seeing.
217. The northern continent of Uttarakuru (one of the four continents of the human realm in traditional Buddhist cosmology) is excluded because the wealth and preoccupation of human beings in this realm preclude the inclination or leisure to pursue spiritual practice.
218. The quotation is actually from Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 1, v. 68c.
219. Although all of the transcendent perfections pertain to every spiritual level, on each level a particular perfection is emphasized in the training and realization associated with that level.
220. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 21, v. 34ab.
221. *Ibid.*, v. 34cd.
222. *Ibid.*, v. 35.
223. On the fifth spiritual level, the transcendent perfection is meditative stability.
224. *Ibid.*, v. 36.
225. *Ibid.*, v. 37.
226. *Ibid.*, v. 38b.
227. Nagarjuna, *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena*, v. 84cd.
228. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 21, v. 38cd. The source text reads: "it is definitively termed 'the immovable one.'"
229. This is the ninth of the ten spiritual levels of the Mahayana.
230. *Ibid.*, v. 39ab.
231. *Ibid.*, v. 39cd.
232. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. --.
233. *Ibid.*, v. 78.
234. Although Longchenpa refers to five distinctive features of the Mahayana path of meditation, he discusses only four: the antidotes employed, the elimination involved, the qualities associated with this path, and the process of taking rebirth to which it leads.
235. The process of preparation involves suppression that weakens the factors to be eliminated. The process without obstacles takes place when the factors to be eliminated encounter their antidotes. The process of complete freedom takes place when the antidotes eliminate the afflictive states. The process of distinctive features ensures that the possible reoccurrence of these states becomes increasingly remote when an effort is made to attain the next highest spiritual level; here the term refers to the path of meditation as a developmental process in which one attains higher and higher spiritual levels.
236. The Dergé edition of the *Treasury* reads: "In this context, the term 'process of

- preparation' refers to the factors to be eliminated—the obvious hindrances—in a particular individual's experience."
237. The Dergé edition of the *Treasury* reads: "Once that actual level has been initiated."
238. The obvious cognitive obscurations are eliminated on the path of seeing; the subtler instinctive ones are eliminated progressively on the path of meditation.
239. That is, they pertain to the realm of form, which consists of these four states.
240. The pinnacle, or most subtle state, of conditioned existence is also called the state of "neither existence nor nonexistence."
241. In this context, "incalculable" and "indescribable" are terms for enormously large, but finite numbers.
242. In the Buddhist tradition, Indra is subject to death and rebirth; hence, any being with sufficient merit can take rebirth as Indra.
243. Indra is the ruler of the Trayastrimsha gods, those on the second of the six levels of gods in the realm of desire. The Yama, Tushita, Nirmanarati, and Paranirmitavashavartin gods are, respectively, on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth levels. Brahma, Mahabrahma, and Maheshvara are rulers of various levels of gods in the realm of form.
244. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, vv. 66–7.
245. All three editions of the *Treasury* have "the third path." If this is not simply an error in the woodblocks, it may refer to the fact that the path of no more learning is the third of the so-called higher paths, those of seeing, meditation, and no more learning.
246. That is, the pure "quasi-nirmanakaya realm" referred to in the Introduction, note 8.
247. The ten attributes that require no more learning are the consummate levels of the branches of the noble eightfold path (view, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditative absorption), the completely liberated state of mind, and the completely liberated faculty of sublime knowing.
248. The twenty-one categories that pertain to incorruptible timeless awareness are listed in the second citation below from *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*.
249. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 8, v. 1.
250. The revised Adzom Chögar and Dergé editions of the *Treasury* read: "As for the immeasurable state of realization as jñana-dharmakaya."
251. *Ibid.*, vv. 2–6. The groupings and terms referred to in this verse are as follows: *the factors that contribute to enlightenment*: see the enumerations of these thirty-seven factors in Sections I and II of this chapter; *the immeasurable attitudes*: love, compassion, joy, and impartiality; *the aspects of liberation*: eight states of partial liberation, three pertaining to the realm of form and five to the realm of formlessness; *the nine successive states of meditative equipoise*: the four states of meditative stability associated with the realm of form, the four states of meditative absorption associated with the realm of formlessness, and the meditative equipoise of cessation, which is associated with the pinnacle of conditioned existence; *the ten states of total immersion*: states of medita-

tive concentration that result in the experience of everything consisting of one of the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), one of four colors (blue, yellow, red, and white), infinite space, or infinite consciousness; *the eight fields of experience*: eight states of meditative concentration that confer the power to emanate or manipulate four aspects of shape and four of color, so that the perceptions of others are affected while one's own mind is not deceived by these appearances; *the absence of afflictive states*: a state of meditative absorption through which a buddha ensures that those who encounter that buddha do not experience negative emotions; *wisdom arising from aspiration*: the ability of a buddha, by the coming to fruition of previous aspirations, to merely direct attention to any given phenomenon in order to cognize it fully; *supernormal cognitive faculties*: six supernormal states involving miraculous powers, clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, recall of former lifetimes, and knowledge of the exhaustion of corruptible factors in one's makeup; *states of authentic discernment*: four states that allow for knowledge of the individual characteristics of phenomena, knowledge of their specific ways of manifesting and functioning, the ability to understand the languages of myriad beings, and confidence in articulating spiritual teachings to others; *four aspects of absolute purity*: the absolute purity of a buddha's bases of perception, perceptual frames of reference, innate compassion, and timeless awareness; *ten powers*: control over longevity, mind, material possessions, karma, rebirth, dedicated interest, altruistic motivation, supernormal capabilities, timeless awareness, and spiritual teachings; *ten strengths and four states of fearlessness*: see the enumerations at the end of this chapter; *three factors that need not be guarded*: the enlightened form, speech, and mind of a buddha, which need no longer be guarded against the encroachment of negative factors; *three bases of mindfulness*: the mindfulness that entails a lack of attachment to those who treat one with respect, a lack of aversion to those who treat one with disrespect, and a lack of apathy toward those who treat one with indifference; *a nature that is not neglectful of beings*: enlightened activity that is by nature both unceasing and timely; *qualities unique to the Sage*: see the enumeration at the end of this chapter; and *omniscience itself*: comprising omniscience proper (knowledge of all phenomena), knowledge of spiritual paths, and knowledge of the circumstances of ordinary beings.

252. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 2, vv. 4-5.

253. *Ibid.*, vv. 38-9.

254. *Ibid.*, ch. 1, v. 5.

255. The eight avenues are the following: consciousness as the basis of all ordinary experience; the afflictive aspect of consciousness, or "I"-consciousness; consciousness as the coordinating mental faculty; and the five sense consciousnesses.

256. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 40.

257. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 8, v. 12.

258. Nagarjuna, *In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena*, v. 57. The three aspects are subject, object, and their interaction.

259. The layout of Akanishtha is imagined by the ordinary mind; these features do not truly exist.
260. In Chapter 1, Longchenpa quotes the identical verse, giving *The Journey to Sri Lanka* as the source.
261. The level of the Sudarshana gods is the sixteenth of the seventeen levels of gods in the realm of form, immediately below that of Akanishtha, the seventeenth. As indicated, this is not the Akanishtha being referred to in the text; rather the reference is to a pure sambhogakaya realm (see Introduction, note 2).
262. The back of the hands, the insteps, the shoulders, and the nape of the neck.
263. That is, as tall as the arms are wide when outstretched.
264. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 8, vv. 13–17.
265. The fruit of the tree *Momordica monadelpha*—a bright red gourd.
266. *Ibid.*, vv. 21–33a.
267. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 11, v. 18. See Mipham Rinpoche's *Introduction to the Middle Way*: "When all conceptual constructs of the mind and mental factors completely subside, the sambhogakaya arises, of one taste with the expanse that is free of concepts" (p. 339).
268. The source text reads: "... because the mara of death cannot act."
269. The source text reads: "and because, at all times, it follows that there is refuge and so forth."
270. The source text has an additional line: "for the first seven reasons, ..."
271. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 2, v. 62cd. The source text reads: "and the latter three reasons demonstrate the ever-present quality of the dharmakaya." The entire passage in *The Highest Continuum* lists a total of ten reasons. The first seven (ch. 2, vv. 63–5, not cited here by Longchenpa) apply to the ever-present quality of the rupakayas, and the latter three reasons (ch. 2, vv. 66–7) apply to the ever-present quality of dharmakaya. The entire passage is as follows:
- 63/ Because bodhisattvas relinquish their bodies, life force,
and resources, and uphold the sacred spiritual teachings;
because they hold to their initial resolution
in order to benefit all beings;
- 64/ because buddhahood itself entails the total engagement
of innate compassion, pristine and pure;
because buddhas engage in such conduct in perpetuity,
expressing the bases of supernormal powers;
- 65/ because wisdom brings freedom from the dualistic perception
of samsara versus nirvana;
because magnificent bliss constantly imbues
states of inconceivable meditative absorption;
because buddhas are not sullied by worldly influences
while engaging with the world;
- 66/ because the lord of death cannot act
where the deathless state of peace has been attained;

because, with a nature that is uncompounded,
 the Sage is primordially in a state of utter peace;
 67/ and because, at all times, refuge and so forth are provided
 for those without a refuge:
 for the first seven reasons,
 there is the ever-present quality of the rupakayas,
 and for the latter three reasons,
 there is the ever-present quality of the dharmakaya as the Teacher.

272. According to the Indian commentaries on *The Highest Continuum*, these lines imply a progression from ordinary beings who enter the spiritual path (“brought to the path of peace”), to spiritually advanced beings (reaching “full spiritual maturity”), to bodhisattvas on the eighth spiritual level (for whom prophecies of their attainment of buddhahood are uttered).
273. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 41.
274. The source text reads: “Once the causal factor has thoroughly matured.”
275. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 8, vv. 9–10.
276. The source text reads: “Through artistry, through conscious rebirth, and as expressions of sublime enlightenment, / these emanations constantly point toward nirvana.”
277. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 10, v. 64.
278. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 2, vv. 53–6.
279. *Ibid.*, v. 61. See *Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra*: “The first kaya, the kaya constituting depth, is to be understood as being the dharmakaya [the kaya in terms of nature], since it is equivalent to the nature of all phenomena and since it is not a field of experience for an other-awareness (Tib. *gzhan rig*). The latter two kayas, these being the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya, are the form kayas or visible kayas (Skt. *rūpa kāya*, Tib. *gzugs sku*), since they appear to the disciples in tune with their respective karmic fortunes” (p. 211).
280. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 10, vv. 65ab, 60bc, 65cd.
281. *Ibid.*, v. 76.
282. If there were afflictive states in their own right, they would not be affected by one’s realization of the emptiness of all phenomena. The term “in their own right” means “established to exist by virtue of their inherent characteristics, without being merely ascribed conceptually.”
283. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 11, v. 18c.
284. Here Longchenpa discusses the four aspects of timeless awareness that constitute the knowledge of things in their multiplicity. As he noted in the preceding subsection on the classification of timeless awareness, the fifth aspect, timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena, constitutes the knowledge of reality just as it is.
285. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 10, v. 68.
286. *Ibid.*, v. 67.

287. Ibid., v. 69.
288. Ibid., v. 70cd.
289. Ibid., v. 71.
290. Ibid., v. 72ab.
291. Ibid., v. 72cd.
292. Ibid., v. 73.
293. Ibid., v. 74.
294. Ibid., v. 75.
295. Chandrakirti, *The Entrance into the Middle Way*, ch. 11, v. 17d.
296. Some Chittamatrins maintain that the omniscient awareness of a buddha is subject to the same criteria as the ordinary awareness of an ordinary being. They maintain that, like ordinary awareness, it can be analyzed on the basis of whether or not it necessarily involves sense data. In his critique, Longchenpa points out that the logical conclusion of such flawed reasoning is that omniscience equals ordinary awareness.
297. This is the opinion of some proponents of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika systems.
298. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 2, v. 5cd.
299. The passage is actually found in Dharmakirti's further commentary on his *Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*, not in his *Ascertainment of Valid Cognition*. The Dergé edition of the *Treasury* reads: "One should understand that when something is not perceived by an omniscient one, in such cases it is because that thing in no way exists." The source text reads: "When something cannot be perceived by an all-seeing one, this causes one to understand that the thing in no way exists."
300. The eighth level of the immovable one, the ninth level of the highly intelligent one, and the tenth level of the clouds of dharma.
301. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 12, vv. 45–6. The power to experience nonconceptual awareness and pure realms is gained on the eighth level, the power to experience timeless awareness on the ninth, and the power to experience the enactment of activity on the tenth. See Gampopa, *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (trans. Guenther), pp. 249–51.
302. The Nyingmapa position, which Longchenpa is establishing here, is that a buddha's omniscient awareness is such that a buddha can be aware of impure phenomena without perceiving them in the way ordinary beings do. For a buddha, then, knowledge does not necessitate perception in the ordinary sense.
303. This verse is from Jnanagarbha's *Commentary on "Delineating the Two Levels of Truth,"* a commentary on his own source text. The lines cited are part of the commentary on verse 41 of the source.
304. That is, to perceive the ultimate nature of phenomena.
305. Shantideva, *Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, ch. 9, v. 34.
306. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 10, v. 33.
307. Ibid., ch. 21, v. 45a.
308. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 2, v. 7.

309. The source text reads: “Since the true nature of phenomena cannot be known, / one cannot conceptualize it.”
310. Maitreya, *The Ornament of Manifest Realization*, ch. 8, v. 34bc.
311. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 4, v. 12.
312. *Ibid.*, v. 1.
313. *Ibid.*, vv. 87–90.
314. *Ibid.*, v. 65.
315. *Ibid.*, vv. 29–30b.
316. *Ibid.*, v. 34.
317. *Ibid.*, vv. 42–3.
318. Maitreya, *The Ornament of the Sutras*, ch. 21, v. 45a.
319. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 3, v. 5.
320. *Ibid.*, v. 7.
321. The term “actions” denotes physical, verbal, and mental actions, and “time” denotes past, present, and future.
322. *Ibid.*, vv. 10–12.

Chapter 5

1. The eight, relatively common siddhis are the ability to pass through solid matter, the ability to fly through space, the possession of a sword that confers invincibility, the possession of pills that promote longevity, the possession of medicine that confers supernormal vision, the ability to perceive hidden treasures, the ability to move with supernormal swiftness, and the ability to extract and live on the nutritive essence of inanimate matter such as rocks.
2. That is, one is relying solely on changing the circumstances of one’s ordinary life to establish causes that bring about results over a long period, without using any of the Vajrayana techniques that accelerate the process.
3. The water empowerment (so called because it is conferred with water poured from a vase) is the most basic form of empowerment in Vajrayana rituals.
4. The single purpose of the Vajrayana is to benefit beings both temporarily and ultimately.
5. The verse reads “purpose” (*dgos pa*), but in Longchenpa’s discussion later in the text, the term is “enlightened intent” (*dgongs pa*) (“Moreover, from the standpoint of enlightened intent, . . .”).
6. The “indivisible truth” refers to the two levels of truth, ultimate and relative, which are inseparable.
7. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 2, l. 22.
8. The notion that timeless awareness is a cause has nothing to do with the ordinary process of cause and effect—of awareness causing purity or the removal of distortions, in the way that a seed produces a plant. The fact that timeless awareness is innately present as one’s buddha nature means that a state of purity becomes evident once the adventitious factors that temporarily obscure that nature have been removed; in a similar way, the fact that the sun is already shining in the sky is the “cause” of its appearance once clouds obscuring it dissipate.

9. These eleven levels include the ten that constitute the path of meditation, as well as the level of buddhahood, which constitutes the path of no more learning.
10. *Ibid.*, ch. 12, v. 6c.
11. In the earlier quotation from *The Lamp of the Three Methods*.
12. Dombi Heruka was one of the eighty-four mahasiddhas of the Vajrayana tradition in ancient India.
13. Indrabhuti was a semilegendary king of Oddiyana in ancient India and an important figure in the early development of the Vajrayana teachings. See Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 458, where Indrabhuti is identified as King Ja, the first human master of the mahayoga teachings; and p. 468, where he is described as the king who discovered and adopted Padmakara after that master's miraculous birth in Lake Dhanakosha.
14. The aperture above the nine orifices, at the crown of the head, is that through which consciousness leaves the body at death when the transference of consciousness is successful.
15. This line is not found in the version of the source text available to us.
16. Here "yogins" refers to Vajrayana practitioners.
17. Dharmakirti, *The Ascertainment of Valid Cognition*, ch. 2., v. 4. This passage deals with different aspects of inferential knowledge. Taking the light of the lamp to be the gem is a case of erroneous inference; taking the light of the gem to be the gem is a case of correct inference. Both are equally wrong in that they do not entail direct knowledge, but correct inference is conventionally more accurate than erroneous inference. By analogy, Vajrayana techniques such as meditating on deities do not entail direct knowledge of the true nature of reality, but they are conventionally more accurate, as an approximation thereof, than the techniques of the dialectical approach.
18. Ideally, the master has already undertaken a personal retreat (the stage of approach, in this context) on a given practice to prepare for bestowing the empowerment for that practice; the master may have done so earlier in his or her life or just before the empowerment. The stage of accomplishment involves the various stages of meditation focusing on the mandala, again performed by the master before conferring the empowerment.
19. The detailed treatment of this approach is presented in Chapters 6 and 7.
20. These forms of Vajradhara manifest in countless pure nirmanakaya realms.
21. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, ch. 1, v. 12.
22. "Those realms" are the pure nirmanakaya realms mentioned in note 20.
23. "Fruition-level bodhisattvas" are buddhas manifesting as bodhisattvas.
24. "Ordinary buddhas" are nirmanakaya buddhas visible to all.
25. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, v. 1.
26. The Shridhanyakataka stupa is located in South India.
27. Adhimukta will be the last buddha of this eon.
28. "Extraordinary teachers" are dharmakaya and sambhogakaya buddhas.
29. For an account of the destruction of the libraries and buildings of Nalanda University in India by the powerful anti-Buddhist teacher known to Tibetans as Nyima Ngödrup (the Sanskrit equivalent is Suryasiddhi), see *Tāranātha's His-*

- tory of Buddhism in India*, pp. 141–3. According to this account, only one-fifteenth of the original Mahayana canon remained after the fire, some parts having been lost in previous calamities and during other periods of anti-Buddhist activity in India.
30. A brief account of this period in Tibetan history (middle to late eighth century) can be found in *Ancient Tibet: Research Materials from the Yeshe De Project*, pp. 251–2, 261–2. The name of this Chinese scholar is a generic one for any Chinese Buddhist monk teaching the Mahayana; it would seem that this figure corresponds to the “Mes mGo” mentioned in this account. The Tibetan translator Bairotsana was one of the twenty-five intimate students of Guru Rinpoche and was instrumental in transmitting the teachings of the categories of Mind and Expanse in Tibet. Ba Sangshi was an envoy sent by the Tibetan king Mé Aktsom to the T’ang court of China because of the king’s interest in Buddhism. Ba Sangshi returned with a number of Buddhist texts and encouraged Mé Aktsom’s son, the future king Trisong Detsen, to study the Buddhist teachings.
 31. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 5, v. 18bd.
 32. The early spread of Buddhism in Tibet took place during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Pandita Smriti reigned during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.
 33. Rinchen Zangpo lived from 958 to 1055.

Chapter 6

1. The Nyingma tradition is discussed in Chapter 7.
2. See Chapter 4, pp. 221–2.
3. The two processes referred to are the maturing process of receiving empowerment and the liberating process of receiving teachings.
4. This verse indicates that the Vajrayana is the highest expression of the Mahayana; although it is grounded in the principles of the Mahayana, the distinctive feature of the Vajrayana is that it enables one to transmute afflictive states without having to eliminate them.
5. The term *sngags* (the Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit term *mantra*) is cognate to the verb *bsngags pa* (to extol, praise); thus, it is interpretive rather than a literal translation of the Sanskrit. Tibetan authors, however, were aware of the literal meaning of *mantra*: “(that which) protects the conceptual mind.”
6. The three kinds of food are either the three “white” (i.e., dairy) foods—milk, butter, and yogurt—or the three sweet foods—honey, molasses, and sugar.
7. The Sanskrit term is more properly *ubhayaatantra*, meaning “tantra of both” (i.e., physical and verbal actions, on the one hand, and mental activity, or meditation, on the other); see Guenther, *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, pt. 1, p. 284, n. 9. Tibetan commentators almost invariably use the derivative form *upatantra*, which perhaps comes from the Sanskrit *upāya* (skillful method). Longchenpa also uses the alternative name for this class, “tantra of conduct.”

8. Here Longchenpa substitutes "mahayogatantra" for the term he used previously, "anuttarayogatantra."
9. Powerful mastery of omnipresence is the power to satisfy the minds of beings everywhere and at all times. Powerful mastery of abiding at will is the power to remain in a given state of meditation at will.
10. The following discussion reconciles the alternative listings of the eight aspects given in the two preceding citations. The three principles (taken from the first) are those of enlightened form, speech, and mind. Included in the principle of mind are (from the first citation) abiding at will and (from the second) subtlety, spaciousness, and the ability to gain access to more subtle levels. The principle of enlightened form includes (from the first citation) enlightened activity, powerful mastery of supernormal powers, powerful mastery of omnipresence, and (from the second) the ability to engage in conduct, supreme embodiment, joyfulness, and actions that accord with beings' wishes. Included in the principle of enlightened speech are (from the first citation) teaching whatever is desired and (from the second) mastery over all beings.
11. That is, the "spaciousness" referred to in the second quotation above.
12. The perception referred to here is not ordinary perception that takes place through the physical senses; rather, it is an insight that arises as a dynamic expression of timeless awareness.
13. "Embodiment" here implies "mastery"; "transformative power" refers both to mastery over (and removal of) the factors to be eliminated and to attainment of the experience of timeless awareness.
14. The "yoga that downplays action" is a synonym for "upatantra."
15. *Bolla* and *kakko* are code words used in the tantras to denote the penis and vagina, respectively.
16. This verse indicates that Vajrasattva is the antidote to desire.
17. Here "harmful actions" refers specifically to blood sacrifices.
18. Ishvara is an epithet of Shiva.
19. This refers obliquely to the role of the feminine principle in the Buddha's enlightenment.
20. The three levels are physical, verbal, and mental.
21. Here "bodhichitta" refers to the vital essences that embody the masculine and feminine energies, or hindu, termed "white" and "red," respectively.
22. Tormas, offerings made of dough and adorned with colored butter, are the focus of certain Vajrayana rituals. A torma may symbolize either the presence of a deity or an offering made to that deity.
23. This refers to extensive rituals that involve meditation on an entire mandala, including both principal and secondary deities, and an elaborate format of spiritual practices.
24. The "Sutras" and "Collected Dharanis" are sections of the Kangyur, the Tibetan Buddhist canon of the translated words of the Buddha.
25. That is, upatantra places equal emphasis on outer conduct and inner contemplation.

26. Kumara Shanmukha is a son of Shiva (Maheshvara) and a god of war.
27. The references to “yogi” and “yogini” indicate emphasis on the masculine and feminine principle, respectively, and not on the gender of the practitioners of these tantra cycles.
28. Empowerments of awareness are part of the vase empowerment, the first of four stages of empowerment in all classes of Sarma tantra except kriya; they introduce the recipient to the experience of the five mental poisons as, in essence, the five aspects of timeless awareness.
29. The vase empowerment includes the “six specific empowerments” referred to in the preceding quotation.
30. The threefold mandala is that of enlightened form, speech, and mind.
31. Vessels “of one piece” are an oblique reference to skull cups, which, for the purposes of tantric rituals, should be such that the cranial sutures do not reach the rim of the cup.
32. These are considered the purest form of foodstuffs in that no direct taking of life is required to procure them.
33. The five meats are beef, horse meat, dog meat, elephant meat, and human flesh; the five nectars are human semen, blood, feces, urine, and bone marrow. Nectar pills are prepared from “starter cultures” that contain minute quantities of the five meats and five nectars.
34. Here “bodhichitta” refers to bindu.
35. Shantipa was an Indian Buddhist master, also known as Ratnakarashanti.
36. Vairochana, who is depicted holding the wheel of dharma.
37. This refers figuratively to the deity and family with which the practitioner has the strongest affinity (as a result of the individual’s temperament and connections to the deity and family in previous lifetimes) and literally to the stage of an empowerment in which the practitioner casts a flower onto a depiction of the mandala to determine that affinity.
38. That is, the four cardinal directions of the mandala.
39. “Anuttarayoga of sublime knowing” refers to the mother tantra class, as distinct from *The Gathering of Secrets*, which is a father tantra (also called “anuttarayoga of skillful means”). “Frankincense” and “camphor” are code words for the masculine and feminine bindu.
40. Nairatmya is the feminine consort of Hevajra, the principal deity of the mandala discussed in this tantra.
41. The five mind-body aggregates are the masculine buddhas of the five families; the five elements are the five feminine buddhas; the visual and other sense faculties are the masculine bodhisattvas; and their corresponding objects are the feminine bodhisattvas.

Chapter 7

1. *The Reverberation of Sound*, ch. 1, ll. 120–5.
2. The transcendent approaches are those of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva.
3. These two lines are not found in the version of the tantra available to us.

4. *Ibid.*, ll. 194-54.
5. *Ibid.*, ll. 1951-7.
6. Those of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva, referred to as "nirmanakaya approaches" because they were taught by the nirmanakaya buddha Shakyamuni.
7. An insignia may be an implement held in the deity's hand or a symbol that is visualized during an intermediate step, as when the seed syllable of the deity is transformed into an insignia, which then becomes the form of the deity.
8. These four translators were among the twenty-five intimate students of Guru Rinpoche in eighth-century Tibet.
9. "Upayatantra" is an alternative name for this second class of outer tantra. See Chapter 6, note 7.
10. The preparatory phase of meditative absorption involves meditating on oneself as the samaya aspect of the deity and inviting the timeless awareness aspect, which then dissolves into the samaya aspect. "Meditative absorption as a state of complete purity" refers to the visualization of the entire mandala.
11. These seals are methods found particularly in yogatantra practice. The "seal of action" involves eliminating one's perceptions based on confusion, making evident the aspect of timeless awareness that ensures spontaneous fulfillment. The "seal of samaya" involves the use of mudras, or symbolic gestures, in meditation. The "seal of ordinary experience" involves eliminating one's ordinary thinking, making evident the discerning aspect of timeless awareness. The "supreme seal," or "seal of timeless awareness" (not to be confused with *mahamudra*, which denotes the fruition, or enlightenment), involves meditation on the deity as an expression of nondual timeless awareness, thus eliminating the confusion of the basis of all ordinary experience and making evident the mirror-like aspect of timeless awareness.
12. Five kinds of enlightened activity are relatively common: pacification, enrichment, the exercise of power, wrathful intervention, and the effortless accomplishment of goals. The sixth, termed "sublime," is the attainment of enlightenment.
13. This passage is not found in the version of the tantra available to us.
14. These five motile energies are the following: the "life-sustaining energy" located in the brain, which maintains the connection between mind and body and controls mental function; the "downward-moving energy," which controls excretory and reproductive functions; the "upward-moving energy," which controls respiration and speech; the "equalizing energy," which controls digestion; and the "pervasive energy," which controls motor function.
15. The five mandalas are those of enlightened form, speech, mind, qualities, and activity.
16. These terms seem to correspond to practices based, respectively, on tantras and sadhanas.
17. That is, by emphasizing the ritual aspect of mahayoga practice.
18. A reference to various stages of practice associated with the deity Vajrakila; in each case, the metaphor of a kila, or dagger, stabbing or penetrating conveys the sense of insightful awareness cutting through ignorance and confusion.

19. “Total illumination” is a term for buddhahood.
20. *Awakened Mind, the All-Creating Monarch: The View Equal to Space*, ch. 38, ll. 1–61.
21. These lines are not found in *The All-Creating Monarch* (although all three editions of the *Treasury* cite it as the source); rather, they are well-known and frequently quoted lines from Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, vv. 50cd, 5a.
22. The tantra reads: “Space entails no effort or achievement.”
23. The tantra reads: “for those who indulge in effort and achievement.”
24. The tantra reads: “The onset of a duality of acceptance and rejection constitutes error and obscuration.”
25. *The All-Creating Monarch*, ch. 38, ll. 63–95.
26. See Longchenpa, *The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, p. 122:

The view of great perfection is to realize that the ten attributes—view, samaya, empowerment, mandala, levels, paths, activity, timeless awareness, fruition, and the nature of phenomena—are attributes whose nature is ineffable. *The All-Creating Monarch* states:

Awakened mind is like space.

In the nature of phenomena—the nature of mind, like space—there is no view to be cultivated, no samaya to be upheld, no effort to be made in enlightened activity, nothing to obscure timeless awareness,

no levels on which to train, no paths to be traversed,

no subtle factors, no duality, no dependent relationship.

There is no definitive or conclusive statement concerning mind.

Since it is beyond value judgments, there is no specific instruction to follow or decision to be made.

This the view of awakened mind, great perfection.

27. *The All-Creating Monarch*, ch. 9, l. 50 passim. The last half of the stanza (from “no empowerment . . .”) is not found in the version of the tantra available to us.
28. *Ibid.*, ch. 44, ll. 35–41.
29. The tantra reads: “this naturally occurring, awakened mind itself.”
30. *Ibid.*, ch. 42, ll. 1–25.
31. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 12, v. 8.
32. The tantra reads: “Mind is the essence of what simply is.”
33. The line following this (line 50 in the tantra) is missing from the quotation. It reads: “Given that it is naturally what it is, do not seek it anywhere else.”
34. *The All-Creating Monarch*, ch. 37, ll. 46–54.
35. This verse is not found in the version of the tantra available to us; however, a similar verse appears there (*ibid.*, ch. 7, ll. 120–4) and is cited in Longchenpa’s *A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission*, p. 135:

Since there is perfection in one, perfection in two, perfection in everything, there is ease in the abundance of fresh possibilities.

There is perfection in one—perfection in awakened mind.

There is perfection in two—perfection in what is created by ordinary mind.

There is perfection in everything—perfection in abundance.

Longchenpa also quotes this verse in *The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, p. 70.

36. This paragraph presents the perspective of the Category of Mind.
37. This paragraph presents the perspective of the Category of Expanse.
38. These perspectives are essentially the same, although they vary in emphasis; for example, the first emphasizes lucidity, the second emphasizes emptiness, others emphasize primordial unity, and others the display of awareness.
39. The idiom “dredging the pit” means “eliminating dualistic frameworks.”
40. The tenets of the Category of Mind correspond to a modified form of philosophical idealism, based on the interpretation that everything is the display of mind, without the deeper analysis of the mind found in the categories of Expanse and Direct Transmission.
41. Given that mind itself has no finite essence, neither do the sensory appearances that are its display.
42. “The experiential context and what is experienced” refer to mind and its display.
43. Although the view emphasizes the aspect of emptiness, it is not one of nihilism nor does it imply a mere void. Conduct emphasizes the aspect of manifest appearances as well as the need to carry out positive actions and avoid negative ones, but it is not based on the assumption that these actually exist. In this context, conduct is beyond effort.
44. These points undermine one’s ideas about meditation because there is nothing to cultivate in meditation.
45. “Mind” here refers to awakened mind.
46. Here and in the following paragraphs, “exist” indicates the manifest aspect of experience, whereas “does not exist” indicates the empty aspect.
47. The term “fixed concepts” refers to dualistic frameworks of consciousness.
48. The absence of causes implies the absence of conditions and results.
49. Here the term “deeds” refers to the dynamic expression of awareness, not exclusively to overt actions.
50. Here an emphasis on what “exists” indicates an emphasis on the aspect of mind’s clarity; on what “does not exist,” an emphasis on its empty aspect; and on what “exists” and “does not exist,” an emphasis on the primordial unity of these two aspects.
51. “Vacillating things” are impermanent phenomena.
52. There is freedom from the duality of someone looking and something being looked at, and of someone becoming familiar and something to become familiar with.
53. Here “awareness” refers to dualistic consciousness that is aware of objects.
54. Longchenpa does not discuss the white expanse of the nonduality of view and meditation.
55. Here “awareness that perceives” refers to naturally occurring awareness. “Bare

- act of perception” indicates that one does not perceive things to have any finite essence, even in the most nominal sense.
56. Because these eight approaches are based on ordinary mind.
 57. The conclusion presented in the teachings of the Category of Direct Transmission.
 58. Moxabustion treatment, which involves heating specific points on the body to release blockages of energy, is a traditional analogy for the precise application of an effective method.
 59. In this and the following discussions, Longchenpa follows the common breakdown of being into its essence (or mind itself) as emptiness, its nature as lucidity, and its responsiveness as the all-pervasive unity of these. In the repetitive phrase “Being can be characterized as,” “being” refers to this unity of the essence and nature of being.
 60. And thus require no further commentary.
 61. From the perspective of the confused mind, the “mother aspect” is the true nature of mind, timeless and unchanging; the “child aspect” is the awareness of that nature developed through spiritual practice. The experience of an advanced practitioner at the time of death is described as “the reunion of mother and child.”
 62. Genuine being is not a particular state that requires “getting used to,” but rather is simply what is ultimately so, just as it is.
 63. The true nature of phenomena and of mind is like a sphere in that it is traditionally defined as being “free of the corners and edges of concepts”; that is, it is a holistic state that cannot be conceptualized by the ordinary mind.
 64. The idiom translated here as “affirms” is literally “applies the seal,” in the sense of bringing one’s full attention to bear on the realization of something being the case.
 65. One’s experience of being is connected to the faculty of hearing in that one listens to teachings that one can then put into practice.
 66. The “cessation of breathing” refers to death.
 67. Yudra Nyingpo was a student of Bairotsana and was largely responsible for promulgating the teachings of the categories of Mind and Expanse in Tibet.
 68. An alternative title for *The Soaring of the Great Garuda*.
 69. An alternative title for *Supreme Space: The Victory Banner That Never Falls*.
 70. An alternative title for *The General Theme of the Great Perfection Approach*.

Chapter 8

1. *Heaped Jewels*, ch. 5, ll. 131-3.
2. The three cycles of the authentic sphere of being are also referred to as the outer, inner, and secret cycles of the Category of Direct Transmission.
3. Relics found among an advanced practitioner’s ashes after cremation are of two kinds. The less common are extremely hard spheres of five colors; the more common are smaller and generally off-white.
4. *Ibid.*, ll. 135-44.

5. The level of certain experience is that of a spiritually advanced being.
6. The tantra reads: “Therefore, rely on these tantras. / Any extremely fortunate practitioners . . .”
7. *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon*, ch. 1, ll. 317–34.
8. Saraha, *A Song of the Treasury of Realization*, v. 34. See Guenther, *Ecstatic Spontaneity*, p. 97.
9. This passage is not found in any of the seventeen tantras of the Category of Direct Transmission available to us.
10. This does not indicate that buddha nature is the cause of karma or ordinary thought. Rather, because beings fail to recognize their buddha nature, they experience a state of confusion, which produces karma and leads to the ordinary functioning of mind.
11. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 2, ll. 48–52.
12. The “vast scope of timeless awareness” refers to the inconceivable qualities of buddhahood (such as the five aspects of timeless awareness), which are innately present without having to be achieved.
13. This passage is not found in any of the seventeen tantras of the Category of Direct Transmission available to us.
14. The tantra reads: “as the very beginning of the entire body.”
15. *The Blazing Lamp*, ch. 1, ll. 145–53.
16. The tantra reads: “the supreme channel called the golden kati.” This channel is referred to by both terms.
17. The distinctive feature of this approach is a more subtle process than the one described in the anuyoga teachings.
18. There is a correspondence between these four processes and the aspects of bindu mentioned in the following lines and discussed further in the next section. “Occurrence” is a reference to bindu as the ground of being; “function,” to bindu as the spiritual path; “natural arising,” to bindu as the pinnacle of all that is noble; and “visionary experience,” to bindu “adorned with ornaments of nobility.”
19. *Ibid.*, ch. 3, ll. 119–35.
20. The masculine and feminine energies are associated with dualistic, conceptual consciousness; the neutral (literally, hermaphroditic) energy is associated with nonconceptual awareness.
21. Also termed “the habit patterns of transition through the three subtle stages of experience,” these three degrees of utter lucidity are increasingly subtle states of subjective consciousness—termed “appearance,” “increase,” and “attainment” (or “thorough attainment”)—that one experiences when falling asleep or dying, although unless one has developed spiritually, they go unrecognized. They are also experienced when one enters into deep states of meditation.
22. Here “light” refers not to a visual experience but to a subtler kind of inner experience.
23. For example, the treatment of this topic in *The Heart Essence of Secrets* and other sources of the mahayoga approach is only cursory; only in the Category of Direct Transmission is there a thorough discussion.

24. The upper end of the central channel at the crown of the head.
25. The most subtle vital essence is bindu as the pinnacle of everything noble, mentioned in the text as radiating five colors of light.
26. Maitreya, *The Highest Continuum*, ch. 1, v. 27.
27. The verse that most resembles this one in the version of *The Reverberation of Sound* available to us is as follows:
 The elaborate, the unelaborate,
 the extremely unelaborate,
 and similarly the utterly unelaborate:
 the individual minds of faithful people are brought to maturity
 by this fourfold process. (ch. 1, ll. 2,203–7)
28. *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart*, ch. 4, ll. 96, 93. Line 96 in the tantra reads: “Without reliance on the empowerments of secret mantra, how could any accomplishment come about?”
29. *The Heart Essence of Secrets*, ch. 10, ll. 45–8.
30. The five heart essences are the buddhas of the five families.
31. The fundamental structure of the body is a reference to the three chakras in the second line.
32. The freeing of blockages into light refers to the subjective experience of states of samsaric experience being replaced by subtler states of genuine being. According to the spiritual approach of utter lucidity, there are a total of twenty-one blockages; buddhahood ensues with the freeing of the last of these.
33. These one hundred states are ramifications of the meditative absorption associated with the first spiritual level of the bodhisattva path.
34. The limitation lies in the fact that, in the lower approaches, the spiritual path is based on ordinary mind; only in the highest approach is the path based on timeless awareness. So long as ordinary mind is the basis of the path, such a cause will produce a like result.
35. The nine levels are the following: conceptualization and analysis; the four states of meditative stability associated with the realm of form; and the four states associated with the realm of formlessness.
36. *Ibid.*, ch. 19, ll. 69–76. Line 75 is missing from Longchenpa’s quotation; the tantra reads:
 They enter the very realm of the sugatas,
 dwell on the sublime level of masters of awareness,
 and merge with the imperishable Samantabhadra.
37. Supreme transference is the process often described as “attaining rainbow body,” in which one’s physical body transforms into an identical form made of light, which endures for as long as conditioned existence endures, manifesting to highly advanced spiritual practitioners with the appropriate karma.
38. Here “awareness” refers to one’s direct perception of the true nature of mind, whereas “timeless awareness” refers to the awareness of buddhahood with its five aspects.

39. *The Pearl Garland*, ch. 8, ll. 236-48.
40. In the foregoing verse from *The Pearl Garland* and Longchenpa's commentary that follows, an important distinction is made. "The primordial, universal ground of being" that Longchenpa refers to in his introduction to the verse is not identical to "the level of freedom itself," mentioned in the last line of the verse (and to which Longchenpa refers in the ensuing commentary as "the level of original freedom"). "Ground of being" implies a situation in which obscurations are still present, whereas "the level of freedom" indicates a situation in which all obscurations are absent. However, as the Great Perfection teachings indicate, ground and fruition are ultimately the same.
41. *Ibid.*, ch. 8, ll. 152-4.
42. *Ibid.*, ll. 4-5.
43. *Ibid.*, ll. 9-10.
44. *Ibid.*, ll. 11-12.
45. *Ibid.*, ll. 13-14.
46. In the Great Perfection approach of *tögal*, four (sometimes six) "lamps" contribute to the unfolding of the visions of utter lucidity. Longchenpa discusses these lamps in detail in Chapters 4-7 of his *Treasury of Words and Their Meaning*.
47. *The Pearl Garland*, ch. 8, ll. 44-8.
48. *Ibid.*, ll. 72-5. Lines 49-71, which Longchenpa omits, are as follows:

For those who make no effort, there is natural purity.
 Through three key points,
 one implements the ultimate meaning of this in a practical way.
 Those points are the postures, the avenues, and the environment.
 There are three physical postures:
 one sits in the manner of a lion,
 an elephant, or a seer.
 There are two unwavering avenues
 that illuminate the undeluded experience of suchness,
 and even space itself is unwavering.
 There are three key points of the environment:
 one remains within pure basic space;
 likewise, one remains within the essence of awareness;
 and one remains with all that is perceived.
 The conceptual mind (*yid*) rests in its natural state without stirring;
 the mind (*sems*) has limpid recall without stirring.
 Awareness (*rig pa*) is lucid as the three kayas without stirring.
 The conceptual mind (*yid sems*) is relaxed, interrupting the flow of
 thought.
 The body and speech are relaxed, free of suffering.
 Awareness is relaxed, arising as the five kayas.
 Awareness arises, interrupting the circumstances that produce ordinary
 experience.

Utter lucidity arises, interrupting the obvious and subtle states of ordinary experience.

The unity of basic space and awareness arises, interrupting the confrontation

between ordinary mind and its objects.

49. This line does not appear in the version of the tantra available to us. Line 62 of ch. 5 reads: "In that it abides timelessly, it is called 'tantra.'" Line 75 of ch. 8 reads: "In that it abides continuously, it is called 'tantra.'"
50. Ibid., ll. 43-4. In a citation earlier in this section, line 44 is given as "'Skillful means' also involve distinctions."
51. Ibid., l. 74.
52. Ibid., ll. 47-8.
53. Ibid., ll. 76-83.
54. Ibid., ll. 85-6.
55. Ibid., ll. 87-8.
56. Ibid., ll. 97-104.
57. Ibid., ll. 105-8.
58. The phrase "quintessence of the flowers" is merely figurative. In Great Perfection teachings, the three terms "ground" (or "basis"), "heart essence" (or "center"), and "flower" are used in a way that, on the microcosmic level, is strikingly parallel to the macrocosmic context, in which our universe is called "Basis Whose Center Is Adorned with a Flower." The line cited below from *The Pearl Garland* ("entails the ground, the heart essence of being, and the flowers") refers to timeless awareness (as the heart essence of being) abiding in the heart center (the ground), with its effulgent radiance (the flowers).
59. Ibid., ll. 109-11.
60. Ibid., ll. 125-6. The tantra reads: "which is ascertained to be ground, straight path, and fruition."
61. Ibid., ll. 117-24.
62. Ibid., ll. 125-38.
63. Ibid., ll. 159-71.
64. *Samantabhadra: The Mirror of Enlightened Mind* and *Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart*.
65. *The Pearl Garland*, ch. 8, ll. 1-3-94.
66. The tantra reads: "explain that all phenomena are identical."
67. Here "memory" refers specifically to recollection of the key points of spiritual practice.
68. Ibid., 199-214.
69. One carries the texts or attaches miniature copies to one's body; such texts are termed those that "liberate through contact."
70. There are seventeen Great Perfection tantras. In the tradition of Vimalamitra, *The Wrathful Black Goddess* is considered an eighteenth, auxiliary text; in the tradition of Padmakara, there is also an eighteenth text, *The Clear Expanse*.

71. The tantra reads: "Given that the natural state is empty."
72. The tantra reads: "it arises as the basis for conventional descriptions."
73. *The Reverberation of Sound*, ch. 4, ll. 395-415. The tantra reads: "they thus abide in their inexpressible state."
74. The tantra reads: "There is the demonstration of that great purpose, / as well as all of the tantras, explanatory commentaries, and pith instructions."
75. *The Natural Freedom of Awareness*, ch. 1, ll. 76-81.
76. *The Conjunction of Sun and Moon*, ch. 1, ll. 107-21. In the version of the tantra available to us, the last two groups of three lines are in the reverse order.
77. The tantra reads: "With an attitude of creeping along like a tortoise."
78. *The Natural Freedom of Awareness*, ch. 2, ll. 24-5, 22-3, 28-9, 42-3. In the version of the tantra available to us, these couplets are found in a larger section discussing this theme of exposition and are not in the exact order given here.
79. The introduction in ordinary works (such as sutras) is a statement by the one compiling the work. In extraordinary works, the first introduction is that spoken by the teacher, who personifies naturally occurring timeless awareness, and has a timeless quality; the second is that of the compiler, indicating the occasion on which the teaching was first given in this world.
80. All three editions of the *Treasury* read: "fifteen primary and secondary texts."
81. Longchenpa combined these volumes into two of the four volumes of *The Heart Drop of Vimalamitra*, included in his collection *The Four Higher Collections of the Heart Drop Teachings*.
82. See Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 555, which states that Vimalamitra himself translated and concealed these four volumes.
83. Muné Tsenpo was King Trisong Detsen's eldest son, who succeeded him to the throne in 797 C.E. Ting-ngé-dzin Zangpo of the Nyang clan was an attendant of Trisong Detsen in the king's youth. He later took monastic ordination and received a complete transmission of the Nyingtik, or "Heart Drop," teachings (those of the most secret, unsurpassable cycle of the Category of Direct Transmission) from Vimalamitra. Nyang Ting-ngé-dzin Zangpo served as an adviser to both Trisong Detsen's son, King Senalek, and his grandson, King Ralpachen, and oversaw the construction of Zhai Lhakhang, where he later hid (as termas) texts connected with the cycle *The Heart Drop of Vimalamitra* (see Nyoshul Khenpo, *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*, pp. 82-3). Kawa Paltsek and Chokro Lui Gyaltzen were two of the most accomplished translators during Trisong Detsen's reign. Vimalamitra's transmission of the Nyingtik teachings to these five individuals is described in *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*, p. 82.
84. An ancient temple about one hundred kilometers northwest of Lhasa in central Tibet. Because of its historical importance, Longchenpa restored it during his lifetime.
85. As a culmination of Great Perfection practice, a practitioner's physical body dissolves into subatomic particles at death, while the ordinary mind is described as "dissolving into dharmakaya."
86. The text lists 108 titles. *The Great Pivotal Point of the Heart* and *The Lesser*

Pivotal Point of the Heart are counted as a single entry, as are *Great Miraculous Letters* and *Lesser Miraculous Letters*.

87. Because the texts are included in *The Four Extremely Profound Volumes* mentioned earlier, some claim that Vimalamitra alone was responsible for writing all of the instructions; they were, in fact, composed by a number of great masters of awareness, including Vimalamitra.
88. This is a reference to Vimalamitra's index of pith instructions.

Colophon

1. The three planes of beings are those of beings that dwell above, on, and below the surface of the earth.
2. The great seer of the past is Buddha Shakyamuni.

Word List

absence of attachment	ma chags pa
absence of aversion	zhe sdang med pa
absence of characteristics	mtshan ma med pa
absence of ignorance	gti mug med pa
absence of malice	rnam par mi 'tshe ba
absence of speculation	smon pa med pa
absences, three	med pa gsum
absolute	yongs su grub pa
absolute ultimate truth	yongs su grub pa don dam pa'i bden pa
accounts of the Buddha's previous lives	skyes rabs
accounts of the marvelous qualities of enlightenment	rmaḍ du byung ba
acquisition	thob pa
adorned arhat	dgra bcom rgyan can
afflictive aspect of consciousness	nyon mongs pa'i yid
afflictive obscuration	nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa
afflictive state	nyon mongs pa
aging and death (link of)	rga shi('i yang lag)
agitation	rgod pa
aids to enlightenment, seven	byang chub kyi yan lag bdun
Akanishtha	'og min
Akanishtha in the realm of form	gzugs khams kyi 'og min
alertness	shes bzhin
all-consuming afflictive state	kun nas nyon mongs pa
all-knowing awareness	kun shes
analysis	dpyod pa
Analyst	bye brag pa
anger	khong khro
anticipatory phase	nges 'byed cha mthun
antidote of suppression	mgo gnon pa'i gnyen po

- antidote that involves confrontation
 antidote that involves distancing
 antidote that involves elimination
 antidote that involves providing support
 aphorisms
 apparent and capable of performing a function
 apparent yet incapable of performing a function
 applications of mindfulness, four
 approach of the existing situation among gods and humans
 approach of the transcendent perfections
 arhat
 arhats who do not experience residual traces
 arhats who experience residual traces
 arrogance
 aspects of correct renunciation, four
 aspects of lucidity, three
 aspects of manifest enlightenment, five
 aspiration
 attainment of manifestation
 attention
 attribute
 authentic
 Autonomist
 avarice
 avenues to complete liberation, three
 avenues of consciousness, eight
 avenues of consciousness, six
 awakened mind (in Dzogchen contexts)
 awakening mind (in Mahayana contexts)
 awareness's own manifestation
- Barhaspatya
 bases of form
 bases of mental states
- rnam par sun 'byin pa'i gnyen po
 thag bsring ba'i gnyen po
 spong ba'i gnyen po
- rten gyi gnyen po
 ched du brjod pa
- snang la don byed nus pa
- snang la don byed mi nus pa
 dran pa nye bar bzhag pa bzhi
- sor bzhag lha mi'i theg pa
- pha rol tu phyin pa'i theg pa
 dgra bcom pa
- dgra bcom pa lhag med
- dgra bcom pa lhag bcas
 rgyags pa
 yang dag par spong ba bzhin
 gsal ba gsum
- mgnon par byang chub pa lnga
 smon pa
 snang ba thob pa
 sems pa
 yon tan
 yang dag pa
 rang rgyud pa
 ser sna
 rnam thar gyi sgo gsum
 rnam shes tshogs brgyad
 rnam shes tshogs drug
- byang chub kyi sems
- byang chub kyi sems
 rang snang
- phur bu ba
 gzugs kyi gzhi
 sems byung gi gzhi

bases of mind
 bases of supernormal powers, four
 basic space
 basic space of phenomena
 basis of all ordinary experience
 that supports a multiplicity of
 habit patterns
 Basis Whose Center Is Adorned
 with a Flower
 becoming (link of)
 belief in discipline and deportment
 as absolutes

 belief in erroneous ideas
 belief in philosophical views
 as absolutes
 belief in the reality of the perishable
 aggregates
 belief in some ideological extreme
 benighted being
 birth (link of)
 black expanse
 black expanse of emanation
 black expanse of enlightened deeds
 black expanse of the responsiveness
 of being
 Bodhimanda
 branches of the Buddha's excellent
 speech, twelve
 branches of worship, seven
 buddha nature

 calm abiding
 can stand up under mental
 investigation
 Category of Direct Transmission
 Category of Expanse
 Category of Mind
 cause-based approach
 causes of suffering produced
 relentlessly
 central channel
 certainties, five
 certainty of release

sems kyi gzhi
 rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi
 dbyings
 chos kyi dbyings

bag chags sna tshogs pa'i kun gzhi

gzhi dang dbus me tog gis brgyan pa
srid pa('i yan lag)

tshul khirms dang brtul zhugs la
mchog tu 'dzin pa'i lta ba
log par lta ba

lta ba mchog tu 'dzin pa'i lta ba

'jig tshogs la lta ba
 mthar 'dzin pa'i lta ba
 mun pa can
 skye ba('i yan lag)
 klong nag po
 sprul pa klong nag gi sde
 mdzad pa klong nag gi sde

thugs rje klong nag gi sde
byang chub snying po

gsung rab yan lag bcu gnyis
 yan lag bdun pa
 de/bde gbhegs snying po

zhi gnas

rigs pas dpyod bzod pa
 man ngag sde
 klong sde
 sems sde
 rgyu'i theg pa

rab tu dbye ba
 rtsa dbu ma
 nges pa lnga
 nges par 'byin pa

cessation	'gag pa / 'gog pa
cessation of consciousness	
independent of discernment	brtags min gyi 'gog pa
cessation of consciousness owing	
to discernment	so sor brtags pa'i 'gog pa
cessation of suffering (truth of)	'gog pa('i bden pa)
Charvaka	rgyan 'phen pa
Chittamatra	sems tsam pa
Chittamatrins who hold that	
consciousness truly exists in	
multiple states	rnam shes du mar bden par 'dod pa'i sems tsam
Chittamatrins who hold that	
multiple states truly exist as	
a single consciousness	rnam shes du ma gcig tu bden par 'dod pa'i sems tsam
Chittamatrins who hold that sense	
data are false	sems tsam rnam rdzun pa
Chittamatrins who hold that sense	
data are valid	sems tsam rnam bden pa
Chittamatrins who posit the	
nonduality of mind and its	
myriad perceptions	sna tshogs gnyis su med par smra ba'i sems tsam
Chittamatrins who posit that mind	
and its objects are like the two	
halves of an egg	sgo nga phyed gnyis par smra ba'i sems tsam
Chittamatrins who posit that there	
are an equal number of subjective	
states of perception and objects	
perceived	grangs mnyam par smra ba'i sems tsam
Chittamatrins who posit that there	
is but one avenue of consciousness	rnam shes tshogs gcig tu smra ba'i sems tsam
clouds of dharma	chos kyi sprin
cognitive obscuration	shes bya'i sgrib pa
completely pure basic space	dbyings rnam dag
components of perception, eighteen	khams bco brgyad
composite formation	'dus byas pa
compounded phenomenon	'dus byas
compulsion (link of)	sred pa('i yan lag)
conceptual elaboration	spros pa

conceptual mode of the coordinating mental faculty	rtog bcas kyi yid
conceptualization	rtog pa
concerted effort	'bad pa'i shugs
conditioned existence	srid pa
confidence	dad pa
congruence	mtshungs pa
congruence of reference	dmigs pa mtshungs pa
congruence of sense data	rnam pa mtshungs pa
congruence of substance	rdzas mtshungs pa
congruence of support	rten mtshungs pa
congruence of time frame	dus mtshungs pa
connection	'phrad pa
conscientiousness	bag yod pa
consciousness (link of)	rnam par shes pa('i yan lag)
consciousness, aggregate of	rnam shes kyi phung po
Consequentialist	thal 'gyur ba
contact (link of)	reg pa('i yan lag)
continuity	'jug pa
contracting action	bskum pa
controlling factors, twenty-two	dbang po nyi shu rtsa gnyis
coordinating mental faculty	yid (kyi dbang po)
correspondence	'byor pa
corruptible	zag pa dang bcas pa
corruptible spiritual path	zag bcas kyi lam
deception	g.yo
deductive reasoning	rjes su dpag pa
definitive meaning	nges pa'i don
deity of the aesthetic setting	bzhugs tshul gyi lha
deity of form	gzugs kyi lha
deity of light shining forth and being reabsorbed	spro bsdu 'od kyi lha
deity of meditative stability	bsam gtan gyi lha
deity of sound	sgra'i lha
deity that is an expression of one's samaya	dam tshig sems dpa'
deity that is an expression of timeless awareness	ye shes sems dpa'
deity of timeless awareness	ye shes kyi lha
density	mun pa
dependence	gzhan dbang
dependent ultimate truth	gzhan dbang don dam pa'i bden pa
deportment	brtul zhugs

desire	'dod chags
deterioration	rga ba
devoid of sense data	rnam med pa
dialectical approach	mtshan nyid kyi theg pa
didactic verses	tshigs su bcad pa
differentiation	so sor nges pa
Difficult to Renounce	mi mjed
diligence	brtson `grus
direct perception	mgnon sum
discerning timeless awareness	so sor rtog pa'i ye shes
discernment	'du shes
discernment, aggregate of	'du shes kyi phung po
discipline	tshul khrims
discourses in verse	dbyangs su bsnyad pa
disengagement	bden pa
display	rol pa
distinct formative factor	ldan min `du byed
distinctness	so so ba
distortion	dri ma
distractedness	rnam g.yeng
doubt	the tshom
downward action	'jog pa
drowsiness	gnyid
dualistic perception	zung `dzin / gnyis `dzin
duration	gnas pa
elaborate vase empowerment	spros bcas bum dbang
elimination, process of	spong ba
embodied being	lus can
emptiness	stong pa nyid
enlightened activity	phrin las
enlightened form	sku
enlightened intent	dgongs pa
enlightened mind	thugs
enlightened speech	gsung
enlightenment by means of the complete purity of the timeless awareness aspect of the deity	yang dag ye shes sems dpa'i sgo nas byang chub pa
enlightenment through the insignia symbolic of mind	thugs phyag mtshan las byang chub pa
enlightenment through the perfect and complete form	sku yongs su rdzogs pa las byang chub pa

enlightenment through reliance on
a seat of the sun and moon

enlightenment through reliance on
syllables that symbolize speech

entailing sense data

Enumerator

envy

erroneous on the relative level

ether

ethical directives

ethically neutral

evenness

exalted training in discipline

exalted training in mind

exalted training in sublime

knowing

exhaustion

expanse of adornment

expanse of basic space, which does
not involve transition or change

expanse of the essence of being,
which does not involve anything
being confirmed or refuted

expanse of freedom from anything
to be done

expanse of the freedom of sensory
appearances and mind, even in
light of their ordinary
characteristics

expanse of the fruition, which does
not involve hope or fear

expanse of jewels

expanse of meditation, which does
not involve what "is" or "is not"

expanse of natural lucidity, which
involves no concerted effort

expanse of the ocean

expanse of space

expanse of spontaneous presence,
which is supremely spacious

expanse of the sun and moon

gdan nyi zla la brten nas byang
chub pa

gsung yig 'bru la brten nas byang
chub pa

rnam bcas pa

grangs can pa

phrag dog

log pa'i kun rdzob

nam mkha'

gleng gzhi

lung ma bstan

mnyam pa myid

tshul khriims kyi lhag pa'i bslab pa

sems kyi lhag pa'i bslab pa

shes rab kyi lhag pa'i bslab pa

zad pa

rgyan gyi klong

dbyings la 'pho 'gyur med pa'i
klong

ngo bo la grub bsal med pa'i klong

bya bral gyi klong

mtshan nyid la snang sems grol ba'i
klong

'bras bu la re dogs med pa'i klong

rin po che'i klong

sgom pa la yin min med pa'i klong

rang gsal bya rtsol med pa'i klong

rgya mtsho'i klong

nam mkha'i klong

lhun grub yangs pa chen po'i klong

nyi zla'i klong

expanse of timelessly free,
imperturbable rest, spontaneous
and uniform

expanse of the unceasing display
of the nature of being
expanse of the unceasing, naturally
arising display

expanse of the uncreated state,
which is timelessly so
expanse of the view, which does
not involve transition or change

expanses, nine
extending action

extremely unelaborate empowerment
of sublime knowing and timeless
awareness

fact that all things in essence have
causes

factors to be eliminated

factors to be refined away

factors conducive to enlightenment,
thirty-seven

factors that cause refinement

faculty of life force

faith

falsity

far-reaching one

fields of experience, six (link of)

fields of experience, twelve

flawless one

focus

Follower of Brihaspati

Follower of Charaka

Follower of Jina

Follower of Kapila

Follower of the Sutras

Follower of Uluka

Follower of Vatsiputra

Follower of the Vedas

forgetfulness

form

lhun mnyam ye grol cog gzhag gi
klong

rang bzhin ma 'gags rol pa'i klong

rol pa 'gag med rang shar gyi klong

ma byas ye nas grub pa'i klong

lra ba la 'pho 'gyur med pa'i klong
klong dgu
brkyang ba

shin tu spros med shes rab ye shes
kyi dbang

rgyu
spang bya
sbyang bya

byang chub phyogs kyi chos so bdun
shyong byed
srog gi dbang po
dad pa
chos ma yin pa
ring du song ba
skye mched (kyi yan lag)
skye mched bcu gnyis
dri ma med pa
yid la byed pa
phur bu pa
tsa ra ka pa
rgyal ba pa
ser skya pa
mdo sde pa
'ug phrug pa
gnas ma bu'i sde pa
rig byed pa
brjed ngas pa
gzugs

form, aggregate of
 formative factor
 foundational approach
 frame of reference
 freedom from anything to be done
 freedom from being unitary or
 manifold entities
 freedom in the immediacy of the
 ground of being
 fruition (aspect)
 fruition-based approach
 fundamental being
 fundamentally positive factors

general discourses
 generality
 generic idea
 generosity
 Ghanavyuha
 governing condition
 governing powers, five
 Grammarian
 great principle
 greater approach
 ground (aspect)
 ground for the arising of things
 ground in which refinement
 takes place
 grouping
 groups of letters
 groups of phrases
 groups of words

habit pattern
 hatred
 heart essence
 Hedonist
 heedlessness
 highest state of mundane
 experience
 highly intelligent one
 historical accounts
 holder of extreme views
 hypocrisy

gzugs kyi phung po
 'du byed
 theg pa dman pa
 dmigs pa
 bya bral

gcig du 'bral (gyi gtan tshigs)

gzhi thog tu grol ba
 'bras bu
 'bras bu'i theg pa
 khams
 dge ba'i rtsa ba

mdo
 spyi
 don spyi
 sbyin pa
 stug po bkod pa
 bdag po'i rkyen
 dbang po lnga
 brda sprod pa
 chen po
 theg pa chen po
 gzhi
 'char gzhi

sbyang gzhi
 tshogs pa
 yi ge'i tshogs
 tshig gi tshogs
 ming gi tshogs

bag chags
 khro ba
 snying po
 tshur rol mdzes pa
 bag med pa

'jig rten chos mchog
 legs pa'i blo gros
 de ltar byung ba
 mu stegs pa
 'chab pa

ideal situation	gya nom pa
ignorance (link of)	ma rig pa('i yan lag)
illuminating one	'od byed pa
illuminator	mar me mdzad
immaculate abode	gtsang pa'i gnas
immense expanse	klong rab 'byams
immense expanse of suchness	de kho na nyid kyi klong rab 'byams
immodesty	khrel med pa
immovable one	mi g.yo ba
impartiality	btang snyoms
impermanence	mi rtag pa
imperturbable light	'od mi 'khrugs pa
impulse	rdul
impure dependence	ma dag pa gzhan dbang
imputation	kun brags
imputation involving categories	rnam grangs kyi kun brags
inanimate matter	bem po
inattentiveness	shes bzhin ma yin pa
incorrect realization	log par rtogs pa
incorruptible	zag med
increase of manifestation	snang ba mched pa
indifference	bar ma
indiscernible form	rig byed ma yin pa'i gzugs
infinite consciousness	rnam shes mtha' yas
infinite space	nam mkha' mtha' yas
inner immense expanse	nang gi klong rab 'byams
integral factors, five	kun `gro lnga
intensely joyful one	rab tu dga' ba
intent that is straightforward	dgongs pa
intent that requires interpretation	ldem dgongs
intention	'dun pa
interest	mos pa
Investigator	rnam phug pa
irreducible moment of consciousness	rnam shes cha med
Jain	rgyal ba pa
joy	dga' ba
karmic patterning (link of)	'du byed pa('i yan lag)
knowledge of the ground	gzhi shes
knowledge of the path	lam shes
knowledge of reality just as it is	ji lta ba mkhyen pa

lack of faith	ma dad pa
lack of identity	bdag med pa
lack of self-respect	ngo tsha med pa
lalana channel	rkyang ma
laxity	bying ba
laziness	le lo
lethargy	rmugs pa
level of freedom	grol sa
life force	srog
lightness	nying stobs
limited generality	nyi tshes ba'i spyi
location	yul
logic	rigs pa
logic of the process of the path	rigs pa
Logician	dpyod pa ba / rig pa can pa
lucidity	gsal ba
major lines of reasoning, five	gran tshigs chen po lnga
malice	rnam par 'tshes ba
manifestly perfect buddha	mgnon par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas
master of awareness	rig pa 'dzin pa
Materialist	rgyang 'phen pa
materialist (philosopher)	dngos por smra ba
meditative absorption	ting nge 'dzin
meditative equipoise	mnyam par bzhag pa
meditative stability	bsam gran / snyoms par 'jug pa
meditative stability of cessation	'gog pa'i snyoms 'jug
meditative stability of a trance state	'du shes med pa'i snyoms 'jug
meditative warmth	drod
mental factors for ascertaining objects, five	yul nges lnga
mental state	sems byung
mental stirring	'gyu ba
Mind Only	sems tsam
mind-body aggregates, five	phung po lnga
mind-body complex (link of)	ming gzugs (kyi yan lag)
mindfulness	dran pa
minute indivisible particle	rdul phran cha med
mirror-like timeless awareness	me long lta bu'i ye shes
mobile action	'gro ba
modesty	khrel yod pa
morally instructive biographies	rtogs pa brjod pa
most extensive teachings	shin tu rgyas pa

motile energy	rlung
multicolored expanse	klong khra bo
multicolored expanse that conforms to the Category of Direct Transmission and speaks in terms of the unity of what "exists" and "does not exist"	yod med man ngag dang mthun par smra ba'i klong khra bo
multicolored expanse that conforms to the Category of Mind and speaks in terms of what "exists"	yod smra sems sde dang mthun pa'i klong khra bo
multicolored expanse that conforms to its own category and speaks in terms of what "does not exist"	yod smra rang gnas dang mthun pa'i klong khra bo
mutual support	phan gdags bya 'dogs byed
Naked Ascetic	gcer bu pa
naturally occurring	rang byung
neither existence nor nonexistence	yod med
nihilism	chad par tra ba
noble eightfold path	'phags lam yan lag brgyad
nonacquisition	ma thob pa
nonconceptual	rtog pa med pa
nonconceptual mode of the coordinating mental faculty	rtog pa med pa'i yid
nonexistence of any personal identity	gang zag gi bdag med pa
nonrecognition of awareness	ma rig pa
nonreturner	phyir mi 'ong ba
not requiring that anything be done	bya bral
nothingness	ci yang med pa
number	grangs
obscured being	sgrib pa can
omniscience	thams cad mkhyen pa
once returner	lan gcig 'ong ba
one who has trained in what is difficult	shyang dka' ba
one who makes evident	mngon du gyur pa
ordinary being	sems can
ordinary state of being	so so skye bo
outer immense expanse	phyi'i klong rab 'byams

path (truth of)	lam (gyi bden pa)
path of accumulation	tshogs kyi lam
path of linkage	shyor ba'i lam
path of meditation	sgom pa'i lam
path of no more learning	mi slob pa'i lam
path of seeing	mthong ba'i lam
patient acceptance	bzod pa
peace	zhi ba
peak experience	rtse mo
perpetuation (link of)	len pa('i yan lag)
perspective based on the foundational tenets of the Category of Mind	phyogs 'dzin grub mtha'i sems phyogs pa
perspective that error and obscuration are transcended	gol sgrub la zla ba'i sems phyogs pa
perspective that the fruition is found in mind's source	'bras bu sems kyi byung sar 'dod pa'i sems phyogs pa
perspective that mind is free of ordinary consciousness and goes beyond the holding of any bias	blo bral phyogs 'dzin las 'das pa'i sems phyogs pa
perspective that speaks in terms of what things nominally are	sems kyi phyogs yin du smra ba'i sems phyogs pa
perspective that the state that undermines what ordinarily makes sense can be determined by lines of reasoning	gtan tshigs khun rdib kyi sems phyogs pa
perspective that there are no restrictions or extremes	rgya chad phyogs lung med par 'dod pa'i sems phyogs pa
pervasiveness	khyab pa
phases that anticipate the decisive breakthrough	nges 'byed cha mthun grub mtha'
philosophical system	yon tan gsum pa
Positer of Three Attributes	dge ba bcu gcig
positive mental states, eleven	rjes thob
postmeditation	gzungs kyi stobs
power of complete recall	sgyu
pretense	nga rgyal
pride	

primal matter	gtso bo
primal matter as the natural cause of things	rang bzhi rgyu'i gtso bo
primal matter as the resultant manifestation	rnam 'gyur 'bras bu'i gtso bo
primary afflictive states, six	rtsa ba'i nyong mongs drug
primary factor	gtso bo
primary factor of mind	gtso bo sems
primordial ground of being	gdod ma'i gzhi
primordial protector	gdod ma'i mgon po
process of complete freedom	rnam grol lam
process of distinctive features	khyad par gyi lam
process without obstacles	bar chad med lam
production	skye ba
profound insight	lhag mthong
prophecies	lung du bstan pa
Proponent of Distinct Substantial Entities	bye brag tu smra ba
Proponent of Nine Categories	don dgu pa
proven attainment to which the path leads	bsgrub pa
providing an open dimension	sgo 'byed pa
provisional meaning	drang ba'i don
proximity	gzhan ma yin pa
pure dependence	dag pa gzhan dbang
purely theoretical imputation	mtshan nyid chad pa'i kun btags
qualified negation	ma yin dgag
qualities (of enlightenment)	yon tan
quantifiable ultimate truth	rnam grangs pa'i don dam pa
quasi-nirmanakaya sambhogakaya	phyed sprul longs sku
radiant one	'od 'phro ba
rainbow body	'ja' lus
rasana channel	rkyang ma
real entity	dngos po
realism	rtag par lta ba
recollection, power of	gzungs kyi stobs
red vital essence	khams dmar po
reflexive consciousness	rang rig
reflexive consciousness that is naturally lucid	rang rig rang gsal
refutation of production in any of four ways	mu bzhi skye 'gog (gi gran tshigs)

refutation of the production and
 cessation of what is existent
 or nonexistent
 regret
 relative truth
 remoteness
 resentment
 restraint
 result of the refinement
 rudimentary components, five

Samkhya
 scriptural authority
 secondary afflictive states, twenty
 secret immense expanse
 Secret One
 self-knowing awareness
 selfhood
 self-respect
 sensation (link of)
 sensation, aggregate of
 sense faculties
 sense field
 sensory appearances
 separation
 sequence
 situational paradigm
 size
 skillful means
 soul
 space
 speed
 spirit
 spiritual development, to pursue
 spiritual level
 spiritual potential
 spiritual strength
 spiritually advanced being
 spite
 spontaneous presence
 stage of completion
 stage of development
 stages of entrance, four
 stream winner

yod med skye 'gog (gi gtan tshigs)
 'gyod pa
 kun rdzob kyi bden pa
 gzhan
 khon du 'dzin pa
 sdom pa
 sbyangs 'bras
 de tsam ste lnga

grangs can pa
 lung
 nye ba'i nyong mongs nyi shu
 gsang ba'i klong rab 'byams
 gsang ba pa
 rang rig
 bdag skal pa dang ldan pa
 ngo tsha shes pa
 tshor ba('i yan lag)
 tshor ba'i phung po
 dbang po
 skye mched
 snang ba
 'byed pa
 go rims
 gnas skabs kyi chos
 bongts tshod
 thabs
 bdag
 nam mkha'
 'gyog po
 skyes bu
 tshogs gsog pa
 sa
 rigs
 stobs
 'phags pa
 'tshig pa
 lhun gyis grub pa
 rdzogs pa'i rim pa
 bskyed pa'i rim pa
 zhugs pa bzhi
 rgyun du zhugs pa

strengths, five
 sublime knowing
 sublime state of perception
 substantial entity
 substantial existence
 subtle energy
 suchness
 suffering (truth of)
 suffering perpetuated by conditions
 Superior
 supreme principle of interdependent
 connection
 supreme transference
 Svatantrikas who accept that ultimate
 truth is an object of consciousness

 Svatantrikas who do not accept that
 ultimate truth is an object of
 consciousness

 syllogism

 tantra of action
 tantra of conduct
 tantra as demonstration
 tantra as ground
 tantra as the heart essence of being
 tantra as the nature of being
 tantra as the path
 tantra as quintessence
 tantra as realization
 tantra as scripture
 tantra as skillful means
 tantra of supreme union
 tantra as ultimate reality
 tantra as the ultimate reality to be
 demonstrated
 tantra of union
 teachings that define phenomena
 temporary
 thorough analysis of phenomena
 Three Compilations
 time
 time of decline

stobs lnga
 shes rab
 mgnon par shes pa
 rdzas
 rdzas yod
 rlung
 de bzhin nyid
 sdug bsngal (gyi bden pa)
 rkyen gyi ngo bo nyid
 dbu ma

 rten 'brel chen po ('i gtan tshigs)
 'pho ba chen po

 don dam bden pa rig shes kyi yul du
 khas len pa'i rang rgyud pa

 don dam bden pa rig shes kyi yul du
 khas mi len pa'i rang rgyud pa
 thal 'gyur

 bya ba'i rgyud
 spyod pa'i rgyud
 mtshon byed kyi rgyud
 gzhi'i rgyud
 snying po'i rgyud
 rang bzhin gyi rgyud
 lam gyi rgyud
 bcud kyi rgyud
 rtogs pa'i rgyud
 tshig gi rgyud
 thabs kyi rgyud
 rnam 'byor chen po'i rgyud
 don gyi rgyud

 mtshon bya'i rgyud
 rnal 'byor gyi rgyud
 gtan la dbab pa
 res 'ga
 chos rab tu rnam 'byed pa
 sde snod gsum
 dus
 'grib pa'i dus

time of fruition
 time of holding to mere outer signs
 time of scriptural transmission
 time of spiritual practice
 timeless awareness
 timeless awareness as the basic
 space of phenomena
 timeless awareness as equalness
 timeless awareness as spontaneous
 fulfillment
 timelessly perfect
 total pliancy
 trance state
 transcendent perfection
 true ground of all experience
 true nature of phenomena
 truth
 twofold spiritual development

ultimate truth
 unadorned arhat
 unchanging absolute
 unchanging light
 uncompounded
 understanding
 unelaborate secret empowerment
 unerring absolute
 universal generality
 universal origin of suffering
 (truth of)
 unqualified negation
 unquantifiable ultimate truth

upward action
 utter lucidity
 utterly lucid mind itself
 utterly unelaborate precious word
 empowerment

Vaibhashika
 Vaisheshika
 vajra heart essence
 vajra shards
 valid cognition

'bras bu'i dus
 rtags tsaṃ 'dzin pa'i dus
 lung gi dus
 sgrub pa'i dus
 ye shes

chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes
 mnyam pa nyid kyi ye shes

bya ba grub pa'i ye shes
 ye nas rdzogs pa
 shin tu sbyangs pa
 'du shes med pa
 pha rol tu phyin pa
 don gyi kun gzhi
 chos nyid
 chos
 tshogs gnyis

don dam pa'i bden pa
 dgra bcom rgyan med
 'gyur ba med pa'i yongs grub
 'od mi 'gyur ba
 'dus ma byas pa
 shes rab
 spros med gsang dbang
 phyin ci ma log pa'i yongs grub
 khyab pa'i spyi

kun 'byung (gi bden pa)
 med dgag
 rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don
 dam pa
 'degs pa
 'od gsal
 sems nyid 'od gsal ba

rab tu spros med tshig dbang

bye brag tu smra ba
 bye brag pa
 rdo rje snying po
 rdo rje gzegs ma('i gtan tshigs)
 tshad ma

valid on the relative level
variable mental states, four
very heart of enlightenment

way of abiding
well-being
white expanse
white expanse of the nonduality
of view and meditation

white expanse of the supreme
and naturally arising state
of ineffability

white vital essence
word-based ideas
Worshiper of Brahma
Worshiper of Shiva
Worshiper of Vishnu

yang dag pa'i kun rdzob
gzhan 'gyur bzhi
byang chub snying po

gnas lugs
bde ba
klong dkar po

lra sgom gnyis su med pa'i klong
dkar po

brjod med rang shar chen po'i
klong dkar po
khams dkar po
gra spyi
tshangs pa ba
dbang phyug pa
khyab 'jug pa

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Scriptures (Sutras, Tantras, and Pith Instructions)

- Abode of Awareness*
Tib. *Rig pa'i gnas sa*
- Abridged Essence of Scripture*
Tib. *Lung tig bsdus pa*
- Accomplishment of Enlightened Intent*
Tib. *dGongs pa grub pa'i rgyud*
- Accomplishment of Secrets*
Tib. *gSang ba grub pa*
- Accomplishment of Various Activities*
Tib. *sNa tshogs las sgrub*
- Account of Rebirth in the House of Iron*
Tib. *ICags kyi khyim du skyes pa'i rabs*
- Accumulation*
Tib. *Tshogs kyi rgyud*

Acting in Accordance with the World

Tib. 'jig rten mthun 'jug gi mdo

Activity Manual for Empowerment

Tib. dBang gi las byang

Adorned by the Sun, by Vimalamitra

Tib. Zab pa pod bzhi'i kha byang Nyi mas brgyan pa

NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 1-27

Adornment of the Charnel Ground

Skt. Śrī śmaśānālamkāra tantra rāja

Tib. dPal dur khrod rgyan gyi rgyud kyi rgyal po

Dg. K., rGyud 'bum, vol. Ga, ff. 235a-237a (Toh. 402)

Adornment Through Direct Introduction

Tib. Ngo sprod rin po che spras pa'i zhing khams bstan pa'i rgyud

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 280-304

Advice Similar to a Treasure Chest of Precious Jewels

Tib. Rin po che za ma tog lta bu'i gtam

All-Creating Monarch

Skt. Sarva dharma mahā śānti bodhicitta kulaya rāja

Tib. Chos thams cad rdzogs pa chen po byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po

Dg. K., rÑiñ rgyud, vol. Ka, ff. 1b-86a (Toh. 828)

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 2-262

All-Embracing Awareness

Tib. Kun 'dus rig pa

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 624-6

All-Embracing Sphere

Tib. Thig le kun 'dus (chen po'i rgyud)

NGB, vol. 9, Th. 220

Amassing of the Rare and Sublime

Skt. Ārya mahā ratna kūṭa dharma paryāya śata sāhasrika granthe tri samvara nirdeśa parivarta nāma mahāyāna sūtra

Tib. 'Phags pa dKon mchog brtsegs pa chen po'i chos kyi rnam grangs stong phrag brgya pa las sdom pa gsum bstan pa'i le'u zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

Dg. K., dKon brtsegs, vol. Ka, ff. 1b-45a (Toh. 45)

Amoghapasha (Nyingma kriya source)

Tib. A mo gha pa sha'i rgyud

Analysis of the Key Points of the Elements

Tib. 'Byung ba'i gnad 'byed

Approaching the Three Kayas

Tib. *sKu gsum la 'jug pa'i mdo*

Aralli

Skt. *Vajrārali mahā tantra rāja nāma*

Tib. *rDo rje ā ra li zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 1-1a-1-6a (Toh. 426)

Armor of the Teachings

Tib. *bsTan pa'i go cha*

Array of Inlaid Gems

Tib. *Nor bu phra bkod rang gi don thams cad gsal bar byed pa'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 712---

Array of the Pivotal Points of View

Tib. *lTa ba'i gzer bkod*

Array of the Precious Wish-Fulfilling Secret

Tib. *gSang ba yid bzhin rin po che bkod pa'i rgyud*

Array of Qualities (sutra)

See *Complete Array of Qualities*

Array of Qualities (tantra)

Tib. *Yon tan bkod pa'i rgyud*

Array of Treasure Urns

Skt. *Ārya karaṇḍa vyūha nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa Za ma tog bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ja, ff. 200a-247b (Toh. 116)

Array of the Vajra Heart Essence

Tib. *rDo rje snying po bkod pa'i rgyud*

Arrayed Garland of the Lamps

Tib. *sGron ma 'phreng bkod*

Arrayed with Light

Tib. *'Od zer can*

Ascertainment of Key Occasions for Offerings, by Dharmakāya Vajradhara

Tib. *rDo rje 'chang gis gsungs pa mchod 'os rang bzhin gyi tshig dus gnad*

nges pa / Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi sras gcig gi rgyud kyi man ngag

NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 273-87

Aspiration Prayer of Maitreya

Tib. *Byams pa'i smon lam*

Authentic Gathering of All Deities

Tib. *Lha thams cad yang dag par 'dus pa'i rgyud*

*Auxiliary Tantra of Supreme Space*Tib. *Nam mkha' che phyi ma'i rgyud**Awakened Mind, the All-Creating Monarch: The View Equal to Space*See *All-Creating Monarch**Awesome Lightning of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gsang ba/ gsang ba'i mdzod chen po mi zad pa'i gter gyi sgron ma/brtul zhugs chen po bsgrub pa'i rgyud / ye shes rngam pa glog gi 'khor lo zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

NGB, vol. 15, Tb. 369

*Background Theory*Tib. *rGyab yig**Beauty of Auspiciousness*Tib. *bKra shis mdzes ldan chen po'i rgyud/ dPal nam mkha' med pa chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 173–93

*Berserk Elephant*Tib. *gLang po che rab 'bog gi rgyud*

NGB, vol. 18, Tb. 405

*Black Enemy: Slayer of the Lord of the Dead*Skt. *Yamāri kṛṣṇa karma sarvā cakra siddhi kara nāma tantra rāja*Tib. *gShin rje'i gshed dgra nag po'i 'khor lo las thams cad grub par byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ja, ff. 175a–185b (Toh. 473)*Black Secret Moon*Tib. *dPal zla gsang nag po'i rgyud**Blazing Expanse of Fire*Tib. *Me klong 'bar ba'i rgyud**Blazing Lamp*Tib. *gSer gyi me tog mdzes pa rin po che'i sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 467–91

*Blazing Like Fire*Tib. *Me ltar 'bar ba'i rgyud**Blazing Like Fire (Nyingma anuyoga source)*Tib. *sKu'i rgyud me ltar 'bar ba**Blazing Remains*Tib. *dPal nam mkha' med pa sku gdung 'bar ba chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 11, pp. 788–815

*Blossoming Lotus*Tib. *Padma kha 'byed*

Booklet

Tib. *dPe' chung*

Boundaries Blazing with Radiance: Guarding Against Obstacles

Tib. *Bar chad bsrung ba gzi ldan 'bar ba mtshams kyi rgyud*

Buddha Skull Cup

Skt. *Śrī buddha kapāla nāma yoginī tantra rāja*

Tib. *dPal sangs rgyas thod pa zhes bya ba rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 143a–167a (Toh. 424)

Chakra of the Subtle Channels

Tib. *rTsa gnas 'khor lo*

Changing the Shape of Things

Tib. *dNgos po kha bsgyur*

Chapter on the Accomplishment of the Goal

Tib. *bSam grub le'u*

Cheating Death

Tib. *'Chi ba bslu ba*

Cherished Heart of Being

Tib. *gCes pa'i snying po*

Clear Lotus Expanse

Tib. *Padma klong gsal*

Cluster of Stems

Skt. *Gaṇḍa vyūha sūtra*

Tib. *sDong po bkod pa'i mdo*

(ch. 43 of the sutra *Garlands of Buddhas*)

Collected Fragments of Numerous Pith Instructions

Tib. *Man ngag dum dum khrig*

Combined Divinatory Tantra

Tib. *'Phra rgyud dril ba*

Combined Flow of Meditation Sessions

Tib. *Thun gyi brgyud dril*

Commentary on Enlightened Intent

Tib. *dGongs pa'i ti ka*

Commentary on the Meaning of the Main Source

Tib. *gZhung don 'grel pa*

Compendium

Skt. *Ārya prajñā pāramitā sañcaya gāthā*

Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa sdud pa tshigs su bcad pa*

Dg. K., *Šes phyin sna tshogs*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–19b (Toh. 13)

*Compendium: A Summary of Realization*Tib. *Sa mutstsha rtogs pa bsdu pa'i rgyud**Compendium of Empowerment*Tib. *dBang bskur ba kun nas bkod pa**Compendium of Mudra*Tib. *Phyag rgya 'dus pa**Compendium of Three Scriptures*Tib. *Lung gsum 'dus pa**Compendium of Vajra Timeless Awareness*Skt. *Śrī jñāna vajra samuccaya*Tib. *dPal ye shes rdo rje kun las btus pa*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Cha, ff. 1b–35b (Toh. 450)*Compilation Concerning Confusion*Tib. *'Khrul pa'i sdebs yig**Complete Array of Qualities*Tib. *Yon tan yongs su bkod pa'i mdo**Complete Array of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes rnam par bkod pa'i rgyud**Complete Array of Vajrasattva*Tib. *rDo rje sems dpa' kun tu bkod pa**Complete Array of Wish Fulfillment*Tib. *Yid bzhin rnam par bkod pa'i rgyud**Complete Display of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes rnam par bkod pa'i rgyud**Complete Victory over the Three Realms*Tib. *Khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i rgyud**Complete Victory over the Three Realms (fragment)*Tib. *Khams gsum las rnam par rgyal ba'i dum bu**Conch-Shell Letters*Tib. *Dung yig can*

NYZ, vol. 4, pp. 263–421

*Concise Path of Conduct*Tib. *sPyod lam bsdu pa**Concise Vision*Tib. *sNang ba bsdu pa**Condensed Ritual of the Explanatory Tantra "The Vajra Garland"*Tib. *rDo rje 'phreng ba bshad rgyud cho ga bsdu pa*

*Conferral of Empowerment*Tib. *dBang bskur ba'i rgyud**Conjunction of Sun and Moon*Tib. *Nyi ma dang zla ba kha sbyor ba chen po gsang ba'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 491–559

*Consecration Through Blessings*Tib. *Byin gyis brlabs pa'i rgyud**Copper Letters*Tib. *Zangs yig can*

NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 345–438

*Cutting Through the Basis of Confusion*Tib. *'Khrul gzhi rtsad gcod**Cutting Through the Flow of Memory*Tib. *Dran pa rgyun gcod**Cutting Tongues of Flame*Tib. *gCod byed me lce**Cycle of Examination of Terminology*Tib. *sGra brtags 'khor lo**Cycle of the Vase of the Knowable*Tib. *Shes bya bum skor**Dakini Tantra of Bliss*Tib. *mKha' 'gro ma bde ba'i rgyud**Dakini's Secrets*Tib. *mKha' 'gro ma gsang ba'i rgyud**Dancing Yaksha Spirit*Tib. *gNod sbyin gar khan gyi rgyud**Dark Secret Moon*Tib. *Zla gsang nag po'i rgyud*

NGB, vols. 25–6, Tb. 468–71

*Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent*Skt. *Ārya saṃdhi nirmocana nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa dgongs pa nges par 'grel pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ca, ff. 1b–55b (Toh. 106)*Definitive Origin of the Lamps*Tib. *sGron ma'i khungs gcod**Deity's Fingers*Tib. *Lha'i phyag sor*

*Delineation of the Levels of Awareness*Tib. *Rig pa'i sa 'byed**Delineation of Spiritual Approaches*Tib. *Theg pa'i ru shan**Demonstrating the Vajra Path*Tib. *rDo rje lam bstan**Dense Array of Adornment*Skt. *Ārya ghanavyūha nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa rgyan stug po bkod pa*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Cha, ff. 1b–55b (Toh. 110)*Department of Yoginis*Skt. *Yoginī sañcārya*Tib. *rNal 'byor ma'i kun tu spyod pa*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ga, ff. 34a–44b (Toh. 375)*Detailed Analysis of Samaya*Tib. *Dam tshig rab 'byed**Determination of Imminent Death*Tib. *'Chi ba brtag pa**Dharani of Akshobhya*Tib. *Mi 'khrugs pa'i gzungs**Dharani of Amoghapasha*Tib. *Don yod zhags pa'i gzungs**Discourse on All-Embracing Awareness*Tib. *Kun 'dus rig pa'i mdo**Discourse of Completely Pure Words*Tib. *Yi ge rnam dag gi mdo**Discourse on the Unity of the Enlightened Intent of All Buddhas*Tib. *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo**Dispelling Frames of Reference in the View*Tib. *lTa ba'i dmigs sel**Display of Nectar*Tib. *bDud rtsi rol pa**Display of Sublime Bliss*Tib. *bDe mchog rol pa'i rgyud**Display of the Ten Candidates*Tib. *Zhing bcu rol pa'i rgyud**Display of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes rol pa'i rgyud*

*Distinguishing Among the Kinds of Empowerment*Tib. *dBang gi rigs 'byed**Dredging the Pit of Samsara*Tib. *'Khor ba dong sprugs**Eight Thousand Stanzas*See *Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Eight Thousand Stanzas**Eighteen Essentials of Scripture*Tib. *Lung tig bco brgyad**Elephant's Sport: The Enormous and Complete Array*Tib. *Kun nas bkod pa rgyan chen glang po rol pa**Eleven Modes of Innate Abiding*Tib. *Babs lugs bcu gcig**Elucidation of Empowerment*Tib. *dBang gi dag byed**Elucidation of the Meaning of Mantra: Sealed with a Vajra*Tib. *sNgags don gsal ba rdo rje rgyas 'debs**Emergence of Commitment*Tib. *Dam tshig mngon par 'byung ba**Emergence of Heruka*Tib. *Khrag 'thung mngon 'byung**Emergence of Precepts*Tib. *sDom pa 'byung ba**Emergence of the Vajra*Tib. *rDo rje mngon par 'byung ba**Emergence of the Vajra Essence*Tib. *rDo rje snying po 'byung ba**Emergence of Varahi*Skt. *Ḍākinī sarva cittādvayācintya jñāna vajra varāhyabhibhava tantra rāja nāma*Tib. *mKha' 'gro ma thams cad kyi thugs gnyis su med pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i ye shes rdo rje phag mo mngon par 'byung ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*Dk. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ga, ff. 60b–71a (Toh. 378)*Empowerment of the Vajra Holder*Skt. *Ārya vajrapāṇyabhiṣeka mahā tantra*Tib. *'Phags pa lag na rdo rje dbang bskur ba'i rgyud chen po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Da, ff. 1b–156b (Toh. 496)

*Empowerment of Vajrapani*See *Empowerment of the Vajra Holder**Engaging in Secret Conduct: The Tantra of the Potential*Tib. *gSang ba spyod pa (sa bon gyi rgyud)*See *Only Child of the Teachings**Entering the Dove's Nest*Tib. *Thi bya tshang 'jug**Entrance into the Inner Sanctum of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes sbub 'jug**Epitome of the Sun of the Secret*Tib. *gSang ba nyi khol**Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana*(1) Skt. *Ārya mahā parinirvāṇa sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vols. Ņa and Ta (Toh. 119)(2) Skt. *Ārya mahā parinirvāṇa nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Tha, ff. 1b–151a (Toh. 120)(3) Skt. *Ārya mahā parinirvāṇa sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Tha, ff. 151a–152b (Toh. 121)*Excellent Accomplishment*Skt. *Susiddhi kara mahā tantra sādhanopayika paṭala*Tib. *Legs par grub par byed pa'i rgyud chen po las sgrub pa'i thabs rim par
phye ba*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Wa, ff. 168a–222b (Toh. 807)*Excellent Spiritual Attainment*See *Excellent Accomplishment**Expansive Sphere*Tib. *Thig le klong gi rgyud**Explanation of the Chapter Titles*Tib. *Le'u'i mtshan bshad**Explanation of the Combining of Words*Tib. *Yi ge'i sbyor bshad**Explanation of Modes of Light*Tib. *'Od kyi tshul bshad**Extracts from the Golden Records*Tib. *gSer byang bkol ba*

*Extraordinary Wheel*Tib. *l'bag pa'i 'khor lo**Ferocity Blazing Like Fire*Tib. *rNgom byed me ltar 'bar ba'i rgyud**Fire Ritual: The Ravenous Display*Tib. *Za byed rol pa sbyin sreg gi rgyud**First Sublime and Glorious One*Skt. *Śrī parmādyā nāma mahāyāna kalpa rāja*Tib. *dPal mchog dang po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i rtog pa'i rgyal po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ta, ff. 150b–173a (Toh. 487)*Five Cycles of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes lnga skor**Five Protective Charms*Tib. *Grva lnga**Five Protective Dharanis*Tib. *gZungs grva lnga**Fivefold Array*Tib. *bKod pa lnga pa**Flawless Vajra*Tib. *rDo rje dri ma med pa**Flow of Honest Words*Tib. *Drang pa'i tshig rgyun**Flower of Awareness*Tib. *Rig pa'i me tog**Focus on the Vast Range of "A": An Overview of Subtle Energy*Tib. *rGya mts'ho ar gtad rlung gi sdom byang**Fortunate Eon*Skt. *Ārya bhadrā kalpika nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa bskal pa bzang po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–340a (Toh. 94)*Four Higher Collections of the Heart Drop Teachings*Tib. *sNying thig ya bzhi*

NYZ, vols. 1–13

*Four Meanings of Enlightened Intent*Tib. *dGongs don bzhi pa**Four Necessities*Tib. *dGos 'dod bzhi pa*

*Fourfold Vajra Basis*Skt. *Śrī catuḥ piṭha mahā yoginī tantra rāja nāma*Tib. *rNal 'byor ma'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal gdan bzhi pa zhes bya ba*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Nā, ff. 181a-231b (Toh. 428)*Fourfold Vajra Basis* (Nyingma anuyoga source)Tib. *rDo rje gdan bzhi'i rgyud**Fragment of Magic*Tib. *'Phrul gyi dum bu**Fragment of the Quintessence*Tib. *bCud kyi dum bu**Fully Fledged Wings of the Great Garuda*, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zerTib. *Khyung chen gshog rdzogs*NYZ, vol. 12 (*Zab mo yang tig*), pp. 26--76*Fundamental Pith Instructions*Tib. *Man ngag rtsa ba**Fundamental Tantra*Tib. *Mū la tantra rtsa ba'i rgyud**Fundamental Tantra of Manjushri*Tib. *'Jam dpal rtsa rgyud**Fundamental Tantra of Supreme Space*Tib. *Nam mkha' che rtsa ba'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 3, Tb. 61

*Garlands of Buddhas*Skt. *Buddha avataṃsaka nāma mahā vaipūḷya sūtra*Tib. *Sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *Phal chen*, vols. Ka-A (Toh. 44)*Gathering of All Mamos*Tib. *Ma mo kun 'dus**Gathering of Masters of Awareness*Tib. *'Phrin las kyi rgyud rig 'dzin 'dus pa**Gathering of Secrets*Skt. *Sarva tathāgata kāya vāk citta rahasya guhya samāja nāma mahā kalpa rāja*Tib. *De bzhin gsbegs pa thams chad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang chen**gsang ba 'dus pa zhes bya ba brtag pa'i rgyal po chen po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ca, ff. 90a-148a (Toh. 442)*Gathering of Supreme Power*Tib. *gSung gi rgyud dbang chen 'dus pa*

- Gem at the Midbrow*
Tib. mDzod spu nor bu
- General Conduct of the Great Perfection Approach*
Tib. rDzogs pa spyi gcod
NGB, vol. 1, pp. 634–6
- General Summary of the Stages of Approach and Accomplishment*
Tib. bs.Nyen sgrub spyi 'dus
- General Tantra of Secrets*
Tib. gSang ba spyi'i rgyud
- General Theme of the Great Perfection Approach*
Tib. rDzogs pa spyi chings
- General Theme of Spontaneous Perfection*
Tib. Lbun rdzogs spyi chings
- Glorious Gathering of Secrets. Equal to Space*
Tib. gSang ba 'dus pa nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud
- Glorious and Secret Timeless Awareness*
Tib. dPal ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud
- Goddess of the White Parasol*
Tib. gDugs dkar mo can
- Golden Array of View*
Tib. lTa ba'i gser bkod
- Golden Casket.* by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer
Tib. Man ngag rin po che gser gyi sgrom bu
NYZ, vol. 7 (mKha' 'gro yang tig), pp. 441–58
- Golden Letters*
Tib. gSer yig can
NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 37–344
- Golden Lily*
Tib. gSer gyi utpala
- Great Array of Empowerments*
Tib. dBang bkod chen po
- Great Commentary on Difficult Points*
Tib. dKa' 'grel chen po
- Great Compendium of Empowerments*
Tib. dBang dgod chen mo
- Great Compilation Concerning Confusion*
Tib. 'Khrul pa'i sdebs yig chen mo

Great Garuda Soaring in Space, by Śrī Siṃha
Tib. *Khyung chen mkha' lding*
NYZ, vol. 5 (*Bi ma snying thig*), pp. 52–63

Great History
Tib. *Lo rgyus chen po*

Great Instruction on the Path
Tib. *Lam khrid chen po*

Great Miraculous Letters
Tib. *'Phrul yig chen po*

Great Pivotal Point of the Heart
Tib. *sNying gzer chen po*

Great Section of the Heruka
Tib. *He ru ka gal po che*

Great Summary
Tib. *Don bsdus chen po*

Harbinger of Awareness
Tib. *Rig pa'i khu byug*
NGB, vol. 1, pp. 499–524

Heaped Jewels
Tib. *Rin po che spungs pa'i yon tan chen po ston pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po
chen po*
NGB, vol. 11, pp. 757–88

Heaps of Lotusess
Tib. *Padma brtsegs pa*

Heart Drop of Vimalamitra
Tib. *Bi ma snying thig*
NYZ, vols. 3–6

Heart Essence of the Cycle of the Sphere
Tib. *Thig le skor gyi snying po'i rgyud*

Heart Essence of the Golden Flower
Tib. *gSer gyi me tog snying po*

Heart Essence of Secrets: The Ascertainment of Suchness
Skt. *Śrī guhya garbha tattva viniścaya*
Tib. *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid rnam par nges pa*
Dg. K., *rÑiñ rgyud*, vol. Kha, ff. 110b–132a (Toh. 832)
NGB, vol. 20, pp. 152–218

Heart Essence of Sublime Knowing (Heart Sutra)
Skt. *Bhagavatī prajñā pāramitā hṛdaya*

Tib. *bCom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po*
Dg. K., *Ses phyin sna tshogs*, vol. Ka, ff. 144b–146a (Toh. 21)

Heart Essence of View

Tib. *lTa ba'i snying po*

Heruka

Tib. *Khrag 'thung*

Heruka (Nyingma anuyoga source)

Tib. *Rig sngags spyi'i sgrub pa he ru ka'i tantra*

Hevajra: Web of Dakinis

Tib. *Kye'i rdo rje mkha' 'gro ma dra ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*
Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 13b–30a (Toh. 418)

Hevajra Tantra

See *Vajra of Delight*

Hidden Sun

Tib. *sBas pa nyi ma*

Highest Continuum of Nomenclature

Tib. *Nges brjod bla ma'i rgyud*

Hundred Thousand Categories of Vuyotamala

Tib. *Byi to ta ma la 'bum sde*

Hundred Thousand Stanzas

See *Perfection of Sublime Knowing in a Hundred Thousand Stanzas*

Illuminating Lamp, by Vimalamitra

Tib. *Dung yig can rgyud kyi khong don bsdus pa sgron ma snang byed mdo*
rgyud kun kyi don gsal bar byed pa
NYZ, vol. 4, pp. 263–367

Illuminating Summary

Tib. *Don bsdus gsal byed*

Illumination of the Pearl

Tib. *Mu tig gsal byed*

Inconceivable Rali

Skt. *Śrī cakra saṃvara gubhācintya tantra rāja*
Tib. *dPal 'khor lo sdom pa gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i rgyud kyi*
rgyal po
Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ga, ff. 196a–199a (Toh. 385)

Inconceivable Secrets

Tib. *gSang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i mdo*

*Inlaid-Gem Letters*Tib. *Phra yig can*

NYZ, vol. 4, pp. 1–261

*Inner Record of Mantra*Tib. *sNags kyi nang them**Innermost Heart Drop: The Wish-Fulfilling Gem*, by *klong chen rab 'byams pa*

Dri med 'od zer

Tib. *bLa ma yang tig yid bzhin nor bu*

NYZ, vols. 1–2

*Innermost Heart Drop of Explanation*Tib. *bShad pa'i yang tig**Innermost Heart Drop of the Summary*Tib. *Don bsdus yang tig**Innermost Heart Summary*Tib. *Don bsdus yang snying**Inspiration of Jvalamukhi*Tib. *Kha 'bar ma dbugs dbyung ba'i rgyud**Instruction on the Key Points of Empowerment*Tib. *dBang gi phra khrid* and *dBang gi phra tig**Instruction on the Key Points of Gaining Power*Tib. *dBang sbyor phra khrid**Instruction on the Key Points of Passion*Tib. *Chags pa'i phra khrid**Instruction on the Key Points of Subtle Energy*Tib. *Rin po che rlung gi phra khrid*

NYZ, vol. 4, pp. 1–20

*Interconnection of Four Levels of Terminology*Tib. *sGra bzhi mtshams sbyor**Interlinear Gloss*Tib. *mTshams sbyar lde mig**Intermediate-Length "Mother"*Tib. *Yum bar ma*See *Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Twenty-five Thousand Stanzas**Journey to Sri Lanka*Skt. *Ārya laṅkāvatāra mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa lang kar gshags pa'i theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ca, ff. 192a–284b (Toh. 108)

*Key to Empowerment*Tib. *dBang gi lde mig**Key to Utter Lucidity*Tib. *'Od gsal lde mig**Lamp of Clarity*Tib. *gSal ba'i sgron ma**Lamp Shining with Light*Tib. *sGron ma 'od 'bar**Lamp That Shines*Tib. *sNang byed sgron ma**Lamp That Summarizes*Tib. *Don bsdus sgron ma**Lesser Miraculous Letters*Tib. *'Phrul yig chung ba**Lesser Pivotal Point of the Heart*Tib. *sNying gzer chung ba**Lotus Coronet*Tib. *Padma cod pan**Lotus Coronet (Nyingma kriya source)*Tib. *Padma cod pan gyi rgyud**Lotus Pinnacle*Tib. *Padma rtse mo**Lucid Expanse*Tib. *kLong gsal 'bar ba'i rgyud**Magical Array of Bliss*Tib. *bDe ba 'phrul bkod/bDe ba phra bkod*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 621-4

*Magical Display: The Heart Essence of Secrets*See *Heart Essence of Secrets**Magical Display as the Guiding Principle*Tib. *gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i bla ma chen po*Dg. K., *rÑiñ rgyud*, vol. Ga, ff. 34b-60a (Toh. 837)

NGB, vol. 20, pp. 337-41

*Majestic Array of Qualities*Skt. *Ārya sarva dharma guṇa vyūha rāja nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa chos thams cad kyi yon tan bkod pa'i rgyal po zhes bya ba
theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ja, ff. 181a-195b (Toh. 114)

Majestic Innermost Sphere

Tib. Yang tig rgyal po

Majestic State of Meditative Absorption

Skt. Ārya sarva dharma svabhāva samatā vipañcita samādhi rāja nāma mahāyāna sūtra

Tib. 'Phags pa Chos thams cad kyi rang bzhin mnyam pa nyid rnam par spros pa ting nge 'dzin gyi rgyal po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

Dg. K., mDo sde, vol. Da, ff. 1b-10b (Toh. 127)

Majestic Supreme Space

Tib. Nam mkha' che rgyal po

Making the Fruition Evident

Tib. 'Bras bu mgnon byed

Manifest Enlightenment

Tib. mNgon par byang chub pa'i rgyud

Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana

Tib. rNam snang mngon byang

Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana (Nyingma upa source)

Tib. rNam par snang mdzad mngon par byang chub pa'i rgyud

Manifest Realization

Tib. mNgon par rtogs pa'i rgyud

Manjushri: The Immaculate Expression of Timeless Awareness

Tib. 'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa' dri ma med pa'i rgyud

Manjushri: The Sharp and Unobscured

Tib. 'Jam dpal rnon po sgrib pa med pa'i rgyud

Manjushri: The Web of Conduct

Tib. 'Jam dpal drva ba spyod pa'i rgyud

Manjushri: The Web of Magical Display

Tib. 'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba

Manjushri: The Web of Magical Display in Sixteen Thousand Chapters

Tib. 'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drva ba le'u khri drug stong pa

Mantra of the Lotus Pinnacle

Tib. Padma rtse mo sngags kyi rgyud

Manual of the Authentic Measure of Practice

Tib. Tshad kyi yi ge

Manual of Key Points

Tib. gNad yig

Manual on the Key Points of the Four Elements

Tib. 'Byung bzhi'i gnad kyi yi ge

- Manual of Original Purity*
Tib. *Ka dag yi ge*
- Manual of Secret Terminology*
Tib. *gSang ba'i sgra yig*
- Manual of Signs of Successful Practice*
Tib. *rTags yig*
- Manual of Spontaneous Presence*
Tib. *Lhun grub yi ge*
- Marichi*
Tib. 'Od zer can
- Meaningful Diligence*
Tib. *brTson pa don ldan gyi rgyud*
- Meaningful Meditation*
Tib. *sGom pa don grub*
- Meditative Stability: Cycle of Sleep*
Tib. *bsam gtan nyal ba'i 'khor lo*
- Meditative Stability of the Eyes*
Tib. *Mig gi bsam gtan*
- Minor Scriptural Transmissions*
Skt. *Vinaya kṣudraka vastu*
Tib. 'Dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi
Dg. K., 'Dul ba, vol. Tha, ff. 1b-310a (Toh. 6)
- Mirror Illuminating the Basis of Confusion*
Tib. 'Khrul gzhi gsal ba'i me long
- Mirror of the Secret*
Tib. *gSang ba'i me long*
- Monarch of Space*
Tib. *Nam mkha'i rgyal po*
NGB, vol. 1, pp. 601-6
- Most Concealed Hidden Fragment*
Tib. *Yang gab sbas pa'i dum bu*
- Most Secret Heart Drop*, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer
Tib. *Yang gsang snying tig*
- Most Sublime Secret*
Tib. *gSang ba mchog gi rgyud*
- Natural Freedom of Awareness*
Tib. *Rig pa rang grol chen po thams cad 'grel pa'i rgyud*
NGB, vol. 11, pp. 699-757

*Naturally Abiding Meditative Stability*Tib. *bSam gtan rang gnas**Naturally Arising Awareness*Tib. *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi ting nge 'dzin yongs su bshad pa ye shes 'dus pa'i mdo theg pa chen po gsang ba bla na med pa'i rgyud chos thams cad kyi 'byung gnas sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa gsang sngags gcig pa'i ye shes rdzogs pa chen po'i don gsal bar byed pa'i rgyud rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 11, pp. 323-699

*Naturally Occurring Perfection*Tib. *sKu thams cad kyi snang ba ston pa dbang rdzogs pa rang byung chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 11, pp. 1-297

*Net of Brahma*Skt. *Brahma jāla sūtra*Tib. *Tshangs pa'i drva ba'i mdo*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Aḥ, ff. 70b-86a (Toh. 352)*Nine-Faced One: The Seven Accounts of the Terrifying One*Tib. *'jigs byed rtogs pa bdun pa zhal dgu pa'i rgyud**Nine Ways of Surpassing Ordinary Experience*Tib. *Tbod rgal dgu pa**Nonconceptual Awareness*Tib. *rNam par mi rtog pa'i rgyud**Oceanic Tantra of Bliss*Tib. *rGya mtshe bde ba'i rgyud**One Hundred Cases of Karma*Skt. *Karma śataka*Tib. *Las brgya tham pa*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ha, ff. 1b-309a, and vol. A, ff. 1b-128b (Toh. 340)*Only Child of the Teachings*Tib. *bsTan pa bu gcig gi rgyud gSer gyi snying po Nyi ma rab tu snang byed*
NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 3--1*Oral Transmission of Mind: Instructions on Meditation*Tib. *Sems lung sgom kbrid**Origin of Mind at Rest*Tib. *gNas pa byung khungs**Original Sacredness*Tib. *Dam pa dang po'i rgyud*

Padma: The Web of Magical Display

Tib. *Padma sgyu 'phrul drva ba*

Padmakara, the First Sublime and Glorious One

Tib. *Padmā ka ra dpal mchog dang po'i rgyud*

Passing into Nirvana

See *Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana*

Peaceful Deities

Tib. *Zhi ba lha'i rgyud*

Pearl Garland

Tib. *Mu tig rin po che 'phreng ba'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 304–93

Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion

Tib. *Seng ge rtsal rdzogs chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 559–12

Perfection of the Great Garuda

Tib. *Khyung chen rdzogs pa*

See *Soaring of the Great Garuda*

Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Eight Thousand Stanzas

Skt. *Ārya aṣṭa sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā*

Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa*

Dg. K., *Śes phyin*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–286a (Toh. 12)

Perfection of Sublime Knowing in a Hundred Thousand Stanzas

Skt. *Śata sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā*

Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa*

Dg. K., *Śes phyin*, vols. Ka–A (Toh. 8)

Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Seven Hundred Stanzas

Skt. *Ārya sapta śatikā nāma prajñā pāramitā mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa bdun brgya pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *Śes phyin sna tshogs*, vol. Ka, ff. 148a–174a (Toh. 24)

Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Twenty-five Thousand Stanzas

Skt. *Pañca viṃśati sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā*

Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag nyi shu lnga pa*

Dg. K., *Śes phyin nyi khri*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–382a (Toh. 9)

Pinnacle State Victorious in All Circumstances

Tib. *rTse mo byung rgyal*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 606–18

Placing Timeless Awareness in One's Hand

Tib. *Ye shes lag sprad*

Practical Instruction on the Three Kayas

Tib. *sKu gsum lag khrid*

Practice of the Single Form

Tib. *sKu rkyang sgrub pa*

Precious Array

Tib. *Rin chen bkod pa*

Precious Clarity

Tib. *gSal ba rin chen*

Precious Garland (tantra)

Tib. *Rin chen phreng ba*

Precious Golden Garland

Tib. *Rin chen gser 'phreng*

Precious Golden Letters

Tib. *Rin chen gser yig*

Precious Illuminating Garland

Tib. *Rin chen gsal 'phreng*

Precious Instruction on Key Points

Tib. *Rin chen pra khrid*

Precious Lamp

Tib. *Rin chen sgron ma*

Precious Wheel

Tib. *Rin chen 'khor lo*

Presence of Timeless Awareness

Tib. *Ye shes grub pa'i rgyud*

Primacy of Buddhahood

Tib. *Sangs rgyas gtso bo*

Primordial Yoga

Tib. *A ti rnal 'byor*

Prophetic Enlightened Intent

Skt. *Sandhi vyākaraṇa nāma tantra*

Tib. *dGongs pa lung bstan pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ca, ff. 158a–207b (Toh. 444)

Purifying Beings in Lower States of Rebirth

Tib. *Ngan song sbyong ba dkyil 'khor bcu gnyis kyi rgyud*

Queen Shrimala

Skt. *Ārya śrī mālā devī siṃha nāda nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa lha mo dpal phreng gi seng ge'i sgra zhes bya ba*

Dg. K., *dKon brtsegs*, vol. Cha, ff. 255a–277b (Toh. 92)

Rali, the Secret King of Nectar

Tib. *Ra li gsang ba bdud rtsi'i rgyal po*

Rare and Sublime Meteor

Skt. *Ārya ratnolkā nāma dhāraṇi mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa dkon mchog ta la la'i gzungs shes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Pa, ff. 34a–82a (Toh. 145)

Ratna

Tib. *Rin po che*

Realization of All Goals (fragment)

Tib. *Don thams cad pa'i grub pa'i dum bu*

Reciting the Names of Manjushri

Skt. *Mañjuśrī jñāna sattvāsyā paramārtha nāma saṃgīti*

Tib. *'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i don dam pa'i mtshan yang dag par brjod pa*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–13b (Toh. 360)

Record of the Neophyte's Meditation

Tib. *gSar pa'i sgom byang*

Red Slayer

Skt. *Śrī rakta yamāri tantra rāja nāma*

Tib. *dPal gshin rje'i gshed dmar po zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ja, ff. 186a–214b (Toh. 474)

Refined Nectar

Tib. *bDud rtsi yang zhun*

Refinement of Beings in Lower Realms (fragment)

Tib. *Ngan song sbyong ba'i dum bu*

Refinement of Beings in Lower Realms in Seventy Chapters

Tib. *Ngan song sbyong rgyud rtogs pa pa bdun cu pa*

Refining Away Lower States of Rebirth

Skt. *Sarva durgati pariśodbhāna tejo rājasya tathāgatasya arhato samyak sambuddhasya kalpa nāma*

Tib. *Ngan song sbyong rgyud / De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa zhes bya ba*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ta, ff. 58b–96a (Toh. 483)

Refining Gold from Ore

Tib. *rDo la gser zhun*, by Mañjuśrimitra

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 560–1

Relieving the Guilt of Ajatashatru

Skt. *Ārya ajātaśatru kaukṛtya vinodana nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa ma skyes dgra'i 'gyod pa bsal ba zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Tsha, ff. 211b–268b (Toh. 216)

Request of Chandragarbha

Skt. *Ārya Candragarbha paripṛcchā sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa Zla ba'i snying pos zhus pa'i mdo las / sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa gnas pa dang 'jig pa'i tshul lung bstan pa*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Aḥ, ff. 216a–220b (Toh. 356)

Request of the Four Goddesses

Skt. *Catur devī paripṛcchā*

Tib. *Lha mo bzhis yongs su zhus pa*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ca, ff. 277b–281b (Toh. 446)

Request of Sagara

Skt. *Ārya sāgara mati paripṛccha nāma mahā yāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa blo gros rgya mtshos zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Pha, ff. 1b–115b (Toh. 152)

Request of Subahu

Skt. *Ārya subāhu paripṛccha nāma tantra*

Tib. *'Phags pa dpung bzang gis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Wa, ff. 118a–140b (Toh. 805)

Request of Susthitamati

Skt. *Ārya susthita mati deva putra paripṛcchā nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa lha'i bu blo gros rab gnas kyi zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *dKon brtsegs*, vol. Ca, ff. 285a–309a (Toh. 80)

Reunion of Father and Son

Skt. *Ārya pitā putra samāgamana nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa yab dang sras mjal ba zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *dKon brtsegs*, vol. Na, ff. 1b–168a (Toh. 60)

Revelation of the Inexhaustible Treasure

Tib. *Mi zad pa'i gter bstan pa*

Reverberation of Sound

Tib. *Rin po che 'byung bar byed pa sgra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 1–13

Ritual Activities: The Garland of Action

Tib. *Karma mā le 'phrin las kyi rgyud*

Root of Empowerment

Tib. *dBang gi rtsa ba*

*Sacred Golden Light*Skt. *Ārya suvarṇa prabhāsottama sutrendra rāja nāma mahāyāna sūtra*Tib. *'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Pa, ff. 151b-273a (Toh. 556)*Sacred and Mighty One*Tib. *rje btsan dam pa*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 592-4

*Sacred Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes dam pa**Samantabhadra: The Mirror of Enlightened Mind*Tib. *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud ces bya ba thams cad ston pa'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 245-80

*Secondary Auxiliary Tantra: A Thorough Discussion of Supreme Space*Tib. *Nam mkha' che phyi ma'i phyi ma'i rgyud yongs su bgro ba**Secret Background Theory*Tib. *gSang ba'i rgyab yig and rGyab yig gsang ba**Secret Buddhahood*Tib. *Sangs rgyas gsang ba**Secret Commentary*Tib. *gSang ba'i ti ka**Secret Conduct: The Tantra of the Potential*See *Only Child of the Teachings**Secret Goddess*Tib. *Yon tan gyi rgyud lha mo gsang ba**Secret Session*Tib. *Thun gsang**Secret Sound*Tib. *gSang ba sgra'i rgyud**Secret Tantra of the Manifest Display*Tib. *gSang ba'i rgyud rnam par rol pa**Secret Testament*Tib. *gSang ba'i zhal chems**Secret of Vajra Equipoise*Tib. *rDo rje snyoms 'jug gsang ba'i rgyud**Seedling of Bliss*Tib. *bDe ba'i myu gu*

Seven Hundred Stanzas

See *Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Seven Hundred Stanzas*

Seven Ways of Cutting Through Solidity

Tib. *Khregs chod bdun pa*

Sevenfold Dispelling of Frames of Reference

Tib. *dMigs sel bdun pa*

Sharp-Pointed Vajra

Tib. *rDo rje rnon po'i rgyud*

Shining Lamp, by Vimalamitra

Tib. *sGron ma suang byed*

See *Illuminating Lamp*

Singing Praises

Tib. *bsTod pa glur blangs kyi rgyud*

Six Combined Sessions

Tib. *Thun drug dril ba*

Six Expanses

Tib. *Kun tu bzang po klong drug pa'i rgyud*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 394-467

Six Mental Reference Points

Tib. *Sems kyi dmigs drug*

Six Stages

Tib. *Rim pa drug pa*

Six Supreme Expanses

Tib. *klong chen drug pa*

Six Wheels

Tib. *'Khor lo drug pa*

Sixfold Preparation of Substances

Tib. *rDzas sgrub drug pa*

Sixfold Sphere

Tib. *Thig le drug pa*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 594-8

Sixfold Wheel

Tib. *'Khor lo drug pa*

Six-Leveled Wheel

Tib. *'Khor lo drug rim*

Sixteen Elaborate Sections

Tib. *sPros bcas dum bu bcu drug*

*Small Brown Volume*Tib. *Po ti smug chung**Soaring of the Great Garuda*Tib. *Khyung chen lding ba*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 537–60

*Spacious Lotus Expanse*Tib. *Padma klong yangs**Sphere of Awakened Mind*Tib. *Byang chub sems tig*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 636–61

*Sphere of the Secret Moon*Tib. *Zla gsang thig le'i rgyud**Sphere of Timeless Awareness*Skt. *Śrī jñāna tilaka yoginī tantra rāja parama mahādbhuta nāma*Tib. *dPal ye shes thig le rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po mchog tu rmad du byung ba zhes bya ba*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 96b–136b (Toh. 422)*Spontaneously Present Ocean of Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Ye shes rgya mtscho lhun gyis grub pa'i rgyud**Spontaneously Present Timeless Awareness*Tib. *Lhun grub ye shes**Sport of the Cuckoo in the Charnel Ground*Tib. *Dur khrod khu byug rol pa**Sport of the Sublime Hayagriva*Tib. *rTa mchog rol pa**Stages of the Guru*Tib. *bLa ma'i rim pa**Stirring of Supreme Dynamic Energy*Tib. *rTsal chen sprugs pa*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 524–37

*Stirring Up the Lion's Dynamic Energy*Tib. *Seng ge rtsal sprugs**Strung Garland of Pearls*Tib. *Mu tig phreng brgyus**Sublime Awareness*Tib. *Rig pa mchog**Sublime Bliss*See *Wheel of Sublime Bliss*

Sublime Wish Fulfillment of the Manifest Display of Manjushri

Tib. 'Jam dpal rnam par rol pa yid bzhin mchog gi rgyud

Subsequent Tantra of "The Gathering of Secrets"

Tib. gSang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud phyi ma

Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability

Tib. bSam gtan phyi ma

Subtle Sphere of Empowerment

Tib. dBang gi phra tig

Suchness: The Concise Version of the Sublime and Glorious One

Tib. dPal mchog bsdus pa de kho na nyid kyi rgyud

Suchness of Secrets

Tib. gSang ba'i de nyid

Summarizing the Definitive Meaning

Tib. Nges don bsdus pa'i rgyud

Summarizing Key

Tib. Don bsdus lde mig

Summary

Tib. bsDus don and Don bsdus

Summary of the Lamps

Tib. sGron ma 'dus pa

Summary of the Meaning of the Terminology

Tib. sGra don bsdus yig

Summary of the Secret Meaning

Tib. gSang ba'i don bsdus

Summary of the Subject Matter

Tib. Don skor bsdus pa

Summary of Suchness

Skt. Sarva tathāgata tattva saṅgraha nāmā mahāyāna sūtra

Tib. bDe bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdus pa zhes bya ba
theg pa chen po'i mdo

Dg. K., rGyud 'bum, vol. Ņa, ff. 1b-142a (Toh. 479)

Summary of the Visions

Tib. sNang ba bsdus pa

Summit of Sumeru, Equal to the Ocean

Tib. Ri rab zom rgya mtsbo dang mnyam pa'i rgyud

Summit of Sumeru, the Vajra Mountain

Tib. rDo rie lhun po ri rab zom gyi rgyud

*Superb Monarch*Tib. *rMad byung rgyal po**Supreme Amassing of the Rare and Sublime: Categories of Dharma*See *Amassing of the Rare and Sublime**Supreme Array*Tib. *bKod pa chen po**Supreme Commitment of Rali*Tib. *Ra li'i dam tshig chen po**Supreme Fundamental Sphere*Tib. *rTsa thig chen po**Supreme Heart Drop of Explanation*Tib. *bShad tig chen po**Supreme Illusion*Tib. *sGyu ma chen po'i rgyud**Supreme Magical Illusion*Skt. *Śrī mahā māyā tantra rāja nāma*Tib. *dPal sgyu 'phrul chen po zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 167a–171a (Toh. 425)*Supreme Scriptural Transmission of Mind*Tib. *Sems lung chen po**Supreme Space: The Victory Banner That Never Falls*Tib. *Mi nub pa'i rgyal mtshan nam mkha' che*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 571–86

*Supreme Sphere*Tib. *Thig le chen po**Supreme Sphere of the Secret*Tib. *gSang thig chen po**Supreme Transference*Tib. *'Pho ba chen po**Synopsis of Suchness*Tib. *De nyid bsdus don* and *De nyid don bsdus**Synthesis of the Most Secret Teachings*Tib. *Yang gsang dril ba**Taking Obvious Appearances as the Path*Tib. *Rags pa lam slong**Tamer of Elemental Spirits*Tib. *'Byung po 'dul byed*

- Taming the Three Wrathful Ones*
Tib. *Drag po gsum 'dul gyi rgyud*
- Tantra of the Blazing Jewel*
Tib. *Rin chen 'bar ba'i rgyud*
- Tantra of Blissful Wish-Fulfilling Secrets*
Tib. *gSang ba yi bzhin bde ba'i rgyud*
- Tantra Capable of Rivaling Supreme Joy in Enlightened Activity*
Tib. *'Phrin las la dga' chen zla nus kyi rgyud*
- Tantra of Effortlessness*
Tib. *Bya rtsol med pa'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Empowerment of Supreme Space*
Tib. *Nam mkha' che dbang gi rgyud*
- Tantra Equal to Space*
Tib. *Nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Fundamental Quality of Supreme Space*
Tib. *Nam mkha' che rtsa ba can gyi rgyud*
- Tantra of the Garland of Jewels*
Tib. *Rin po che phreng ba'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Garland of Pith Instructions*
Tib. *Man ngag phreng ba'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Ground That Is Supreme Space*
Tib. *Nam mkha' che gzhi'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Heart Essence of Certainty*
Tib. *Nges pa snying po'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Lamp of the Three Realms*
Tib. *Khams gsum sgron ma'i rgyud*
- Tantra Like a Golden Rain*
Tib. *gSer gyi char pa lta bu'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Most Majestic Nature of Phenomena*
Tib. *Chos nyid rgyal po'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Most Majestic Secret*
Tib. *gSang ba rgyal po'i rgyud*
- Tantra of the Oceanic View*
Tib. *lTa ba rgya mtsbo'i rgyud*
- Tantra of Ongoing Meditative Stability*
Tib. *bSam gtan rgyun chags kyi rgyud*

Tantra of Quintessential Pith Instructions

Tib. *Man ngag snying po'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Reaches and Center of Space

Tib. *Nam mkha' mtha' dbus kyi rgyud*

Tantra of Sacred Timeless Awareness

Tib. *Ye shes dam pa'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Secret Heart Essence

Tib. *sNying po gsang ba'i rgyud*

Tantra of Secret Jewels

Tib. *Rin po che gsang ba'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Spacious Expanse of Space

Tib. *Nam mkha' klong yangs kyi rgyud*

NGB, vol. 6, Tb. 143

Tantra of the Sphere of Awakened Mind

Tib. *Byang chub kyi sems thig le'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Sphere of Timeless Awareness

Tib. *Ye shes thig le'i rgyud*

Tantra Summarizing Meditation

Tib. *sGom pa mdo'i rgyud*

Tantra of Supreme Meditative Stability

Tib. *bSam gtan chen po'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Supremely Blissful and Charming Goddess Mamaki

Tib. *bDe chen sgeg ma mā ma kī'i rgyud*

Tantra of Timeless Buddhahood

Tib. *Ye sangs rgyas pa'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Total Purity of the Realm of Space

Tib. *mKha' dbyings rnam dag gi rgyud*

Tantra of Unique Enlightened Intent

Tib. *Nyag gcig dgongs pa'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Vajra Daka

Tib. *rDo rje mkha' 'gro'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Vajra Secret

Tib. *rDo rje gsang ba'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Vast Assembly of Dakas

Tib. *mKha' 'gro rgya tsho'i rgyud*

Tantra of the Vast Range of Activities

Tib. *Las rgya mtsho'i rgyud*

*Tantra of the Vast Range of Precepts*Tib. *sDom pa rgya mtsho'i rgyud**Tantra of the Vast Range of Sacred Occasions*Tib. *Dus gnad rgya mtsho'i rgyud**Tantra of the Wish-Fulfilling Summit*Tib. *Yid bzhin tog gi rygud**Tantra Without Letters*Tib. *Yi ge med pa'i rgyud / Yi ge med pa'i rgyud chen po zhes bya ba rin po che rgyal mtshan gyi rgyud rgyal po'i gdud rgyud lta ba nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud chen po*

NGB, vol. 11, pp. 297-322

*Tantra Without Letters of Supreme Space*Tib. *Nam mkha' che yi ge med pa'i rgyud**Tantric Rituals*Tib. *Cho ga sngags kyi rgyud**Tara the Savioreess*Tib. *sGrol ma**Ten Discourses*Tib. *mDo bcu*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 352-499

*Ten Spiritual Levels*Skt. *Daśabhūmika sūtra*Tib. *Sa bcu pa'i mdo*(ch. 31 of *The Garlands of Buddhas*)*Ten Wrathful Deities*Tib. *Khro bo bcu'i rgyud**Tenfold Array of Inlaid Gems*Tib. *'Phra bkod bcu pa**Testaments*, by Vajradhara, dGa' rab rdo rje, Mañjuśrimitra, and Śrī SiṃhaTib. *'Das rjes*

NYZ, vol. 3, pp. 287-344

*Three-Faced Form of the Black Slayer of the Lord of the Dead*Tib. *gShin rje gshed nag po zhal gsum pa'i rgyud**Threefold Direct Introduction*Tib. *Ngo sprod gsum pa**Torch of Metaphor*Tib. *dPe'i sgron me*

Torma

Tib. gTor rgyud

Torma Offering of the True Nature of Phenomena

Tib. Chos nyid gtor ma'i rgyud

Total Accomplishment of the Mahayana

Tib. Theg pa chen po yongs su grub pa'i rgyud

Total Freedom of Mahabala

Tib. sTobs po che yongs su sgrol ba'i rgyud

Totally Perfect and Supreme Treasure

Tib. gTer chen yongs rdzogs

Treasury of Dakinis

Tib. mKha' 'gro mdzod

Treasury of Secrets

Tib. gSang ba mdzod

Treasury of Space

Tib. Nam mkha' mdzod kyi rgyud

Trilogy of Innate Abiding

Tib. Babs lugs gsum skor

Turquoise Letters

Tib. gYu yig can

NYZ, vol. 4, pp. 423-585

Twelve Major Headings

Tib. sKabs don bcu gnyis ma

Two Sections

Tib. bTag gnyis

See *Vajra of Delight* and *Hevajra: Web of Dakinis**Unchanging Sphere*

Tib. 'Gyur med thig le

Unelaborate Armor

Tib. sPros med go cha

Unelaborate Empowerment Ritual

Tib. sPros med dbang chog

Unfolding of Lotus Power

Tib. Padma dbang rgyas

Unfolding of Timeless Awareness

Skt. Ārya niṣṭhāgata bhagavajñāna vaipūlyā sūtra ratnānanta nāma mahāyāna sūtra

Tib. *'Phags pa bcom ldan 'das kyi ye shes rgyas pa'i mdo sde rin po che mtha' yas pa mthar phyin pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*
Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ga, ff. 1b-275b (Toh. 99)

Unfolding of Timeless Awareness, Equal to the Earth

Tib. *Ye shes rgyas pa sa gzhi dang mnyam pa'i rgyud*

Unified Intent of All Buddhas

Tib. *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa*

NGB., vol. 16, Tb. 373

Unified Sphere

Tib. *Thig le 'dus pa'i rgyud*

Union of Buddhas in Equalness (Nyingma source)

Tib. *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor (rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma)*

NGB, vol. 18, Tb. 402-3

Union of Buddhas in Equalness (Sarma source)

Skt. *Sarva kalpa samuccaya nāma sarva buddha samāyoga ḍākini jāla sambara uttarottara tantra*

Tib. *rTog pa thams cad 'dus pa zhes bya ba sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog gi rgyud phyi ma'i phyi ma*

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ka, ff. 193a-212a (Toh. 36-)

Universal Renown of Enlightened Intent

Tib. *dGongs pa kun tu grags pa'i rgyud*

Universal Secret

Tib. *Thams cad gsang ba'i rgyud*

Vajra Array

Tib. *Rdo rje bkod pa'i rgyud*

Vajra Basic Space (fragment)

Tib. *rDo rje dbyings kyi dum bu*

Vajra Basic Space in Five Thousand Verses

Tib. *rDo rje dbyings rtsa ba'i rgyud stong phrag lnga pa*

Vajra Crown Prominence

Tib. *rDo rje gtsug tor*

Vajra Cutter

Skt. *Ārya vajra cchedikā nāma prajñā pāramitā nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *Śes phyin sna tshogs*, vol. Ka, ff. 121a-132b (Toh. 16)

See also *Commentary on "The Vajra Cutter"*

*Vajra of Delight*Skt. *Hevajra tantra rāja nāma*Tib. *Kye'i rdo rje zhes bya ba rgyud kyi rgyal po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 1b-13b (Toh. 417)*Vajra Equal to Space*Tib. *rDo rje nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud**Vajra Garland*Skt. *Śrī vajra mālābhīdāna mahā yoga tantra sarva tantra hṛdaya rahasya vibhāṅga nāma*Tib. *rNal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba mngon par brjod pa rgyud thams cad kyi snying po gsang ba rnam par phye ba zhes bya ba*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ca, ff. 208a-277b (Toh. 445)*Vajra Heart Essence, the Incorruptible Source*Tib. *rDo rje snying po sra ba 'byung gnas kyi rgyud**Vajra Pavilion*Skt. *Ārya dākinī vajra pañjara mahā tantra rāja kalpa nāma*Tib. *'Phags pa mkha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po'i brtag pa*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 30a-65b (Toh. 419)*Vajra Pinnacle*Skt. *Vajra śekhara mahā guhya yoga tantra*Tib. *gSang ba rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud rdo rje rtse mo*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Na, ff. 142b-274a (Toh. 480)*Vajra Pinnacle of Pashakara*Tib. *Pa sha ka ra rdo rje rtse mo'i rgyud**Vajra Scepter*Tib. *rDo rje be con gyi rgyud**Vajra Underground*Skt. *Ārya vajra pātāla nāma tantra rāja*Tib. *'Phags pa rdo rje sa 'og gi rgyud kyi rgyal po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Tsha, ff. 237a-266a (Toh. 744)*Vajrakila (Nyingma anuyoga source)*Tib. *rDo rje phur bu**Vajrasattva: The Great Web of Magical Display*Tib. *rDo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba gsang ba thams cad kyi me long zhes bya ba'i rgyud*Dg. K., *rÑin rgyud*, vol. Kha, ff. 132b-198a (Toh. 833)

NGB, vol. 22, pp. 480-692

*Vajrasattva: The Mirror of the Heart*Tib. *rDo rje sems dpa' snying gi me long*

NGB, vol. 12, pp. 193–245

Vase of Nectar, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zerTib. *bDud rtsi bum pa**Vase of Spiritual Attainment*Tib. *dNgos grub bum pa**Vast Array of Bliss*Tib. *bDe ba rab 'byams*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 618–21

*Vast Range of Secrets*Tib. *gSang ba rgya mtsho'i rgyud dam pa'i dam pa/rnal 'byor gyi rnal 'byor /
gsang ba thams cad kyi tig ka rgyud kyi rgyal po*

NGB, vol. 13, Tb. 313

*Vast Range of (Vajra) Dakas*Skt. *Śrī ḍākārṇava mahā yoginī tantra rāja nāma*Tib. *dPal mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po
zhes bya ba*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Kha, ff. 13-a–264b (Toh. 3-2)*Vijaya*Tib. *rNam par rgyal ma**Weapon of Speech*Tib. *sMra ba'i mtshon cha**Web of Magical Display*Tib. *sGyu 'phrul drva ba**Web of Magical Display: The Fundamental Tantra of Manjushri*Tib. *'Jam dpal rtsa rgyud sgyu 'phrul drva ba**Well-Sealed Locket*Skt. *Samputa nāma mahā tantra*Tib. *Yang dag par shyor ba zhes bya ba'i rgyud chen po*Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ga, ff. 73b–158b (Toh. 381)*Wheel of Life Force*Tib. *Srog gi 'khor lo*

NGB, vol. 1, pp. 598–601

*Wheel of Meditation*Tib. *sGom pa'i 'khor lo**Wheel of Sublime Bliss*Skt. *Tantra rāja śrī laghu sambara nāma*

Tib. *rGyud kyi rgyal po dpal bde mchog nyung ngu zhes bya ba*
 Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ka, ff. 213b–246b (Toh. 368)

Wheel of Sublime Knowing

Tib. *Shes rab 'khor lo*

Wheel of Terminology

Tib. *sGra gnas 'khor lo*

Wheel of Time

Skt. *Paramādi buddhoddhṛta śrī kālacakra nāma tantra rāja*

Tib. *mChog gi dang po'i sangs rgyas las phyng ba rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal*
dus kyi 'khor lo zhes bya ba

Dg. K., *rGyud 'bum*, vol. Ka, ff. 22b–128b (Toh. 362)

White Lily

Tib. *Thugs kyi rgyud puṇḍa rī ka*

White Lotus of Compassion

Skt. *Ārya karuṇā puṇḍarīka nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *'Phags pa snying rje padma dkar po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Cha, ff. 129a–297a (Toh. 112)

White Lotus (of the Sacred Dharma)

Skt. *Saddharma puṇḍarīka nāma mahāyāna sūtra*

Tib. *Dam pa'i chos Padma dkar po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*

Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Ja, ff. 1b–180b (Toh. 113)

Wish-Fulfilling Gem, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer

Tib. *Yid bzhin nor bu*

Wish-Fulfilling Gem (Nyingma kriya source)

Tib. *Yid bzhin nor bu'i rgyud*

Wrathful Black Goddess

Tib. *bKa' srung nag mo'i rgyud/ ma mo ral gcig ma'i snying thun gsang ba'i*
rgyud

Wrathful Goddess

Tib. *Khros ma'i rgyud*

Wrathful Goddess: Blazing Glory

Tib. *dPal 'bar khro mo'i rgyud*

Youthful Six-Faced One

Tib. *gZhon nu gdong drug pa'i rgyud*

Treatises

Account That Extols the Hearing of Teachings, by Ratnākaraśānti

Tib. *Thos pa la bsngags pa'i rabs*

Advice

See *Precious Garland*, by Nāgārjuna

Anthology on the Heart Essence of Timeless Awareness, by Āryadeva

Skt. *Jñāna sāra samuccaya nāma*

Tib. *Ye shes snying po kun las btus pa zhes bya ba*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Tsha, ff. 26b–28a (Toh. 3851)

Ascertainment of Valid Cognition, by Dharmakīrti

Skt. *Pramāṇa viniścaya*

Tib. *Tshad ma rnam par nges pa*

Dg. T., *Tshad ma*, vol. Ce, ff. 152b–230a (Toh. 4211)

Authoritative Index of Pith Instructions, by Vimalamitra

Tib. *Man ngag nges pa'i kha byang ming rnam par bkod pa*

NYZ, vol. 5, pp. 1–9

Categories of the Spiritual Levels, by Asaṅga

Skt. *Yogacaryā bhūmi*

Tib. *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i sa*

Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Wi, ff. 1b–283a (Toh. 4035)

Clarification of Specific Analyses, by Kaṇāda

Skt. *Vaiśeṣika sūtra*

Tib. *Bye brag gsal ba'i bstan bcos*

Clear Logical Investigations, by Bhṛṅgu

Tib. *rNam dpyod gsal ba*

Clear Words, by Candrakīrti

Skt. *Mūla madhyamaka vṛtti prasanna padā nāma*

Tib. *dBu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal zhes bya ba*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. 'A, ff. 1b–200a (Toh. 3860)

Commentary on Asaṅga's "Categories of the Spiritual Levels of the Bodhisattva," by Sagaramegha

Skt. *Yogacaryā bhūmau bodhisattva bhūmi vyākhyā*

Tib. *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las byang chub sems dpa'i sa'i rnam par bshad pa*

Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Yi, ff. 1b–338a (Toh. 4047)

Commentary on Awakening Mind, by Nāgārjuna

Skt. *Bodhicitta vivaraṇa nāma*

Tib. *Byang chub sems kyi 'grel pa zhes bya ba*

Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Ngi, ff. 38a–42b (Toh. 1800)

Commentary on "Delineating the Two Levels of Truth," by Jñānagarbha

Skt. *Satya dvaya vibhāṅga vṛtti*

Tib. *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel pa*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Sa, ff. 3b–15b (Toh. 3882)

- Commentary on the Five Stages*, by Nāgārjuna
 Skt. *Pañca krama*
 Tib. *Rim pa lnga pa*
 Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Ņi, ff. 45a–57a (Toh. 1802)
- Commentary on “The Highest Continuum,”* by Asaṅga
 Skt. *Mahāyānottara tantra śāstra vyākhyā*
 Tib. *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos rnam par bshad pa*
 Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Phi, ff. 74b–129a (Toh. 4025)
- Commentary on “The Hundred Thousand Stanzas,”* by Daṃṣṭrasena
 Skt. *Śata sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā bṛhaṭṭikā*
 Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'bum pa rgya cher 'grel pa*
 Dg. T., *Śes phyin*, vol. Na, ff. 1b–331a, and vol. Pa, ff. 1b–252a (Toh. 3807)
- Commentary on “Praise to Sublime Bliss,”* by Vajrapaṇi
 Tib. *bDe mchog gi bstod 'grel*
- Commentary on “The Sixty Verses of Reasoning,”* by Candrakīrti
 Skt. *Yukti ṣaṣṭhikā vṛtti*
 Tib. *Rigs pa drug cu pa'i 'grel pa*
 Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Ya, ff. 1b–30b (Toh. 3864)
- Commentary on “The Subsequent Tantra of Meditative Stability”*
 Tib. *bSam gtan phyi ma'i rgyud 'grel*
- Commentary on “The Vajra Cutter,”* by Kamalaśīla
 Skt. *Ārya prajñāpāramitā vajracchedikā ṭīkā*
 Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa*
 Dg. T., *Śes phyin*, vol. Ma, ff. 204a–267a (Toh. 3817)
- Compendium*, by Dipaṃkara
 Tib. *bTus pa*
- Compendium of Abhidharma*, by Asaṅga
 Skt. *Abhidharma samuccaya*
 Tib. *Chos mngon pa kun las btus pa*
 Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Ri, ff. 44b–120a (Toh. 4049)
- Compendium of the Supreme Spiritual Approach*, by Asaṅga
 Skt. *Mahāyāna saṃgraha*
 Tib. *Theg pa chen po bsduis pa*
 Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Ri, ff. 1b–43a (Toh. 4049)
- Compendium of Training*, by Śāntideva
 Skt. *Śikṣā samuccaya*
 Tib. *bsLab pa kun las btus pa*
 Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Khi, ff. 3a–194b (Toh. 3940)

*Concise Definitive Conclusion*Tib. *gTan la dbab pa bsdu ba**Concise Summation of "The Illumination of Suchness"*Tib. *De kho na nyid snang bar byed pa'i bsdus don**Concise Summation of "The Manifest Enlightenment of Vairochana,"*

by Śribuddhaguyha

Skt. *Vairocanābhisambodhi tantra piṇḍārtha*Tib. *rNam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa'i rgyud kyi bsdus pa'i don*Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Ņu, ff. 1b–65a (Toh. 2662)*Deeds of the Buddha*, by AśvagoṣaSkt. *Buddha carita nāma mahā kāṛya*Tib. *Sangs rgyas kyi spyod pa dzhes bya ba'i snyan dngags chen po*Dg. T., *sKyes rabs*, vol. Ge, ff. 1b–103b (Toh. 4156)*Definitive Conclusion on the Levels of Realization Resulting from Hearing Teachings*Tib. *Thos pa las byung ba'i sa rnam par gtan la dbab pa**Delineating the Two Levels of Truth*, by JñānagarbhaSkt. *Satya dvaya vibhaṅga kārikā*Tib. *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Sa, ff. 1b–3b (Toh. 3881)*Detailed Classification of the Three Spiritual Approaches*, by RatnākaraśāntiSkt. *Triyāna vyavasthāna nāma*Tib. *Theg pa gsum rnam par gzbag pa zhes bya ba*Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Tsu, ff. 100a–104b (Toh. 3712)*Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition*, by DharmakīrtiSkt. *Pramāṇa vārttika kārikā*Tib. *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa*Dg. T., *Tshad ma*, vol. Ce, ff. 94b–151a (Toh. 4210)*Didactic Aphorisms*, by DharmatrātaSkt. *Udānavarga*Tib. *Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms*Dg. K., *mDo sde*, vol. Sa, ff. 209a–253a (Toh. 326) andDg. T., *Mñon pa*, vol. Tu, ff. 1b–45a (Toh. 4099)*Discourse on Logic*, by AkṣapādaSkt. *Nyāya sūtra*Tib. *Rigs pa'i lta ba**Discourse on Union*, by PatañjaliputraSkt. *Yoga sūtra*

- Dragon's Roar of Pure Melody: An Overview of the Significance of the Mantra Approach*, by kl.ong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer
Tib. sNgags kyi spyi don Tshangs dbyangs 'brug sgra
- Drops of Nectar: A Commentary on Reciting the Names of Manjushri*
Tib. 'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi 'grel pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa
- Drops of Nectar: A Letter of Advice*
Tib. sPring yig bdud rtsi'i thigs pa
- Eight Branches*, by Vāgbhaṭa
Skt. Aṣṭāṅga hṛdaya saṃhitā nāma
Tib. Yan lag brgya pa'i snying po bsdus pa zhes bya ba
Dg. T., gSo rig pa, vol. He, ff. 44b–335a (Toh. 4310)
- Engaging in the Conduct of a Bodhisattva*, by Śāntideva
Skt. Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra
Tib. Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa
Dg. T., dBu ma, vol. La, ff. 1b–40a (Toh. 3871)
- Entrance into the Middle Way*, by Candrakīrti
Skt. Madhayamakāvatāra nāma
Tib. dBu ma la 'jug pa zhes bya ba
Dg. T., dBu ma, vol. 'A, ff. 201b–219a (Toh. 3861)
- Essence of View*, by Devaguru
Tib. lTa ba'i snying po
- Explanation of "The Entrance into the Middle Way,"* by Candrakīrti
Skt. Madhayamakāvatāra bhāṣya nāma
Tib. dBu ma la 'jug pa'i bshad pa zhes bya ba
Dg. T., dBu ma, vol. 'A, ff. 220b–348a (Toh. 3862)
- Explanatory Essays*, by Ratnākaraśānti (Ratnagupta)
Skt. Śrī sarva rahasya nibandha rahasya pradīpa nāma
Tib. dPal thams cad gsang ba'i bshad sbyar gsang ba'i sgron ma
Dg. T., rGyud, vol. Cu, ff. 122a–152b (Toh. 2623)
- Five Treatises of Maitreya*
See *Highest Continuum; Ornament of Manifest Realization; Ornament of the Sutras; Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes; Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Phenomena and Their True Nature*
- Foundation of Discipline*
Skt. Vinaya vastu
Tib. 'Dul ba (lung) gzhi
Dg. K., 'Dul ba, vols. Ka–Nga (Toh. 1)
- Foundation of Scriptural Transmission*
Tib. Lung gzhi
See *Foundation of Discipline*

Four Hundred Verses, by Āryadeva

Skt. *Catuḥ śataka śāstra kārikā nāma*

Tib. *bsTan bcos bzhi brgya pa zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Tsha, ff. 1b–18a (Toh. 3846)

Further Commentary on “The Detailed Commentary on Valid Cognition,”

by Dharmakīrti

Skt. *Pramāṇa vārttika vṛtti*

Tib. *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi 'grel pa*

Dg. T., *Tshad ma*, vol. Ce, ff. 261b–365a (Toh. 4216)

Graduated Path of Magical Display, by Buddhaguhya

Tib. *sLop dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa'i lam rim chen mo*

NKG, vol. 23, pp. 5–133

Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations

Skt. *Mahāvibhāṣā*

Tib. *Bye brag bshad mdzod chen mo*

Heart Essence of the Middle Way, by Bhavaviveka

Skt. *Madhyamaka hṛdaya kārikā*

Tib. *dBu ma'i snying po'i tshig le'ur byas pa*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Dza, ff. 1b–40b (Toh. 3855)

Highest Continuum, by Maitreya

Skt. *Mahāyānottara tantra śāstra*

Tib. *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*

Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Phi, ff. 54b–73a (Toh. 4024)

Illuminating Lamp, by Candrakīrti

Skt. *Pradīpodyotana nāma ṭīkā*

Tib. *sGron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgya cher bshad pa*

Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Ha, ff. 1b–201b (Toh. 1785)

Illumination of the Three Worlds

Tib. *'jig rten gsum snang*

In Praise of the Basic Space of Phenomena, by Nāgārjuna

Skt. *Dharma dhātu stavā*

Tib. *Chos kyi dbyings su bstod pa*

Dg. T., *bsTod tshogs*, vol. Ka, ff. 63b–67b (Toh. 1118)

In Praise of the “Mother,” by Rahula

Tib. *Yum la bstod pa*

Jeweled Staircase, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer

Tib. *Rin chem them skas*

Lamp of the Middle Way, by Bhavaviveka

Skt. *Madhyamaka ratna pradīpa nāma*

- Tib. *dBu ma rin po che'i sgron ma zhes bya ba*
 Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Tshaff, ff. 259b–289a (Toh. 3854)
- Lamp on the Path*, by Atiṣa
 Skt. *Bodhi patha pradīpa*
 Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*
 Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Khi, ff. 238a–241a (Toh. 3947)
- Lamp of the Three Methods*, by Tripiṭakamala
 Skt. *Naya traya pradīpa*
 Tib. *Tshul gsum gyi sgron ma*
 Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Tsu, ff. 6b–26b (Toh. 3707)
- Light Rays of Speech*, by Viṣṇu
 Tib. *brDa sprod Ngag gi 'od zer*
- Major Commentary on "The Eight Thousand Stanzas,"* by Haribhadra
 Skt. *Ārya aṣṭa sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā vyākhyābhisamayālaṃkāra nāma*
 Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa'i bshad pa / mNgon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi snang ba*
 Dg. T., *Śes phyin*, vol. Cha, ff. 1b–341a (Toh. 3791)
- One Hundred and One Activities*, by Guṇaprabha
 Skt. *Ekottara karma śātaka*
 Tib. *Las brgya rtsa gcig pa*
 Dg. T., *'Dul ba*, vol. Wu, ff. 100b–259a (Toh. 4118)
- Oral Transmission of Mañjuśrī*
 Tib. *'Jam dpal zhal lung*
- Ornament of Manifest Realization*, by Maitreya
 Skt. *Abhisamayālaṃkāra nāma prajñā pāramitopadeśa śāstra kārikā*
 Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa*
 Dg. T., *Śes phyin*, vol. Ka, ff. 1b–13a (Toh. 3786)
- Ornament of Manifest Timeless Awareness*
 Tib. *Ye shes snang ba rgyan*
- Ornament of the Sūtras*, by Maitreya
 Skt. *Mahāyāna sūtrālaṃkāra nāma kārikā*
 Tib. *Theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa*
 Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Phi, ff. 1b–39a (Toh. 4020)
- Precious Garland*, by Nāgārjuna
 Skt. *Rāja parikathā ratna mālā*
 Tib. *rGyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che'i phreng ba*
 Dg. T., *sPrin yig*, vol. Ge, ff. 107a–126a (Toh. 4158)

Reasoning Through Detailed Explanations, by Vasubandhu

Skt. *Vyākhyā yukti*

Tib. *rNam par bshad pa'i rigs pa*

Dg. T., *Semis tsam*, vol. Zhi, ff. 29a–134b (Toh. 4061)

Refutation of Arguments, by Nāgārjuna

Skt. *Vigraha vyāvartanī kārikā*

Tib. *rTsoḍ pa bzlog pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa zhes bya ba*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Tsa, ff. 27a–29a (Toh. 3828)

Revelation of the Inexhaustible Treasure

Tib. *Mi zad pa'i gter bstan pa*

Schemata, by Maudgalyāyana

Skt. *Kāraṇa prajñapti* and *Karma prajñapti*

Tib. *rGyu gdags pa* and *Las gdags pa*

Dg. T., *mNon pa*, vol. I, ff. 93a–172b and 172b–229a (Toh. 4087 and 4088)

Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya

See *Foundation of Discipline*

Smaller Commentary on “The Ornament of Manifest Realization,”

by Haribhadra

Skt. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra nāma prajñā pāramitopadeśa sāstra vṛtti*

Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtoḡs pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba'i 'grel pa*

Dg. T., *Śes phyin*, vol. Ja, ff. 78b–140a (Toh. 3793)

Somaraja

Tib. *So ma rā dza*

Source Verses of the Enumerators, by Śvarakṣṇa

Skt. *Sāṃkhya kārikā*

Tib. *Grangs can pa'i gzhung*

Source Verses of “The Ornament of the Middle Way,” by Śāntarakṣita

Skt. *Madhyamakālaṅkāra kārikā*

Tib. *dBu ma rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Sa, ff. 53a–56b (Toh. 3884)

Source Verses on Sublime Knowing, by Nāgārjuna

Skt. *Prajñā nāma mūla madhyamaka kārikā*

Tib. *dBu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba*

Dg. T., *dBu ma*, vol. Tsa, ff. 1b–19a (Toh. 3824)

Sphere of Freedom, by Buddhaśrijñāna

Skt. *Mukti tilaka nāma*

Tib. *Grol ba'i thig le zhes bya ba*

Dg. T., *rGyud*, vol. Di, ff. 47a–52a (Toh. 1859)

Stages of Meditation in Nine Cycles, by Satya

Tib. *sGom rim skor dgu*

Sublime Heart Essence (of the "Mother"): A Commentary on the Difficult Points in "The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Eight Thousand Verses," by Ratnākaraśānti

Skt. *Ārya aṣṭa sāhasrikā prajñā pāramitā pañjikā sārottamā nāma*

Tib. *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa'i dka' 'grel snying po mchog ces bya ba*

Dg. T., *Śes-phyin*, vol. Tha, ff. 1b–230a (Toh. 3803)

Supreme Chariot of Definitive Meaning, by kLong chen Rab 'byams pa

Tib. *rDzogs pa chen po sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel pa Shing rta chen po*

Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Center and Extremes, by Maitreya

Skt. *Madhyānta vibhāṅga kārikā*

Tib. *dBus dang mtha' rnam par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*

Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Phi, ff. 40b–45a (Toh. 4021)

Thoroughly Distinguishing Between Phenomena and Their True Nature, by Maitreya

Skt. *Dharma dharmatā vibhāṅga*

Tib. *Chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa*

Dg. T., *Sems tsam*, vol. Phi, ff. 46b–49a (Toh. 4022)

Treasury of Abhidharma, by Vasubandhu

Skt. *Abhidharma kośa kārikā*

Tib. *Chos mngon pa mdzod kyi tshig le'ur byas pa*

Dg. T., *Mñon pa*, vol. Ku, ff. 1b–25a (Toh. 4089)

Treasury of Words and Their Meanings, by Kun mkhyen Ngag gi dbang po (kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer)

Tib. *gSang ba bla na med pa 'od gsal rdo rje snying po'i gnas gsum gsal bar byed pa'i tshig don rin po che'i mdzod*

Union of Buddhas in Equalness, by kLong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer

Tib. *Khrid yig Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*

NYZ, vol. 12 (*Zab mo yang tig*), pp. 197–253

Weapon of Eloquence, by Agni

Tib. *sMra ba'i mtshon cha*

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