

*Extracting the Quintessence of Accomplishment
Oral Instructions for the Practice of Mountain Retreat
Expounded Simply and Directly in Their Essential Nakedness*

By

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*Translated according to the golden explanations of Tulku Thondup Rinpoche,
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And with the kind assistance of many vajra brothers and sisters.*

*Originally published in 1979 by
Orgyan Kunsang Chökhörling,
54 Gandhi Road, Darjeeling, India*

*Reprinted in 1998 by
Vajrayana Foundation
2013 Eureka Canyon Road
Corralitos, CA 95076 USA*

EXTRACTING THE QUINTESSENCE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
ORAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF MOUNTAIN RETREAT
EXPOUNDED SIMPLY AND DIRECTLY IN THEIR ESSENTIAL NAKEDNESS.

*I bow down respectfully and take refuge at the feet of the
Glorious and supreme Guru, incomparable in kindness.*

May we, my disciples, and I be blessed so that, the realization of the profound path being born quickly in our nature without the slightest error; we may attain the Primordial Citadel¹ in this very life.

For those who, through the reunion of their perfectly pure past aspirations and potential karma, have heart-felt confidence in the Dharma of the profound and secret Great Perfection and in the Guru who reveals it, and who wish to go through the practice to its ultimate end, for all these fortunate beings here is an entrance door; the vital instructions for mountain retreat, expounding in its essential nakedness the practice of the most secret Great Perfection, put into our hands in a form that is easy to understand.

This will be explained in three main topics which should be known: *The Preparation* – having cut the ties of passion and clinging, how to purify one’s nature by keeping the mind turned towards the Dharma. *The Main Practice* – having cut misconceptions about View, Meditation, and Action, how to experience the practice. *The Continuation of the Practice* – how to keep the samaya and vows and complete all the subsequent actions of this life with Dharma.

NOW WE WILL SAY A LITTLE ABOUT THE FIRST TOPIC.

Alas! Our mind – that is to say, that which is sometimes clear awareness, sometimes gloomy turmoil – arose at the very beginning simultaneously with Kuntuzangpo. Kuntuzangpo, knowing everything to be himself, is free². We sentient beings, through not

¹ The Absolute Paradise of the Primordial Buddha, Kuntuzangpo, (Skt. Samantabhadra) the Ever Excellent One.

² Rang-du-mKhyen – literally “knowing as himself” Awareness and primordial wisdom, is free from all notations of duality between self and other, and understand all things as being aspects of its own nature.

knowing, wander in endless samsara. Countless times we have taken different forms in the six realms, but all that we have done has been meaningless.

Now, for once out of hundreds of times, we have obtained a human body. Unless we put into action the means for avoiding rebirth in the inferior realms of samsara, once dead where we will be reborn is uncertain; and wherever we might take birth in the six classes of beings there is nothing beyond suffering. To have obtained a human body is not enough by itself. Since the time of death is uncertain, we must practice Dharma genuinely right now. At the time of death we should, like Jetsun Mila feel no regret or self-reproach. As he said:

“The Dharma tradition of myself, Milarepa, is such that one is not ashamed of oneself.”

To enter the path of Dharma, it is not enough to adopt its outer appearances. We have to sever all ties to desirable things and to activities limited to this life. Without severing these ties, we may enter once the door of Dharma with an inconsistent mind, retaining some attachment towards our native land, property, intimates, relatives, friends, and so on; but then, this mind of attachment, creating the root cause, and the objects of attachment, providing the circumstantial causes, will be joined together by Mara as the obstacles. Becoming involved once again with common worldliness, our destiny will regress.

Therefore, giving less importance to food, clothing, and mere talk, without clinging to the eight worldly concerns³, we should one-pointedly focus our mind on Dharma.

*“In the lonely place The-Thought-of-Death-Fixed-in-the-Heart
The hermit Deeply-Disgusted-with-Attachments
Draws the boundaries of his retreat by renouncing the thoughts of this life,
And does not meet those known as the Eight Worldly Dharmas.”*

We should act like Gyalwa Yang Gönpa. Otherwise, Dharma mixed with the eight worldly concerns is extremely dangerous, like food mixed with poison.

The eight worldly dharmas can be condensed into hope and doubt, which mean attachment and aversion. Internal attachment and aversion you cannot get away from Semno and Gyalpo, and obstacles will not cease. So, is there any conceited attachment to the things of this life and to the eight worldly concerns in your innermost thoughts? Examining yourself again and again, you should be diligent in giving up these defects. To retain these

³ The eight worldly considerations or dharmas are: gain and loss; pleasure and pain; fame and obscurity; praise and blame.

eight worldly dharmas in your nature and adopt an artificially religious exterior to deceitfully obtain whatever you require is a wrong way of life.

It is said:

“By obtaining one’s Fatherland half of the Dharma is accomplished.”

So, leaving your Fatherland behind, wander through many unknown countries. Parting from your friends and relatives in a pleasant way, ignore those who try to dissuade you from practicing the Dharma. Giving away your possessions, rely on whatever alms come your way. Understanding all desirable things to be the obstacles linked with bad habits, develop a disinterested mind. If, of possessions and so on, you don’t know how to be contented with just a little, once you’ve got one you’ll want two, and it won’t be difficult for the deceiving devil of the desirable objects to enter.

Whatever good or bad things people might say, don’t take them as true; have no hope or doubt, acceptance or rejection. Let them say, whatever they will, as though they were talking about someone dead and buried. No one but a qualified Guru – not even your father or mother – can give correct advice. Therefore keeping control over your own actions, do not hand your nose-rope to others. Outwardly good-natured, you should know how to get along harmoniously with all without “burning their noses”. But in fact, if anyone – superior or inferior – comes to hinder your Sadhana, you should be unshakeable, like an iron boulder pulled by a silk scarf. It won’t do to be a weak character whose head bends in whichever direction the wind blows, like grass on a mountain pass.

For any practice, from the moment you begin it until you reach its ultimate end – whether thunder falls from above, a lake springs from below, or rocks fall from all sides – having sworn not to break your promise even at the cost of your life, you should persevere until the end. From the very beginning, you should come progressively to an established schedule of periods for practice, sleep, meals, and breaks, allowing no bad habits. Whether your practice is elaborate or simple, you should make it even and regular, never sporadic, and not even for an instant should you leave any room for the ordinary.

During retreat, the entryway should be sealed with mud; if not, you must not speak, not spy, and not come face to face with others. Having completely discarded the wanderings of the restless mind, expel the stale breath and correctly assume the essential elements of body posture. The mind should rest upon clear awareness without wavering even for the time of a

finger snap, like a peg driven into solid ground. A strict outer, inner, and secret retreat will quickly give rise to all the signs and qualities⁴.

If for some important reason you meet someone and talk to him, thinking, “After this I shall be very strict”, after this transgression the prosperity of your practice will fade and everything will become slacker and slacker. If at the very start you make a resolute, clear-cut decision to remain seated, making your retreat progressively stricter, your practice won’t be swept away by obstacles.

There are many descriptions of particular qualifications and topography of places, but in general a place blessed by Guru Rinpoche and the great Siddhas of the past which is not present in the hands of people of dissenting samaya is suitable; or according to your preference, any utterly solitary place where favorable conditions – food and other necessities – are easily available. If you have the ability to control the swift evolution of outer and inner causal links in cemeteries and other frightening places, abodes of the cruel demons of the locality, your meditation will be greatly improved; if not, you will have even more obstacles. When realization becomes vast as space, all adverse conditions arise as friends; it is then excellent to perform secret practices in graveyards and such places. Always forsaking outer and inner entertainments to dwell in non-action is to dwell in the true solitary place.

As for the actual purification of your nature: the ordinary aspects are the four changes of mind; the extraordinary ones are the refuge, generation of Bodhicitta, purification of obscurations, and the two accumulations. Having practiced each of these assiduously according to the commentaries until you have truly experienced them, you should then consider the most extraordinary Guru Yoga, as the vital essence of practice, and persevere in it⁵. If you do not, growth of meditation will be tardy; and even if it grows a little it will be very vulnerable to obstacles and genuine understanding will not be able to take birth in your being.

⁴ Outer retreat means to remain within the limits of the hermitage, not to speak, not to spy outside, etc.... Inner retreat is to practice according to the modalities of the practice one has undertaken without distraction of body, speech, and mind. Secret retreat is to remain in awareness.

⁵ The four changes of mind arise from the contemplation of the preciousness and rarity of the human body, of the impermanence of all things, of the ineluctable law of cause and effect and of the imperfections and sufferings of Samsara. The Guru Yoga of Lamai Nal-jor, literally union with the Guru’s nature, is not only the essence of the preliminaries but also of all practices.

So, if you pray with simple and very fervent devotion, after some time, through the transfer of the Heart-Mind realization of the Guru, an extraordinary understanding, inexpressible in words, will certainly take birth within. As Lama Shang Rinpoche said:

“To nurture stillness, experiences, deep concentration – these are common things.

But very rare is the realization born from within through the Guru’s blessings, which arise by the power of enthusiastic faith.”

Therefore, the birth of understanding in your nature of the meaning of the Great Perfection depends upon these preliminaries. That was what Je-Drigung meant when he said:

“Other teachings consider the main practice profound, but here it is the preliminary practices that we consider profound.”

SECOND, THE MAIN PRACTICE: HOW HAVING CUT THROUGH THE MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING VIEW, MEDITATION, AND ACTION, TO EXPERIENCE THE PRACTICE.

FIRST THE VIEW CONCERNING KNOWLEDGE OF THE ABSOLUTE NATURE.

The nature of our mind is the nature of absolute reality. Divested of all conditional and artificial characteristics fabricated by the intellect, this nature is established with certainty in awareness. Awareness arises naked as the self-originated primordial wisdom. This awareness cannot be expressed in words, nor shown by examples. It is neither corrupted in Samsara, not improved in Nirvana; neither born, nor ceases to be; neither liberated, nor confused; neither existent, nor non-existent; neither delimited, not falling to either side⁶. In brief, from the beginning awareness has neither existed as a substantial entity with elaborated characteristics: its nature is primordially pure, void, vast, and all pervasive. As the radiance of voidness is unobstructed, the ocean of phenomena of Samsara and Nirvana appears spontaneously, like the sun and its rays; neither is awareness a blank nothingness, totally void, for its natural expression is primordial wisdom, the qualities of which are vast and spontaneously accomplished⁷.

⁶ Awareness is not confined to either Samsara or Nirvana, and does not fall in the direction or extreme of either of them.

⁷ Lhundrup – naturally present, as oil in a seed.

Thus awareness, in which appearances and voidness are inseparably united, is the natural sovereign of the Three Kayas, and the natural way of the primal state. To recognize exactly what it is constitutes the View of the Great Perfection. As the Great Master, Guru Padmasambhava said,

“The Dharmakaya, beyond the intellect, is the very nature.”

What a wonder it is thus to behold in our hands Kuntuzangpo’s Mind!

This is the very heart the six million four hundred thousand Tantras of the Great Perfection, which are themselves the ultimate point of the eighty-four thousand sections of the whole of the Lord Buddha’s teachings. There is not even an inch to go beyond this. The ultimate elucidation of all phenomena should be achieved according to this.

*HAVING THUS CUT FROM WITHIN ALL DOUBTS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE VIEW,
TO EXPERIENCE THIS VIEW CONTINUOUSLY IS CALLED MEDITATION.*

Apart from this, all meditations with targets are intellectual meditations devised by thought; we do nothing like that.

Without straying from the firmness of this view, remain free, releasing all the perceptions of the five sense-doors in their natural state. Do not meditate on particulars, thinking, “This is this, this is that”. If you “meditate” that is the intellect. There is nothing to be meditated upon. Do not let yourself be distracted even for an instant. If you wander from dwelling in awareness itself that is the real delusion, so do not be distracted. Whatever thoughts arise let them arise. Do not follow them, do not obstruct them. You may ask, “Then what should be done?” Whatever manifestations of the phenomenal world may arise, remain in a state of natural freshness, without grasping at them like a small child looking inside a temple. If you do so, all phenomena remain in their own place, their aspect is not modified, their color does not change, their luster does not vanish. Although the phenomenal world is present, if you do not contaminate it by wanting and clinging, all appearances and thoughts will arise as the naked primal wisdom of the radiant void. The great number of teachings that are said to be very profound and very vast puzzles people of narrow intellect. So if we were to point a finger at the essential meaning which emerges out of them all one would say: when past thoughts have ceased, and future thoughts have not arisen, in the interval is there not a perception of nowness, a virgin, pristine, clear, awake and bare freshness which has never changed even by a hair? Ho! This is awareness itself.

Now, one does not remain forever in that state; doesn't a thought suddenly arise? This is a manifestation of awareness itself. But if you do not recognize it as such at the very moment it arises, this thought will spread out into ordinary thoughts. This is called "the chain of delusion". It is the root of samsara. If you simply recognize the nature of the thoughts immediately as they arise, without extending them, leaving them freely to themselves, then whatever thoughts arise are all spontaneously liberated in the expanse of awareness – Dharmakaya. This itself is the main practice uniting the view and meditation of Thregchöd⁸.

As Garab Dorje said:

"When awareness arises abruptly from the natural state of the primordially pure expanse,

This instant recollection is like finding a gem in the depths of the ocean:

This is the Dharmakaya which has not been contrived or made by anyone".

You should experience this with great energy day and night, without distraction. Not allowing emptiness to remain in the domain of theory, bring everything back to awareness itself.

NOW, IMPROVING MEDITATION THROUGH PUTTING IT INTO ACTION,

HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE PRACTICE.

As was said before, the most important thing is fervent devotion, to pray with ardor from the heart, without ceasing even for an instant to consider the Guru as the real Buddha; this is the universal panacea that is superior to all other ways of dispelling obstacles and of making progress; levels and paths will be traversed with great momentum.

Regarding meditation's defects: if your meditation sinks and becomes dull, revive alert awareness; if it scatters and becomes wild, relax deep inside. Yet, this should not be an intentional and forcible retrieval made by the usual meditating mind keeping watch. Be simply mindful not to forget the recognition of your true nature. Preserving this in all circumstances – eating, sleeping, walking, sitting, in or out of meditation periods – whatever thoughts arise, happy, painful or defiled, remain without trace of hope or doubt, rejection or acceptance, and do not try in any way to destroy them with antidotes. Whatever feelings of happiness or suffering there may be, leave them, as they are in their true nature, naked, fresh, clear, vast and limpid. Thus, since for all there is nothing but a single point, do not confuse

⁸ To cut through mind's solidity.

yourself with all sorts of cogitation. There is no need to meditate upon voidness as an antidote distinct from the undesirable thoughts and obscurations⁹. If you recognize the nature of these undesirable thought with awareness, at that very moment they will be liberated by themselves, like a snake untying its knot.

Almost everyone knows how to express this ultimate hidden meaning of the radiant adamantine essence in words, but not how to put it into practice; and so it has become just like a parrot's litanies. We who practice it are so greatly fortunate!

Now, there is more to be understood which we must consider carefully. The two deadly enemies, which have bound us to Samsara since beginningless time until now, are the Grasper and the Grasped¹⁰. Now that by the grace of the Guru we have been introduced to the Dharmakaya nature residing in ourselves, these two are burnt up like feathers, leaving neither trace nor residue. Isn't that delectable!

Having received the profound instructions upon such a swift path, if you do not put them into practice, they will be just like a wish-fulfilling gem put in the mouth of a corpse – a miserable loss! Don't let your heart rot; take up the practice.

Beginners will find that the mind, completely invaded by black thoughts, will stray into distraction. Even more tiny thoughts will proliferate unnoticed, until a lucid mindfulness comes back and you will think sadly, "I have wandered". At that moment, do not do anything like interrupting the course of the thoughts, feeling regret about your wandering and so on; simply remain in this clear mindfulness, and keep on experiencing the natural state. This by itself is enough.

"Do not reject the thoughts: see them as Dharmakaya"

So goes a well-known saying. However, until your experience of wider vision has been perfected, merely to think, "This is Dharmakaya" and remain in blank tranquility, involves the risk of being caught in an amorphous equanimity devoid of any characteristic whatsoever. So, to begin with, whatever thoughts arise just stare at them without analyzing or pondering, and rest upon the "recognizer" of the thoughts, without caring about them or giving them any importance, like an old man watching children at play.

⁹ The very nature of these passions and obscurations is voidness. There is therefore no need to superimpose on them as an antidote, a conceptual voidness fabricated by the intellect.

¹⁰ Literally "the grasper and the grasped", that is the duality of the mind which grasps and the object of grasping.

Remaining like this you will settle into a kind of stagnation in the natural state devoid of thoughts. When this is, all of a sudden, destroyed, instantly a wisdom transcending the mind will arise, naked, fresh, vivid and lofty.

On the path, there cannot but be some mixing with experiences of bliss, clarity, and thoughtlessness; but if you remain without even a hair of contentment, conceited attachment, hope or doubt, this will prevent you from going astray.

It is very important that, always discarding distraction, you practice with one-pointed vigilant mindfulness. If you stray into sporadic practice and theoretical knowledge, you will become conceited about a vague tranquility and, without having thoroughly clarified your experiences, you will only be verbally clever; this will not be at all profitable. As the Greta Perfection says:

“Theory is like a patch, it will come away”, and, “Experiences are like mist, they will vanish”.

This is how many great meditators are led astray by good or bad minor circumstances and get lost in them. Even when meditation has penetrated your mind, you need to cultivate it continuously, otherwise the deep instructions will be left on the pages of the books, and your mind, your Dharma and your practice will become impervious, so that the birth of genuine meditation will never come. You old meditators, still novices in practice, watch out – there is a danger that you may die with your head encrusted with salt.

After you have practiced continuously over a long period, a time will come when, through fervent devotion or some other circumstance, experiences will metamorphose into realization, and awareness will be seen naked and resplendent. It is like taking a cloth off your head: Such a happy relief? It is the supreme seeing of that which was not seen¹¹. From then on thoughts will arise as meditation. The quiescent and the moving¹² will be liberated simultaneously.

At first, liberation of thoughts through their recognition is like meeting someone you already know. In the middle, self-liberation of thoughts is like the undoing of a snake’s knot. Finally, liberation of thoughts, which cause neither benefit nor harm, is like a thief in an empty house. These three will happen progressively. A strong and total conviction that all phenomena are the display of your own awareness will take birth from within. Waves of

¹¹ ‘Seeing’ here is the wisdom of awareness, not seeing with the eyes something with form and color.

¹² This refers to the two aspects, still and moving, of the mind.

voidness – compassion will surge forth. Preferences between Samsara and Nirvana will cease. One will realize that Buddhas and beings are not good or bad. Whatever one does, day and night in a vast and perfect continuity, one will never move from the total satisfaction of the absolute nature. As it is said in the Great Perfection:

“Realization is unchanging like the sky.”

Although a Yogi like this, “united to the Natural”, has the appearance of an ordinary person, his mind dwells in effortless vision of Dharmakaya, and without action he traverses all the levels and paths. Finally, his intellect exhausted, phenomena exhausted, like space in a breaking vase his body dissolves into minute atoms and his mind dissolves in the Absolute. This is called dwelling in the space of the primordial ground, the “inner radiating youthful vase body”. So it will be.

This is the ultimate end of view, meditation, and action; it is called the actualization of the fruit, which is not to be obtained. The stages of experience and realization may appear either progressively, or without any particular order, or all at once, according to the capacities of different individuals. But at the time of the fruit, there are no differences.

THIRD, THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRACTICE¹³.

PRESERVING SAMAYA AND VOWS, HOW TO COMPLETE THE SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS OF THIS LIFE WITH DHARMA.

If you preserve with diligence in the experience of view, meditation, and practice, yet are unskillful in the methods of the path of action which follows, so that your vows and samaya degenerate, then for the present there will be interruptions and obstacles on the levels and paths, and ultimately you will certainly fall into the “hell without intermission”. Therefore, it is very important to be always vigilant and mindful, never confusing what must be rejected with what must be adopted. As the Great Master, Guru Padmasambhava said:

“ Though my view is higher than the sky,

My conduct regarding cause and effect is finer than barley flower.”

¹³ Rjes-Top – literally, “after obtaining” – refers to whatever a practitioner does with body, speech, and mind after having achieved an understanding, partial or complete, during the meditation or mNyam-bShag literally “remaining in equanimity”. So, in general Je-thop is the continuation of the practice in daily life, outside meditation sessions. More particularly Nyam-Shak is to rest in equanimity in the primal unalterable nature, and Je-thop is to move out of this state, yet keeping an understanding of it.

So, giving up the hasty gross mind, you should act very subtly regarding cause and effect. Keeping intact the samayas and precepts, even smallest of them, you should remain unstained by faults and downfalls. All the samayas of the secret mantra vehicle, as many can be enumerated, are gathered into the samaya of the Guru as the ordinary man, accomplishment is months and years away. You may ask why. As it has been said:

“For the Vajra holders accomplishment follows after the Master.”¹⁴

This the vital point.

So, at first, whoever you may be, as long as you are not linked to the Guru you depend on yourself alone. But once you are relying on the Guru and have become linked with him by initiations and instructions, from then on you have no power not to keep the samaya. At the end of the four initiations you bow in front of the Guru, the main figure of the mandala and say,

“From now on I offer myself as a servant.

Accept me as your disciple and you use even the minutest part of me.”

In giving such consent, however great or powerful you are, have not presented your bowed head to the guru? You also say,

“Whatever the supreme figure asks, I will do.”

Once you have sworn in this way, have you the power to ignore anything he says? Not to accomplish your own promise does not deserve to be called anything other than breaking the samaya, however this may sound.

It has never been said that you have to keep the samaya perfectly with important Gurus who have many attendants, who are every rich, powerful and prosperous, but that there is no need to keep it with modest Gurus, who take a humble position, the beggar – like yogis; whichever the case, you must understand the crucial points of advantages and risks, since to remain as dull as an old horse won't work. This need to keep the samaya, is it for the Guru's benefit or your own? Deeply recollect yourself and think this over carefully, as when grinding medicine. If it is for the Guru's benefit, then you can forget it right away; but if it is not, then there is no point in throwing ashes upon your own head.

¹⁴ All those who, having received initiations and instructions, have thus crossed the door of the Vajrayana are called the “holders of the Vajra”. For them, the realization of ordinary and extraordinary accomplishments depends exclusively on the devotion and faith they have in the Guru. This is why our Root Guru is more precious and supreme than Lord Buddha and Guru Padmasambhava themselves.

In general, the samaya with you Dharma-brothers and sisters comprises holding all those who have entered the door of Lord Buddha's teachings in high esteem, and of training yourself in seeing everything as pure. You should abandon all criticism and partisan discrimination between philosophical schools. More particularly, all those who have the same Guru and the same mandala are vajra-brothers and sisters. So, renounce contempt, rivalry, jealousy, and deceit, and from your heart consider them as intimates.

All sentient beings without exception have been our own kind parents. Alas! The fierce suffering of Samsara, which has no release, harasses all of them. If I do not protect them, who else will? Unable to bear this thought, train yourself in sustaining compassion. Whatever you might be able to accomplish with the three doors, do only that which is truly beneficial to others, and dedicate all merit to them.

At all times there are only three things to be considered: the Dharma, the Guru, and sentient beings. So, do not contradict your intentions by your actions. Do not compete with those who bear the trappings or the names of yogins or monks. Bite your lip, control your mind. This is extremely important – do not play the fool.

If, for your own real good, you think only for future lives, it is clear that Dharma is something that has to be done by yourself. You might put your hope in virtuous actions performed by others after your death, but it may well prove difficult to derive any benefit from them. So, turn the mind inwards; lay the foundation by having complete disgust for worldly activities and firm resolution to make your life and your Sadhana one. Erect the main construction by hitting the vital point through the practice of the profound view and meditation. After completion, act without confusing what has to be rejected with what has to be adopted in the application of the samayas, precepts, and vows. As a result, the qualities will have no choice but to flourish from within. That is why the Great Perfection is the path for sinners swiftly to become Buddhas.

The great profundity of this Dharma carries obstacles with it in the same way that great profit goes together with great risk¹⁵. The reason for this is that all the accumulated bad karma of your past lives will, by the power of the instructions, arise outwardly as the obstacles and apparitions of Mara. At the place where you practice, spirits will show their forms and call you by name. Taking the guise of the Guru, they will make predictions.

¹⁵ Like a diamond of a snake's head.

Various frightful hallucinations will arise in your inner experience, thoughts, and dreams. In reality, you might be subject to attacks, quarrels, thieves, robbers, diseases, and other unexpected hazards. In the mind, for no reason at all, you will experience intense suffering and sadness, which will make you want to cry. Strong defiled thoughts will develop, while fervent devotion, aspiration to enlightenment and compassion will decline. Thoughts in which you see hostility everywhere will drive you nearly mad. Beneficial words will be misinterpreted. You won't feel like staying in retreat, and you will be tempted to annul your promise. Inverted views regarding the Guru will develop. You will feel doubt about the Dharma. You will be falsely accused even though innocent; you will acquire a bad reputation; close friends will turn into enemies, and so on. So, various undesirable circumstances may well arise, outside and inside.

Ho! These are critical points of eruption. You must recognize them. Here is the frontier between benefit and danger. If you handle these obstacles with the key means, they will turn into accomplishments. If you fall into their power, they will become hindrances. So, with pure samaya and persistent unwavering fervor¹⁶, give your faith and heart to the Guru, praying ardently with complete confidence in whatever he may do. If you take these difficult circumstances as something desirable and persevere resolutely in the practice, after some time the solidity of these conditions will collapse by itself and your practice will progress. Appearances will become insubstantial like mist. Confidence in the Guru and his instructions will grow as never before. Even when these happenings occur again, you will find a firm assurance, thinking, "*That's all right*". Ho! This is the point of solution. By bringing the circumstances on the path, the critical points have been settled. A la la! This is exactly what we old fathers want. So, don't be like a jackal approaching a man's corpse, longing to eat it, but his haunches shaking with fear. Develop a strong mind.

Those whose accumulation of merit is meager, whose samaya and vows are lax, whose inverted views are great, whose doubts are many, who are high in promises and low in practice – such people, whose hearts smell like farts, request the Guru's teaching to remain on their bookshelves. Clutching unfavorable circumstances tightly by the hand, they follow them; having easily found their weak points, the devil will be able to drag them down the path to inferior realms. Alas! Pray to the Guru that this does not happen.

¹⁶ Without alternating tightness and looseness, like the string of a bow, even all along its length.

If bad circumstances, which arise on the path, are relatively easy to deal with, good circumstances present much greater difficulties. There is a danger that supported by the belief that you have attained a high level of realization, you devote yourself to ways of achieving greatness in this life, and become the servant of the distracting Devaputra devil; you must be very careful. You must know that this is the crossroads where you can go up or down, the point where great meditators are put to the test.

Until the expression of the qualities of your inner understanding has reached perfection, it is wrong to recount your experiences to everyone; so keep your mouth shut. Furthermore, don't boast about your years or months of retreat, but practice earnestly for the duration of your entire human life. Do not belittle the gaining of merit through the cause and effect relationships of relative truth, deceiving yourself with mere words about emptiness.

Village ceremonies for the taming of demons and so on are performed in order to get food, so don't stay long in populated places. Meaningless action, unnecessary talk, and unprofitable thoughts must all be reduced. Don't fool others by pretense and deceit, which will contradict the Dharma. Don't practice wrong livelihood by making indirect requests and uttering flatteries out of longing for desirable things. Don't associate with sinful people or with those whose views and actions are not in harmony with yours. Disclose your own defects, and don't speak of the hidden faults of others.

All kinds of smoking are considered the tricks of the oath-breaking demons, so reject them from the heart. Wine should be taken as an element of samaya, but not drunk without control, to the point of intoxication.

You should take along the Path all connections, both with people who hold you in good esteem and treat you well, and with people who dislike you and treat you badly, good or bad, without caring at all, accepting them with pure and good wishes. At all times inwardly keep your spirits high, without losing courage; and outwardly, on the path of action, remain humble. Wear worn-out clothes. Consider everyone, good, bad, or neutral, above yourself. Live frugally and remain steadily in mountain hermitages. Fix your ambition on the condition of a beggar. Follow the example of the lives and perfect liberation of the siddhas of the past. Not blaming your past karma, practice Dharma flawlessly and perfectly. Not blaming circumstances, whatever they may be, remain steadfast. In brief, taking your own mind as witness, pledge this life to Dharma. At the time of death, free of thought about

things left undone, you should not be ashamed of yourself. The vital point of all practices is here.

When the time of death is due, give away whatever possessions you have without being attached to even a needle. At the moment of death, the highest practitioners will be cheerful, middling practitioners will be without apprehension, and ordinary practitioners will feel no regret.

If the radiating light of realization shines continually by both day and night, then there is no bardo, and death is nothing more than the destruction of the body. If not this, then if you have confidence that you will be liberated during the bardo, whatever you do is all right. If not even that, then, having previously trained and become experienced in the practice of transference, put it into action when the time comes, towards whichever heavenly field you desire – the rest of the paths and levels will be traversed there, and you will attain Buddhahood.

In our precious lineage, this is not at all some old story from the past; nowadays also, just in the same way, through the paths of Tregchö and Thogal, realization reaches its ultimate end and the gross body dissolves into rainbow light.

If you throw away this precious gem, don't search for a lesser one. We are extremely fortunate to find these deep instructions, which are like the heart and blood of the Dakinis! So, elevate your mind and meditate with joy. Disciples treasure this book in your heart and great benefits may ensue.

For the benefit of the retreat practice of all the meditators of Ogmin Pema Ö ling (hence the root cause) and at the request of the industrious practitioner Rigsang Dorje, possessor of the jewel of immutable respectful faith (hence the pretext), this was spoken from the heart by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (Fearless Adamantine Wisdom) in the form of naked oral advice.

May the Wisdom of Realization be born instantaneously,
And mightily in the nature of all fortunate beings.



*Translated, according to the golden explanations of Tulku Thondup Rinpoche,
Dungsey Trinley Norbu Rinpoche, and Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche,
And with the kind assistance of many vajra brothers and sisters.*



If there is any merit in this publication,
May it be dedicated to the long life of the Teaching and of the Great Gurus,
So that sentient beings may be helped ceaselessly.