

# Buddhahood and a Vajrayana Path

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe





KHENPO NGAWANG DHAMCHOE

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# Preface



*The Vajrayana Booklets* comprise the readings for the third year of The Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course. They concern another of the main traditions of Buddhism, the Vajrayana tradition. The Vajrayana is the third of our three main Buddhist traditions after the Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana. Vajrayana is also known as Tantric Buddhism because it emphasises the use of sacred texts and practices to transform ordinary experience into profound spiritual understanding.

There are three booklets in *The Vajrayana Booklets* series – *The Heart Sutra*, *Seven Point Mind Training* and *Buddhahood and a Vajrayana Path*. Whilst *The Heart Sutra* and *Seven Point Mind Training* are considered practices in

Mahayana, they are also foundational practices within Vajrayana.

These booklets are based on the recorded teachings of Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe is one of the most highly qualified Tibetan Buddhist Sakya lamas in Australia. He is highly respected in Australia and internationally for his profound knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, the clarity and inspirational qualities of his teachings, and his understanding of the western mind.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe has been a monk since 1971. At the age of nine, he entered the Sakya Monastery in Bir, India, and remained there for 10 years. When Khenpo was 19, the principal of Sakya College in Dehradun, His Eminence Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, asked the Sakya Monastery to send senior monks to join the Sakya College. Sakya College is one of the most famous Tibetan philosophical institutes in India. It was established by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin and His Eminence Khenchen Appey Rinpoche.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe was chosen to join the Sakya College. He studied there for just over 10 years, from 1979 to 1990. In his sixth year he was nominated as the Discipline Master. This was a challenging role, as some of the monks, including his peers, were older than him. In Khenpo's seventh year he was appointed a Teacher's Assistant, and in the eighth year he studied for the degree of Kacho Pa – the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts, requiring intensive study. In Khenpo's ninth and tenth years he studied for the degree of Loppon, equivalent to a PhD degree. At the same time, he taught and conducted examinations at the college.

In 1994 His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin appointed Khenpo as Resident Teacher at Sakya Tharpa Ling, a Buddhist centre in Sydney, following the passing of the 14th Gyalsay Tulku Rinpoche. In 2002, His Holiness bestowed on him the title of 'khenpo', or abbot, in recognition of his teaching ability. The bestowal of the term 'khenpo' recognises something considered rare and precious. His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin recognised Khenpo's special qualities and deep understanding of Buddhist philosophies, both in sutra and tantra, and held an Enthronement Ceremony in the Bir Monastery Northern



India, promoting Khenpo from the term Loppon to Khenpo in March 2002.

The term 'khenpo' has at least three meanings in Tibetan Buddhism: a scholar who has completed an extensive course of study in sutra and tantra, a senior lama who can give ordinations, and the head of a monastery. The khenpos have been the main channels for keeping the purity of Buddha's teachings alive from generation to generation within the Tibetan monastic tradition.

Since November 2015 Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe has lived and taught at Kamalashila Tibetan Buddhist Centre near Tilba on the south coast of New South Wales, although he travels to many countries to spread the Dharma.

From 2017 to 2019, Khenpo taught the first component of the Seven Year Complete Path for senior students which was coordinated by the International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu under the strict guidance of, and within the program developed by, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin.

In 2019, Khenpo began to develop The Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course, a three-year program teaching the main concepts and practices of the three main traditions of Buddhism – Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. The inaugural program began in 2022.

There are many to thank for *The Vajrayana Booklets* but first and foremost we would like to thank Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe for his precious teachings which he has given so generously and diligently to his students over so many years. They have greatly helped his students to understand and to apply the Dharma in their lives to such good effect. These booklets were prepared over five years and with many hours of work by transcribers and editors. The best gift of appreciation we can give our teacher in return is to apply these methods in diligent practice of the Dharma.

*May the precious Dharma continue down through the ages  
to guide countless beings on the Path.*

*Carole Kayrooz Emeritus Professor and Lael Morrissey,  
November 2023*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Vajrayana Booklets* is one of a series based on teachings by Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe. We have many to thank for their contributions to the series.

*Buddhahood and a Vajrayana Path* was prepared by Carole Kayrooz and Lael Morrissey and edited by Carole Kayrooz, Lael Morrissey and Robert Garran.

Lael Morrissey and Ulladulla Printing and Signage prepared the layout and design.

# Introduction

The Vajrayana is the third of the three main Buddhist traditions after the Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana. Vajrayana is also known as tantric Buddhism because it emphasises the use of sacred texts and practices including meditation, mantra recitation, mandala visualisation and ritual to transform ordinary experience into profound spiritual understanding. It emphasises skilful means to quicken the path.

There are four main topics in the Vajrayana Booklet:

1. Steps to understanding buddhahood – shamatha, vipassana (perfection of wisdom) and absolute bodhicitta
2. The dhyani buddhas and the three kayas
3. Paths to enlightenment – the five paths, ten bhumis and a more detailed account of Vajrayana
4. The Lam Dre: a Sakya path including the guru student relationship and concluding with a brief piece on mahamudra.

## Sources

This booklet is a compilation from several sources. It attempts to describe the qualities of Buddhahood and the steps and paths of the Vajrayana path, drawing on Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe's teachings and other sources. This is background information for students of the Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course only. Vajrayana teachings sometimes contain restricted information, not intended for public consumption or wider distribution. It is considered

very important that this knowledge is passed directly from teacher to student. In the interest of providing background notes for students in this Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course, the editors have compiled this offering under Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe's supervision.

This booklet is based mainly on the teachings of Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe, with other (predominantly Sakya) materials added to provide further information. The booklet aims to lay out aspects of the concept of buddhahood and the means to attain buddhahood from the Vajrayana perspective. Other material is drawn predominantly from Khenchen Appey Rinpoche's *Clarifying the Sages Intent* and to a lesser extent other Buddhist texts, mostly in the Sakya tradition. We will acknowledge below and also in the various sections where we have drawn heavily on other masters and teachers.

## Motivation – How do we ripen others

This particular section is drawn from Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe's teachings and from the Teachings on Sakya Pandita's *Clarifying the Sages Intent*, 2008, by Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, Vajra Publications, Kathmandu Nepal and to a lesser extent *Clarifying the Sages Intent*, 2015, by Kunga Gyaltzen, Wisdom Publications, Somerville MA USA.

## The qualities of the Buddha

As cited by Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, Maitreya outlined twenty qualities of the Buddha.

## Five paths to enlightenment

This section draws on Khenchen Appey Rinpoche's book *Teachings on Sakya Pandita's Clarifying the Sage's Intent*, 2008, and on Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe's teachings.

## The Lam Dre

Besides Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe's teachings, we have drawn on the Lam Dre commentaries

- *Three Visions: Fundamental teachings of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism* by Ngorchen Konchog Lhundrub 2002 Snow Lion, Boston and London
- *The Three Levels of Spiritual Perception. A Commentary on the Three Visions* by Deshung Rinpoche 2003, Wisdom Publications, Somerville MA USA.

## Motivation

We begin this discussion of the Vajrayana by setting the right motivation. The right motivation is the root of our path. The right soil to grow this root is mother sentient beings. Without the right soil, without sentient beings, there is nothing to grow. As the Dharma says we must feel connected with all sentient beings; we must open our hearts and fill them with real kindness. Each and every sentient being wants to be happy, but they lack wisdom and are ignorant. They rush into false happiness and, by doing so, create unhappiness.

Each and every sentient being sincerely wishes with all this effort to be free, to create happiness, but sentient beings end up creating discomfort and difficulties. Then you think, 'How can I help them?' Having a famous name doesn't help them, and money is no help. Every mundane thing you can think of is no help, so what can help? Only perfect wisdom will help them. This is because all problems arise from ignorance. Right now, I don't have the wisdom to offer them. Therefore, I must attain perfect wisdom, to gain buddhahood for the sake of all mother sentient beings and, for that purpose, I must study the precious Buddhadharma.

It is priceless, each and every moment, to get this precious opportunity to

listen to the Dharma. While we are in this environment, this is a golden moment to listen to this jewel. This instant will ultimately exhaust our ignorance. It is so important to keep in mind the right purpose for studying the precious Buddhadharmā. This wisdom must be implemented until it is exhausted. This is important to keep in our minds so that we know the right path to be able to free all mother sentient beings, that is, to study the precious Dharma.

To train in the bodhisattva's way of life, to develop perfect wisdom, is to slowly ripen oneself such that we can help others. To ripen oneself is to practise the Six Paramitas – generosity, ethical conduct, patience, joyful effort, contemplation and wisdom. Wisdom is based on an unbiased discerning mind. You will have an awareness of what is right and what is wrong. You will know what is wise to adopt and what is wise to abandon. If you live based on this awareness you will never face challenges in your life. Everyday what you do is for the benefit of you and others. This is wisdom. So these six paramitas or perfections will really awaken and ripen yourself. We need to work with ourselves before we can hope to help others.

How do we ripen others? There are four means for helping others:

1. *Generosity* – Generosity allows for development of good relationships. Once you have a good relationship, remember that the aim is to help others. Without giving or generosity it is harder to help someone. So first we need to create a good relationship. That person needs to feel comfortable and safe with you. Once this is established then there is more openness and more acceptance, then whatever advice is given, there can be more benefit. If you have a bad relationship, even if you say the right thing, they are not going to receive it. There isn't the right condition to receive it. So generosity creates the conditions where others can better receive what you have to offer.
2. *Pleasant speech* – The most pleasant speech is the Dharma. The more you talk about the Dharma the more purified your mind becomes. The more you think about the Dharma, the more clarity is developed in your mind. Dharma is like detoxification for your mind.

## INTRODUCTION

The *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* exhorts us to teach through understanding the recipient of the teaching:

*Thus a bodhisattva who is kind, undiscouraged, compassionate,  
and of good repute and who knows wholesome methods  
is an eloquent speaker – by teaching,  
he shines beautifully among people like the sun.*

Maitreya, *The Ornament of Mahayana Sutras (Mahayanasutralamkara)* 13:23  
Toh 4020 Tengyur, sem tsam, phi, 12b3.

3. *Skilful guidance* – Skilfully guide others or offer what they need. Chandrakirti said:

*The teacher directs disciples  
After understanding their mental dispositions.  
The wise will attract students  
But the unintelligent will never do this for disciples.*

Candrakirti *Commentary on the Four Hundred (Catuhsatakatika)* Toh 3865  
Tengyur, bdu ma, ya, 110a7.

4. *Live by example* – Be a role model. If you live virtuously then others will follow you. In a family it is not right to say this person did not listen to me, or this person did this or that, or if you are a panicky person, you won't help any family members. You really need to be a role model, really calm and positive and with clarity. This way people can more rely on you so you can guide them better.

# 1. Steps in understanding buddhahood

Our previous booklets introduced shamatha, vipassana and absolute bodhicitta. These three are bridges from our earlier study in this course that help us to conceptualise enlightenment – keeping in mind that enlightenment is non-conceptual! We include here some teachings on those topics: firstly on the eighth stage of shamatha meditation, secondly on the perfection of wisdom in vipassana and thirdly on absolute bodhicitta. It is necessary to remind ourselves of these teachings because we are so very entrenched in samsara.

## Shamatha: equanimous single pointed placement of the mind

In Kamalashila's *Bhavanakrama*, or Stages of Meditation, there are three stages of meditation in the desire realm: the initial, intermediate and last stages of meditation. We described the initial and intermediate stages of meditation in the Shamatha and Vipassana section of our Hinayana Booklets, leaving the later for further study in the Mahayana and Vajrayana year. Here we want to focus on the eighth stage which is known as single pointed meditation because it aims to remain with the object of meditation. (The ninth stage is known as 'setting in equipoise', where the meditator stays in meditative stabilisation spontaneously). The aim of these later stages is to gain insight into the luminous clear nature of mind, free from inherent existence. This is important for studying the nature of the enlightened mind. You might like to refer to Kamalashila's Stages of Meditation to understand this more deeply.



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Beyond the meditation states of the desire realm there are four dhyana minds of the form realm and four of the formless realm. Dhyana means a higher states of meditation still, the attainment of deep sustained concentration and mental absorption (see Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa* and Asanga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*).

According to Kamalashila, in the desire realm of meditation, there are these stages:

Ø initial stage comprising in sequence: 1. placement of the mind, 2. continuous placement, 3. repeated placement

Ø intermediate stage comprising in sequence: 4. close placement, 5. taming, 6. pacifying, 7. fully pacifying

Ø later stage comprising in sequence: 8. single pointedness, 9. equanimity, insight.

The eighth stage of meditation is known as equanimous single pointed placement of the mind because it aims to remain with the object of meditation. In this eighth stage, on single-pointedness, it is effortless for one to focus the mind on the object. This is the highest single pointed stage in the desire realms. It is a higher state of meditation. If you maintain this equanimous single pointedness of the desire realm you may enter the first higher state called the first dhyana, which is in the form realm. The desire realm single pointed placement of the mind is not the right platform to cultivate absolute bodhicitta. It is not enough to support you to realise emptiness. If you continue to meditate like this, eventually at the very advanced state there will be no desire.

You will still be the same person in the form realm as you were in desire realm, but the qualities of your mind will be different. A form realm mind is a balanced mind state – without the excesses of a deep meditative state and a wandering mind. A desire realm mind, even if with single pointedness, will still have distractions – for that reason it is not suitable for developing bodhicitta mind. In the formless realm, the mind is too deeply in a meditative state, there is too much dullness. Nor is it suitable for developing bodhicitta mind. The perfect mind for developing absolute bodhicitta is the dhyana mind. It has no subtle wandering mind and no deep meditative state to

support.

## Buddhahood and absolute bodhicitta

It is not easy for a person like me to explain what absolute bodhicitta is, but let's try firstly a basic explanation. Absolute bodhicitta is not talked much about in sutrayana; it is mostly a Vajrayana term. We call absolute bodhicitta 'clear light', referring to the realisation that the nature of the mind is luminosity. Even when we say that the nature of the mind is luminosity, don't grasp for an existent luminosity. This is a mistake. Luminosity is the unborn luminous nature of mind. When we say unborn it cuts off the possibility of luminosity being existent, because for something to be existent it has to be born.

Primordial unborn luminous nature of the mind is called absolute bodhicitta. When we say absolute bodhicitta mind, as soon as we say 'mind', you will hear people think about all consciousness. Primordial unborn luminous mind is not about consciousness, because consciousness is a compounded phenomenon. Anything that is compounded is impermanent. Absolute bodhicitta mind cannot be compounded. It is uncreated, unborn.

When you are meditating on luminosity, once you understand what absolute bodhicitta means, just don't block anything. Don't block anything. Let there be hearing of sound, tasting of food, smelling of smell, leave everything as it is, but don't grasp at anything. Just remain in primordial nature. Don't fabricate or do anything. Within this unfabricated state, everything is possible. Within emptiness everything is possible. Nothing can stop it. This is the beauty of emptiness. When you just leave everything as it is, everything is possible. When you try to manipulate it, everything stops. This is called the freedom of the absolute state.

We call trying to attain that state 'engaging bodhicitta'. When we are engaging bodhicitta, when we are chanting the *Heart Sutra*, there is nothing to obtain, there is nothing to cause any sensation. Obtaining and sensation are all concepts. Getting used to that view is engaging bodhicitta. First we need to get some gross understanding of absolute bodhicitta. Second, we try to

get used to that view. This is what we call meditation on absolute bodhicitta.

Meditation on the luminous nature of the mind slowly dissipates our dualistic mind. Once everything dissipates, all that remains is primordial wisdom. It will rise like a sunrise; it is always there. When we use this language people think it is something existent, but this is a mistake of a dualistic mind. Purity is always there, but the dualistic illusory mind does not allow us to see it. The dualistic mind is a kind of blockage. The only way to remove that is to stay in the absolute bodhicitta state. Eventually the dualistic mind will dissipate, then primordial wisdom will rise like a sun rising in the sky. Out of emptiness it rises like the sun. We call this absolute bodhicitta.

This is the ultimate goal, and in order to achieve this, Santideva said, 'With absence of vipassana or absence of this primordial wisdom, there is no way to uproot obscuration or defilement of cognition'. Without realising absolute truth we cannot uproot our defilements. The main purpose is to cultivate vipassana, and in order to cultivate vipassana one must do shamatha meditation. Before we attempt to cultivate primordial mind, we train our mind to be good with shamatha.

### Buddhahood and Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana meditation has three topics: recognising the luminosity or clarity of mind, abiding in the state free from all extremes, and developing unshakable understanding and conviction that the nature of the mind is inexpressible.

#### Recognising the luminous nature of mind

Based on bodhicitta mind and commitment we can talk about meditating on absolute bodhicitta. The unborn luminous nature of the mind is absolute bodhicitta. To develop that kind of awareness, we reflect on the following points.

*The five aggregates* – We all have an illusory mind that we think as 'self' or as 'I', 'me' or 'mine'. What kind of mechanism or substance causes us to have this sense that the illusory mind is reality? The five aggregates are five aspects

of experience that cause suffering. Because we perceive, we know the five aggregates.

For instance take one of the five aggregates – the form aggregate. Within the form aggregate there are five types of forms (the five physical objects of our experience). There is the visual form, that the eye conscious can see. Then there is a form which eye consciousness cannot see, but ear consciousness can hear and that is the sound form. Then there is a form that eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear, but the nose can sense and that is the smell form. Then there is another form where the eye cannot see, the ear cannot hear and the nose cannot smell, but the tongue can sense and that is the taste form. Then there is a form that the others cannot sense, but the body can feel, and that is the touch form.

The five aggregates arise due to karmic perception; they arise from the interplay of various causes and conditions. We think they are real. When we think they are real this leads to thinking ‘this is me, this is I’. Based on that we develop the identity of a ‘self’ or ‘I’. Really none of these constructions is a ‘self’ none of them is ‘I’.

The object we grasp at as ‘self’ is baseless. It does not exist. If you investigate, you will not find a self. Then why do we grasp at a self? This investigation helps us to understand that grasping at a self comes from a very deep deluded mind. It takes time to unravel that, because we have been holding on to that convoluted deluded mind since beginningless time.

The first thing we need to know is that grasping at a ‘self’ arises from is a deluded mind. We really need to confirm this in our understanding. Confirm this as often as possible.

As an analogy think about when you encounter a needy person who is always demanding from you. At some point, although you are not bothered by that person, you think that person should be more independent. You become a little more firm in insisting they do not depend on you or rely on you or demand so much of you. Hold that firmness, then eventually that person can become more independent. So too our grasping mind is a needy mind. It is always demanding us to do this or do that. And that is the reason we are so tired. Now that we understand that this grasping at a self arises

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from a deeply deluded mind, we need to be firm in deciding not to follow the demands of this deluded mind.

It is not through ignorant mind that we force out this grasping of self; it is through realising the nature of the self that we distinguish what to abandon and what to follow. One way of pushing out this grasping mind is by doing this without knowing the true nature of the self. This is a religious way, such as thinking, 'Self is no good' and pushing that idea out. A better way is the philosophical way of investigating and understanding that the notion of self is a deeply deluded mind. We decide to abandon it all the while with awareness of the reasons why. If there is some kind of self that exists, it can only exist as either merely by name, or it exists as a physical body or it exists as a mind. There is no other way or possibility.

*Name as self* – Our names are given to us or inherited at the time of our birth, but we do not name ourselves. If we gave a name to ourselves when we were born it would be 'goo-goo ga-ga'. If your name is your self, who are you when you are born? Because most people do not have a name before they are born, would you be a different person once you have been given a name? Also, if some have multiple names, does it mean they have multiple selves? Names are quite easy to change, it may even seem like a good idea to change your name if you run into some trouble, but it does not work like that. Trouble will still catch up to you. Even if you call yourself Buddha it does not make you a buddha. Your name is just a label to help others to identify who you are. It does not actually represent you or who we really are. Therefore, you don't have to grasp at a name as self.

*Physical body as self* – 'Body' is also a label or name. The body does not exist independently. Our body is a collection of flesh, blood, and bone which we label as our body. From the past, present and future lives' point of view, we have different bodies in the past and present and future, but what we did in the past will ripen in this life and what you do now will ripen in the future. Our bodies are constantly changing and so our body is not the 'self'. When you investigate from your crown to your toe, none of the parts of your body are the 'self'.

*Mind as Self* – Which mind is self? Past mind? Present mind? Future

mind? The past mind is no longer existent. The present mind changes or dies moment to moment, it never stays the same for a single moment. The future mind is not here yet, so how can it be the 'self'.

In this way we can reason that the concept of grasping at a permanent independent true 'self' is a mere illusion. It is like a drunk person thinks what he sees is reality; but what he sees is not the same as what a sober person sees. Because of our delusion and karma and defilements, we think there is a self. But if we remove the karma and defilements and investigate labels and mind, there will be no such thing as a permanent independent true self.

This is the correct way to investigate selflessness, without ending up grasping at nihilism. We will end up with the conclusion that we want to be free of karma and defilements and free of grasping of a 'self'. If you simply negate the self, you may end up grasping onto nihilism and end up in the lower realms of existence and even lose the motivation for liberation or enlightenment. So it is important not to grasp at nihilism.

Logically we do not have valid evidence that there is a single being or power that created everything. Neither is everything created merely by the four elements. All that you see – animate and inanimate objects – is primarily a result of your karmic perception. If all that we see is truly existent, then beings with totally different karma will see the same thing. We humans see and perceive things differently from animals, which are not going to perceive in the same way. For example, cows perceive grass as food, humans do not perceive grass as food. If you look at it from a logical point of view, our perceptions are created by our defilements rather than something else. If you continue with this logic you will not find any objective phenomena. All phenomena are mere perceptions of our delusion mind, and based on these perceptions we label them. Besides that, there is nothing that independently exists.

We need to invest time using really a logical mind to explore these conclusions. We might not like these conclusions, but we need to accept them as they are also the laws of nature. It is similar to going to court for a crime and losing the court case. If the opposition has more valid evidence and you don't have enough evidence, you have to accept the reality of the

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conclusion even if you don't like it. It is the same with the law of nature that those things don't exist the way they appear. It is out of our ignorance that we don't accept the law of nature and think of things that do not exist as existent. I always say we should go along with nature. There is so much space in nature, so much logic there, so much freedom there. The moment we fight against valid correct logic, which is what we are doing when we are on the samsaric path, we will be defeated.

We have to establish objectlessness. The mind that is grasping at objects is like an illusion mind, it's like a dream mind. People think that if nothing exists, then why do we smell things; if nothing exists, why do we hear things; if nothing exists, why are we feeling these things? These might be some of the arguments we use to prove that things exist objectively. I would counter that with a question – in dreams I can smell things and feel things and hear things; do those dream things exist too? Can they be found after you wake up from the dream? There is nothing to show for the dream reality after the dream. It is entirely your mind acting in the dualistic roles of subject and object. Then when you wake up, your mind is different; that mind is not going to see what you saw in the dream. Our mind is like a dream, like an illusion.

Once you are aware of this and are able to purify this illusion of subject and object, what you have left is mere clarity, mere awareness. This mere awareness aspect we call *alaya* consciousness. Its nature, which is free from the four extremes, is buddha nature.

At this point it may help if you study, diligently and at depth, seven point mind training. It mentions how to meditate on absolute bodhicitta and the innate nature of the mind which means the non-dualistic state of the mind. This is mere awareness. Mere awareness is without a grasping or wandering mind. 'Wandering' does not mean you are thinking where you are from, it means that the moment you grasp, there is an object, then you have wandered away from mere awareness.

We need to look after or retain what we have realised. This is the yogi's job. Most of us don't get any realisations, and secondly many of us never look after the realisations we have, and that is why we never get success. For this reason, we need to know what we as practitioners are looking for. Once

we find what we are looking for then we need to look after it. That is the practice.

## Abiding in the state free from all extremes

Once we experience mere awareness, which is only the alaya consciousness, we need to realise it is free from all extremes.

Firstly, we free the dualistic mind and bring it into a mere awareness state. If you grasp at this mere awareness, you will not realise absolute truth. Mere awareness is the mind and this mind you need to investigate. To investigate means you look for the cause that created this mere awareness. When you look for the cause, you are not going to find any initial cause for this mere awareness. If something is unborn, it is not abiding anywhere or retained anywhere. If it is abiding somewhere, it will have colour or shape or exist in the body or outside body or somewhere between. No matter where you look you are not going to find those causes or those qualities. So not finding it is finding the answer.

When you look for the absolute truth, the moment you find nothing is the moment you find absolute truth. And because there is no beginning, so too there is no middle and no cessation.

When we push too much it causes so much stress mentally and physically; with all the pushing there is no joy or comfort. So, when you find the absolute truth, it relieves you. You realise there is nothing to grasp. Just let go of everything. We ordinarily hold so tightly onto everything we have and so we have much stress. That is why, if we just let it go, we will have much less stress and things will happen naturally. Saying this is not cultural or religious advice or offering a particular point of view. If after thorough investigation we find that there is nothing absolute, that is why we can let go.

This is why we do not need to hope or fear. When we experience mere awareness there is complete joy and freedom. It is for this reason that once the yogis find a real place to meditate, they can really enjoy their mind – so much that they don't want to come out from the cave. You will have a great sense of joy when you realise there is nothing to grasp. It completely relaxes



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the mind. The moment the mind relaxes, the body can feel joy. It is almost like the body is a house and the mind is the tenant. If the tenant is tidy and calm, then the house can relax too.

We are not forcing the mind to relax, but through study we begin to understand and accept what is the absolute truth. Based on this awareness, we can now train the mind. Because we have the habit of grasping all the time, we need to take this medicine in the form of this realisation whenever we are grasping. The moment we bring to mind this realisation it relaxes the grasping mind. So whenever you are stressed bring up this realisation. This is what we call practice. This is real practice. Keep doing this then one day your mind will be more dominated by the realisation that you gained, rather than the ignorance that is usually controlling your mind. The ignorance did not disappear; that very ignorance-dominated mind is transformed into a wisdom-dominated mind.

If you really look at what we want to achieve when we talk about bodhicitta mind and loving kindness, it is not different to what the anger or jealous minds also want to achieve. But one method ultimately achieves it and the other method doesn't. For this reason we need to transform our minds, from jealous mind to rejoicing mind, and from anger mind to patient mind.

When you realise that mere awareness is absent from birth, absent of abiding, absent of death, and that mere awareness is apart from these things, then we meditate that there is nothing left to grasp. In a post-meditative state, we may think, 'Oh there is nothing there', and we may end up 'grasping' that there is nothing there. This is not right. We also need to free our grasping of this. This nothing is created by the mind. You may think, there is no absolutely independently existent nothingness out there. You also need to be free from this.

In the end all you experience is absolute truth. There is nothing to explain. There are no words to explain it. The real absolute truth is not the object of the ordinary grasping mind. Many of us try to understand absolute truth with our ordinary mind, but it is not possible. It is like a child's mind trying to understand the experiences of an adult's mind; similarly a childlike samsaric mind is not going to fully understand the yogic experience of emptiness.

Understanding that, we need to be open to a different state of mind. That is why we study, contemplate and meditate.

If you are free from all extremes and all labels, you can supremely relax, because at that moment there is not going to be anything that can disturb your mind.

## Developing convictions that the nature of mind is inexpressible

The object we meditate on, the method of meditation and the meditator are not going to be found to exist as we think or perceive them. For this reason we say they are beyond expression or beyond conceptual thoughts.

In the post-meditative state we don't block what we see, but think of what we see as the production of emptiness. Because of emptiness, everything appears. If things are absolutely existent then it actually blocks change. When we have space, it allows things to arise and move around. Space allows for a great degree of freedom. Similarly, because of emptiness, everything is possible. If there was no emptiness then nothing could change. If a bowl is only as we perceive it, it can't be used as anything else or for another purpose. But it has no innate identity within itself.

Without emptiness a bowl can only be a bowl, but in reality it can be used and transformed into many other things. If someone takes this bowl and places it in the garden, our conventional mind would make us upset and say, 'Who took Khenpo-la's bowl and put it into the garden?' It seems that many things can make us upset, but it is really just our mental state with the wrong perception. It is mind training and not just a cultural thing.

In the post-meditative state everything is a manifestation of or display of emptiness. So let them arise. Let the drama play out, there is no way we can stop it. Better to just let it be. If good things come, just enjoy it, but don't cling to it. If bad things come, don't be upset – just let it be. If we don't get involved, we will not be disturbed. The moment you are involved, that is when you get disturbed. The trouble we face is created by this mind. We want a joyous mind, so we need to shape or design how it responds.

Jetsun Dragpa Gyaltsen, the third of the five founders of the Sakya order,

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says the mind is not born in the beginning, does not abide in the middle and does not cease in the end. When you realise that, and your conceptual mind is still thinking that mind is not in the beginning and not abiding and not ceasing, then you are not in the emptiness state, because you are still grasping that 'concept'. So ultimately you need to be free from even concepts. In the beginning we use concepts to free us from the concepts of being born, abiding, ceasing. Later we need to be free even from those concepts. Now that is Vipassana.

## 2. Three ways to understand buddhahood

There are a number of ways to conceptually understand buddhahood, three of which we present here. The first concerns the qualities of the buddha expounded by Maitreya and Sakya Pandita, the second the five dhyani buddhas and the third, the three kayas.

### The qualities of the Buddha

According to Khenchen Appey Rinpoche in *Clarifying the Sages Intent*, Maitreya and Sakya Pandita composed many verses about the special qualities of the Buddha. There are twenty exclusive qualities of the Buddha given in the *Mahyanasutralamkara* by Maitreya and fourteen additional qualities listed in Sakya Pandita's *Clarifying the Sages Intent*, Khenchen Appey Rinpoche said we can accumulate merit by reciting these texts daily. The qualities of the Buddha are:

- the four immeasurable (loving-kindness, benevolence, joy in the happiness of others and equanimity); the eight liberations of various states of meditative absorption
- the dignified suppressions showing the Buddhas miraculous powers as compared to others
- the ten pervasive concentrations referring to the meditative absorptions and their activities
- non-afflictive concentration where the Buddha can pacify all manifested defilements towards him

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- knowing from prayers where Buddha can know the future
- four individually correct cognitions including perfectly cognising individual phenomena, perfectly cognising individual classifications, perfectly cognising individual etymologies, perfect confidence to explain all of these
- six clairvoyances in the performance of miracles through the Buddhas meditative state, knowing the minds of others, clairaudience in hearing all sounds, knowing all past lives, knowing time place and manner of death and rebirth for all, knowing the specific means by which each being can overcome their defilements and gain liberation
- the 32 major and 8 minor bodily marks
- the four thorough purities comprising thorough purity of the basis, object, enlightened thought, and transcendental wisdom
- the ten powers include the power of understanding: proper and improper cause; karmas and their consequences; the various aspirations; the various natural temperaments; the various classes of mental faculties; the various paths leading to their corresponding destinations. Also the power of knowing: all the defiled and immaculate meditative concentrations, prior births; dying and rebirth; and the exhaustion of defilements
- the four kinds of fearlessness (or confidence) includes the fearlessness to assert that he has extinguished all negativities and that he has attained perfect and complete realisation. The self-confidence to reveal the paths and antidotes for the purposes of others and to reveal the things to be discarded for the purposes of others
- the quality of not possessing the three concealments of body, voice and enlightened thought
- the quality of applying three kinds of mindfulness
- completely eliminating all the residues
- the quality of non-forgetfulness
- great compassion
- the eighteen qualities exclusively possessed by complete buddhas including the six exclusive qualities of the Buddha's conduct, the six unshared qualities of realisation and the three transcendental wisdoms

or knowledge of past present and future, and the three transcendental activities of body, voice and transcendent mind

- beings omniscient in every respect
- full accomplishment of the six perfections.

Sakya Pandita cited fourteen additional qualities

- marvellous accomplishment of the two purposes;
- thorough accomplishment of the 37 factors of enlightenment;
- the nine stages of meditation
- the three doors of liberation (emptiness, wishlessness and signlessness)
- eradication of the four maras
- the ten dominions
- the quality of various states of meditative absorption
- the door of dharani or non-forgetfulness
- the quality of consummate abandonment
- the perfection of transcendental wisdom (mirror like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, discriminating wisdom, wisdom of accomplishing beneficial deeds)
- the excellent qualities of speech
- the quality of transformation
- the quality of spiritual wealth
- Buddha is the excellent refuge.

## The five dhyani buddhas

While dhyana minds refers to meditative absorption attained through meditation practice, dhyani buddhas are enlightened beings, embodiments of qualities of awakened consciousness. The dhyana mind is like the preliminary practices that pave the way for the attainment of the enlightened mind, symbolised by the dhyani buddhas.

The dhyani buddhas represent unique aspects of the enlightened mind. They are the five wisdom Buddhas, sometimes called the buddha families.

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They are the qualities that practitioners develop or cultivate on their path to enlightenment. If you can meditate on the qualities of the dhyana buddhas you can purify afflictions and transform them into their corresponding wisdoms. They can be associated with healing and purification and help to integrate wisdom and compassion.

Upon initiation into Vajrayana Buddhism you enter into the mandala or sacred place of one of the dhyani buddhas. In highest Yoga Vajrayana you take the samaya vows, which mean that you do not separate from the guru who is giving the initiation. The samaya vows involve devotion to the guru, commitment to certain practices which are secret, and ethical conduct.

There are five Buddha families: Vairocana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi. Vairocana causes ignorance to cease in our consciousness. Akshobhya purifies anger and aversion. Ratnasambhava purifies pride and miserliness. Amoghasiddhi purifies jealousy. Amitabha purifies attachment.

Vairocana Buddha is the wisdom of the dharmadatu, the ultimate nature of reality. This dhyani buddha is central and primary in the Buddha family, belonging to the vajra family, with the indestructible qualities of a diamond, able to overcome anything in its path. Vairocana Buddha embodies wisdom, compassion, and the ability to transform ignorance, which is the root of samsara, into wisdom. The emblem representing Vairocana is often the wheel of Dharma and depicted as a buddha, it is often in white and with some kind of gesture of teaching 'turning the wheel' such as holding both hands held at chest level with the left hand facing inward. The index finger and thumb of both hands touch to make a circle.

Akshobhya Buddha transforms anger and aggression into mirror like wisdom. All phenomena are reflections in a mirror. This is the wisdom that understands the true nature of reality. This is the vajra family – unshakeable, indestructible, immovable and often depicted in blue colour and associated with the east. Akshobhya Buddha is often depicted with his right hand touching the ground.

Ratnasambhava Buddha embodies the wisdom of equanimity. He is the transformation of pride and attachment into the wisdom of equanimity.

He is usually depicted in yellow and facing forward, giving with the right hand which is extended downwards. His left hand rests on his lap holding a wish fulfilling jewel. He transforms poverty mentality into wealth mentality, generosity and the richness of the Dharma. It is associated with the southerly direction.

Amitabha Buddha is associated with the transformation of desire and attachment into the wisdom of discernment. He loves the diversity of all phenomena. He represents infinite light and boundless compassion. He is often shown in red colour with hands in lap, and is associated with the lotus which signifies gentleness and purity. Buddha Amitabha is associated with the westerly direction. Amitabha's blessing develops compassion within us, which arises from overcoming the delusion of attachment.

Amoghasiddhi Buddha is associated with the transformation of jealousy and envy into all accomplishing wisdom. The right hand is raised in a gesture of fearlessness. He is usually green and gives us the potential to develop fearlessness, which results from overcoming jealousy. Fearlessness creates the power to overcome obstacles. The Buddha Book states that this is the buddha of the world of politicians and ambitious people – those perpetually jealous of others, competitive and who want to gain more wealth, success and power.

## The three kayas

In Vajrayana Buddhism, there are three main kayas or interconnected aspects or dimensions of the enlightened state. They show us the qualities of an enlightened being known as the 'three bodies of Buddha'. Besides understanding the qualities of the enlightened state, they can inspire our spiritual practice by showing us our potential for awakening; they can guide meditation practice and visualisation, they can cultivate wisdom and compassion and they can connect us with the Vajrayana lineage and tradition.

Dharmakaya is known as the 'truth body', or the formless essence beyond concepts; it reflects the purity of the mind. It is the ultimate nature of the Buddha. It represents the ultimate nature the enlightened mind itself –



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formless, unmanifested beyond conceptualisation and duality, the boundless all-pervading nature of emptiness and wisdom.

Sambhogakaya, also known as the 'enjoyment body' is the subtle radiant aspect of Buddhahood. It is the body of perfect bliss and enjoyment that buddhas manifest to guide and benefit advanced practitioners. It is characterised by wisdom, compassion and skilful means.

Nirmanakaya is known as the 'emanation body' and is the physical manifestation of the Buddha in the six realms of samsara. It is the tangible form that the buddhas take to guide samsaric beings. The physical body of Buddha Shakyamuni is the nirmanakaya.

The nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya can together be called the rupakaya and you often see this classification to describe them.

## 3. Paths to Enlightenment

There are three classificatory paths to enlightenment that we show here – the five paths, the ten bhumis, and the more detailed classification of the Vajrayana. The first, the five paths is the general path which is common to all three Buddhist traditions of Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana. The second is the ten bhumis of the bodhisattvas, pertinent to Mahayana and Vajrayana. This classification system overlaps with the Five Paths and will be explained below. The third approach is a more detailed classification of the Vajrayana.

### The five paths to enlightenment

The five paths to enlightenment are a succession of five stages or paths that describe the entire spiritual journey towards enlightenment.

Khenchen Appey Rinpoche makes an interesting comment on the importance of the five paths and ten bhumis. In his book *Teachings on Sakya Pandita's Clarifying the Sage's Intent*, he says:

One might ask whether it is absolutely necessary to teach the five paths and the ten bodhisattva bhumis at this time, since we do not yet have the ability to understand them directly. The answer is that we must know them as a prerequisite for developing spiritually and making progress on the paths to enlightenment. It's a bit like preparing to travel to another country; before we set off on our trip, we first prepare ourselves by trying to learn something about the place, the climate, the customs and so forth.

These are the five paths to enlightenment:

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1. The path of accumulation
2. The path of joining or application
3. The path of seeing
4. The path of meditation
5. The path of no more learning

The following pages on the five paths are principally taken from Khenchen Appey Rinpoche 1986 *Teachings on Sakya Pandita's Clarifying the Sage's Intent*, Vajra Publications, Nepal.

#### The path of accumulation

The first stage or gateway is the path of accumulation. On this stage one's mind becomes habituated for the first time to meditating generically on nonconceptual wisdom.

The path of accumulation is the initial meditative cultivation of nonconceptual thought. It is an approach to liberation, coming out of the delusional mind. It is the first time that one can 'rest the mind' in the absolute, being the initial meditative cultivation of nonconceptual thoughts, to begin looking for the mind to be free from delusion. When we practise, the mind is more often coming to an undeluded state, meaning the 'beginning to go' or 'entering into the path of accumulation'. Resting in the natural state of the mind means: not just realising but actually having some kind of concept of the absolute.

The path of accumulation is like gaining an intellectual understanding of the absolute, but this is still the conventional mind. It is not the real thing.

Within the Hinayana path, renunciation is the motivation whereas in the Mahayana path the motivation is to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, through bodhicitta training. In the Theravadan tradition, the motivation for shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is for self-liberation. In the Mahayana tradition it is to cultivate wisdom mind through the bodhicitta method, to attain liberation for the sake of all sentient beings. All depends on our mind and motivation.

This text principally describes the paths according to the Mahayana

tradition, which identifies three sections of the path of accumulation: the small, the intermediate and the great.

The great Sakya lineage master Sakya Pandita stated: 'Once one becomes used to this, there will be less difficulty. Yes, very difficult yet one must never give up.'

The path of accumulation is divided into small, medium and greater stages. What should we practise at each stage?

- The small stage is to practise the four foundations of mindfulness; yet this will not necessarily reach the path of accumulation, this being the Theravada motivation. Being aware of suffering of samsara and not wanting to return to it leads to renunciation mind.
- The medium stage is practising the four perfect endeavours, this path will definitely gain the path of accumulation; realising that one needs wisdom to help all sentient beings is the Mahayana motivation.
- The greater or higher stage is practising the four bases of miraculous powers, leading to the next path of joining or application, which one will definitely reach in this lifetime.

We should not be deluded by culture about the intention or motivation.

We all have our own karmic link for our path, at the same time do not downgrade other schools. Even with non-Buddhism, do not disrespect other religions; sectarianism can be the worse of the discrimination mind. Different schools are suitable for different people, all are equal and just as important.

### *The small stage*

The main practices in the small stage are the 'four mindfulnesses' – the four objects of body, feeling, mind and phenomena. These can be seen as the four incorrect perceptions which create the afflicted mind. One needs to uproot these four misperceptions:

1. *Body* – in this practice, meditation is for dealing with the thought of

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uncleanliness – conventional purification, focusing on the body's blood, pus, urine, dirty aspects. Practising this meditation will lessen the attachment to the physical body.

2. *Feelings* – are all suffering: happy, neutral, and suffering – the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the suffering of the all-pervasive. Instead of adopting feelings and emotions, abandon them.
3. *Mind* – whether today or tomorrow, our ideas are constantly changing. We are attached to our ideas of why things are impermanent.
4. *Phenomena or selflessness* – as in the misperception that a bowl of flowers is permanent. We constantly see these things as real and take them seriously – whether they are treasures or junk! Then when we lose something there is disappointment. This is the misconception that phenomena exist as they appear. Phenomena are labelled and then they are dependant. Compound phenomena arise from interdependent origination; but in absolute reality they are free from the four extremes, not inherently existent.

#### *The medium stage*

The medium stage is practising the four perfect endeavours. This stage will definitely gain the path of accumulation, realising one needs wisdom to help all sentient beings, this being the Mahayana motivation.

1. Abandon non-virtuous deeds.
2. Do not let new non-virtues take root.
3. Increase one's existing virtues.
4. Cultivate new virtues that you do not have.

#### *The greater stage*

Within the greater stage, the aim is to develop bodhicitta, to truly see all sentient beings having been one's mother in all our lifetimes and to see the suffering in samsara. One thinks the only possible way to help sentient

beings is to attain buddhahood and to continually turn the wheel of Dharma. With the bodhicitta view from the depths of heart, one takes the bodhisattva vow and upholds this vow. One continually works on the six perfections, taking refuge, practising shamatha, basing everything on bodhicitta thoughts and actions. This is the Mahayana path. Whoever takes the vows of the enlightenment thought out of the great compassion, and then engages in the practices, has entered the path of accumulation.

A good practice here is:

- Recite the seven-limb prayer to increase one's virtues and decrease one's non-virtues.
- Practise the six perfections to accumulate merit and wisdom.
- Practise shamatha – study, contemplate and meditate.

When beings begin meditating on the small stage of accumulation, there is no certainty as to when they will develop the path of joining within their mindstream. When their spiritual level progresses to the medium stage of accumulation, it is certain that they will progress to the path of joining within a definite time frame. Once they develop the greater stage of accumulation, they will attain the path of joining within their current lifetime.

It is said that whoever has taken the vows of the enlightenment thought out of great compassion and engages in the practices has entered the path of accumulation. There are many practices we must perform once we enter this path. There are numerous qualities which must be possessed by the person practising this path, and these may be subsumed into the following five principal categories:

1. maintaining proper morality
2. restraining the senses
3. knowing how to limit one's intake of food
4. being industrious in the sitting practices, by abstaining from sleeping at dawn and in the early part of the night
5. joyfully abiding in introspection – being aware of what should and

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should not be done.

#### Maintaining proper morality

This means one must hold the vows one has taken as a monk, nun or lay person.

#### Restraining the senses

This means using wisdom to understand that whatever we perceive through our senses, such as forms through our eyes and sounds through our ears, is really empty by nature. With regard to method, it means that we always purify our actions and transform them into the quality of enlightenment. For example: when we walk down the street, we can purify this activity by the thought, 'As I walk down this street, may all sentient beings enter the path of enlightenment', and when we close the door, 'May all sentient beings close the door to the lower realms'. Thus we can purify objects encountered by our senses.

#### Knowing how to limit one's intake of food

This means not taking food and drink with excessive desirous attachment and also limiting our intake. In other words, we must have the correct perception about why we are eating. We must bear in mind that we are eating to sustain the body in order to carry out the practices and to feed the various types of worms living inside it and so on. In such ways we can develop the appropriate attitude towards food and lessen our attachment to it.

#### Being industrious in the sitting practices, by abstaining from sleeping at dawn and in the early part of the night

Instead of sleeping excessively, we should devote part of our waking hours, such as the early evening and early morning, to meditation. We should meditate with a very stable mind on the impurities of the human body, the four strongly placed mindfulness (mindfulness of body, feelings, mind and

Dharma) or the various practices of the enlightenment thought.

Joyfully abiding in introspection; being aware of what should and should not be done:

A person on this path should possess not only mindfulness but also awareness or introspection. At any time when he engages in any action, he should be aware whether the deed is concordant with his morality or not and whether it will accrue favourable or unfavourable results. He should apply this introspection during the performance of the deed and carry it out with this proper understanding.

In other words, the second path, translated here as the path of joining or application, refers to the meditation uniting us with the realisation of the state of ultimate reality, which will arise on the path of seeing. The main practices on the path of accumulation are to listen to the doctrine, study it and contemplate the contents of the teachings, while upholding one's morality.

The Sanskrit term of the path of accumulation is 'sambharamarga.' As to its etymological meaning, 'sambara' means constantly practising or accumulating virtuous deeds again and again, while 'marga' means path.

## The path of joining or application

The path of joining or application is a higher gateway or path to liberation in which nonconceptualising wisdom is cultivated through generic characteristics (that is, conceptual thought), based on what was previously achieved on the path of accumulation. At this stage one has not yet attained the actual realisation of emptiness or selflessness, but there is a clearer mental vision of it, just as we can know about a certain place before we have been there. In other words, although one does not yet have the actual direct realisation of emptiness or selflessness, one can meditate about it and work on the meaning.

There are three paths of joining: the small, the intermediate and the great.

1. When there is no definite time as to when one will attain the path of seeing, which is the next path, this is known as the small path of joining.



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2. On the intermediate path of joining, there is a definite time frame for attaining the path of seeing.
3. When one is on the great path of joining or application, one will attain the path of seeing within the current lifetime. The path of joining is also divided into four, according to the manner in which reality is realised.

a.heat

b.peak

c.patient acceptance

d.the most excellent mundane dharma.

#### *Heat*

An ancient example of why this is named ‘heat’ is just before one attains enlightenment: one’s mind needs heat to lighten up. This is clear light of non-conceptual primordial reality (wisdom), one now has the complete confidence to have a stable state of mind, this being the first sign of being close to enlightenment. Consider the nature of water: if at the end of washing dishes the water is dirty, and we then filter that water, it becomes drinkable. The more one filters the mind the more clarity this will bring. One may not see objectlessness, yet the mind becomes clearer. The five sense consciousnesses are mostly looking outwards, to a physical object, not being able to look inward towards the mind. The mental consciousness though sees the mind. Our virtuousness is the principal mind, this being the path of joining. The principal mind on the path of joining is the mental consciousness.

During this stage of heat, one continues to meditate with a clearer vision of emptiness. One still possesses only the generic realisation of emptiness, which will not develop actual nonconceptual realisation until the path of seeing. Heat occurs as a sign heralding the arising of nonconceptual insight wisdom, just as heat generated by rubbing two sticks together heralds the ignition of fire.

### *Peak*

This is the last stage of any uncertainty, for beyond this, one has a very stable mind. For up to this time, one can still have the wrong view, after proceeding on this part, it will be impossible to have wrong view. This is quite a borderline time. The object aspect, not the subject aspect, is the *Four Noble Truths*. The difference being there is more clarity. The cause is karma, the condition is the defiled mind. The defilements are the cause of karma, the direct cause of karma is the action of the mind, this is both the primary and secondary mind. The truth of cessation, one thinks to attain nirvana, yet nirvana is just a level. Parting from the first and second *Noble Truths*: Suffering and Origin of Suffering, is to attain the need of Truth of Path. The nonconceptual/undefiled mind - there is nothing there to grasp. The object of the path of joining is the *Four Noble Truths*.

The clear vision of the generic realisation of selflessness is progressively intensified. In other words, the mind is being steadied in this meditation. It is called 'peak' because it is the last stage at which one's unwholesome deeds remain shaky; from this time onwards, one's wholesome deeds become stabilised.

The *Abhidharmakosha* explains this as the peak from which the root of one's virtuous deeds will never be cut by erroneous views - in other words, by disbelief in the law of karma and result.

### *Patient acceptance*

There is now no fear of emptiness or selflessness. One knows there is nothing coming, nothing going, there is nothing to lose. That all is created by the conceptual mind. There is now no object, that is created by the mind. Objectlessness is the meditation. The patience of acceptance is the meditation of fearlessness.

On this stage, the practitioner is no longer alarmed by emptiness and develops patience regarding the meditation itself.

### *Most excellent mundane dharma*

This is a supreme state of a samsaric or ordinary mind. The fundamental condition for nonconceptual thought is only primordial wisdom, for without this one cannot develop an enlightened mind, this then can be just only a moment before enlightenment.

In this fourth stage, known as the most excellent mundane dharma, one's realisation of emptiness is still not completely accomplished. Although one has perfected all the different types of worldly dharmas, one has not attained the transcendental wisdom realising emptiness. It is named this because it is the highest factor attainable by worldly people. It acts as the prominent condition for attaining the undefiled path of seeing.

The Sanskrit term for path of joining is 'prayogamarga'. 'Pra' is for 'paramārtha,' which means 'ultimate truth' or 'ultimate reality.' 'Yoga' means 'to join'. 'Marga' means 'path.' Therefore 'paryogamarga' means the 'path which joins to the path of seeing,' which directly sees the dharmadhatu, the ultimate reality.

### The path of seeing

The paths of accumulation and joining are worldly paths, whereas the path of seeing is the enlightened path.

The definition of the path of seeing is the first arising of the clear perceptual insight on the approach to liberation, the first time directly seeing the dharmadhatu (the first bhumi). The dharmadhatu in particular is free from the four extremes. For example: one may see only part of the moon, at the first bhumi level they can see the whole moon. Hence, all levels may see emptiness, the Mahayana sees the dharmadhatu, the first bhumi sees the whole moon.

There are the three divisions on the path of seeing:

1. shravakayana
2. pratyekabuddha

3. bodhisattva.

The nature of the path of seeing is actually seeing the abandonment and how to cultivate the seeing path. Generally, what to be eliminated is the restless mind. What makes a difference in the end is the intention.

1. The worldly view is materialistic and involves technology, so 'happiness' here is comfort.
2. The Dharma view sees the defilement or desire mind, the restlessness mind; so from this view one sees the lack of these so-called comforts.

Resting in the virtuous mind is the undefiled mind, the defiled mind is restless. The mind free from afflictions is the resting mind. The greatest virtuous action is the realisation of emptiness.

There are two types of the defiled mind:

1. the imputed defiled mind
2. the spontaneously born defiled mind.

*The imputed defiled mind* – In studying some religions that state the world has been created by god, this is an imputed defiled mind. This cannot be proven by logic, so it cannot be the truth, this is very important.

*The spontaneous born defiled mind* – We see ourselves and others and judge what is good and bad; one needs to abandon this.

There are principal and the secondary defilements. If one abandons the principal defilement, then automatically one can abandon the secondary defilement.

The principal defilements have six root defilements and the secondary defilements have 20. The principal defilements are the strongest and the root of all the defilements. The secondary defilements, such as in stinginess, jealousy, laziness, and shamelessness, are not as strong.

The six principal root defilements are:

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1. attachment / clinging
2. anger
3. arrogance
4. ignorance
5. doubt
6. view.

These mean:

*attachment* – the desire to obtain an object.

*anger* – one's desire is so deep then one must fight for it; the anger arises if one cannot get it.

*arrogance* – showing off, one looks down on others.

*ignorance* – not being able to see what is really happening, not able to understand or know.

*doubt* – the indecision mind.

*view* – there are five subdivisions:

1. *transitory correction view* – that the aggregates are not a single entity, one on top of the other, likened to a jigsaw puzzle and impermanent. The correction of impermanence is that we are continually dying as in transient. We look at form, feeling, et cetera, and the aggregates and think, this is 'I'.
2. *the view of extreme* – nihilism. If we think that the self and aggregates are not one, then we fall into nihilism.
3. *the supreme view* – We think we know the supreme view, but it is the wrong view; examples are the view that self is permanent or that self does not exist after death.
4. *the supreme conduct and the ethical view* – the wrong view as in being based on religion. Saying that one's imprints can be cleansed by walking is likened to walking as a cow. This point has an unethical view yet is different from a wrong view.
5. *the wrong view* – The conventional point of view is thinking there is no point in being virtuous for it doesn't bring happiness; thinking there is

no point in believing in the Triple Gem, one can commit non-virtuous actions for nothing will happen, it doesn't bring suffering, et cetera. The wrong view of the absolute point of view is that emptiness is nothingness, that there is no way everything is empty.

How can we abandon these root defilements? There is seeing the abandonment and there is the abandonment of the defilement. The shravakayana point of view is that the present antidote can abandon the present defilement. The Mahayana point of view is that there is a future antidote to abandon future defilements; the antidote is in the present. The uncommon Madyamika view is conventional and absolute. In the absolute state there is no object to abandon. There is no subject to abandon at that time in the meditative state, the dharmadhatu state. For in the dharmadhatu state nothing to attain nothing to reject. On the conventional level, the conceptual mind says there is no object, no subject. In the absolute dharmadhatu, there is no object or subject, so there is no antidote. In the conventional state the conceptual exists, so the antidote is needed.

The path of seeing is not just for humans, for in the Mahayana point of view, some animals can attain this too. Within the obscuration defilement, there is such a strong desire to do things and achieve material gain that one cannot hear the Dharma or meditate. Within anger one cannot hear the Dharma. When one is so ignorant one is in a barbaric state of mind, so all of these states are completely controlled by the defiled mind, hence they cannot hear the Dharma. The obscuration of karma is the committing of heinous crimes, the mind is so negative one cannot have any interest in the Dharma. Ripening obscuration is the karmic result. For example, animal beings karmically are unable to hear the Dharma for their mind capacity is not sufficient. If they are alone, they cannot cultivate the path of seeing.

Consider how terribly hard it is to be born human with enough good fortune to hear the precious Dharma, yet so easy to be born in one of the other categories.

In the form and formless realms, the god beings cannot take the path of seeing for they are not near the Dharma. Humans are born so they can

practise the Dharma, yet others, such as demi-gods and gods, are born with no suffering, so they have no need to practise the Dharma.

The uncommon Mahayana view is that some nagas, hungry ghosts, can go to the path of seeing. So, what kind of mind can be on the path of seeing?

The dhyana minds need both shamatha and vipassana, but some desire minds cannot develop vipassana.

- The path of accumulation is likened to hearing about the moon.
- The path of joining or application is seeing a picture of the moon.
- The path of seeing is actually seeing the moon for the first time.

With regard to the manner of realising the objects of the path of seeing, practitioners who possess the Hinayana path of seeing realise the selflessness of person through focusing on the Four Noble Truths. Practitioners who possess the pratyeka path of seeing, in addition to realising the selflessness of person, realise the selflessness of the outer objective aspect. Bodhisattvas on the path of seeing realise the selflessness of person, the selflessness of the outer object phenomena and also the selflessness of the perceiver. In other words, their realisation of selflessness or emptiness is complete.

The Sanskrit term for the path of seeing is 'darshanamarga'. 'Darshana' signifies that one sees or realises the dharmadhatu, which was not previously seen. In other words, it means seeing the real nature of the Four Noble Truths, or the emptiness of all phenomena, for the first time. According to the Mahayana, when one attains the Mahayana path of seeing, one attains the first bhumi; that is, the first arya bodhisattva stage. The Hinayana realist schools do not accept the ten bodhisattva levels. However according to them, one becomes an arya or noble being on gaining the Mahayana path of seeing.

## The path of meditation

The path of meditation involves habituating the mind-stream in the path of special meditative absorption. In other words, one makes meditative absorption a habitual pattern so that it becomes part of one's being. There

are two types of the path of meditation:

1. the mundane path of meditation (worldly)
2. the supramundane path of meditation (beyond worldly).

The mundane path of meditation is shared by both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, but the supramundane path is exclusive to Buddhists. Ordinary humans and other beings have the path of meditation, but on the mundane level there is no such thing as the path of seeing. Since it is evident that we have all been born in the form and formless realms many times, the mundane path of meditation is common to all ordinary beings. This is because the causes of birth in the form and formless realms are mundane meditative absorptions. The mundane path of meditation is shamatha. But shamatha is essential also to the supramundane path because it is the essential base for developing all the higher paths to liberation.

This special meditative absorption needs to be a habitual pattern, one must familiarise with samadhi for the following reasons:

- As mentioned, to make this meditative absorption habitual.
- Beyond worldly meditation is unique and uncommon.
- The first bhumi onwards is shamatha and vipassana which are non-separable, whereas non-enlightened shamatha is the worldly or mundane path. To achieve these two goals, one must have both shamatha and vipassana. Whereas vipassana can only arise from shamatha.
- All worldly meditation has a meditation path.
- The path of worldly meditation does not see the truth and is there for both Buddhist and non-Buddhist.
- Shamatha is a worldly path.
- The non-enlightened shamatha is the worldly path, both in the form and formless realms.

Broadly speaking, the mundane path of meditation consists of shamatha, not penetrative insight (vipassana). Practitioners in all three yanas must



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develop shamatha in order to attain the final goal. In the Bodhicaryavatara, the chapter on concentration is taught before the wisdom chapter, indicating that vipassana is based on a strong foundation of shamatha. Furthermore, Bodhisattva Shantideva said: 'Wisdom together with shamatha enables a person to abandon all the defilements'. Therefore, one should strive to acquire a strong practice of shamatha.

Now let's look briefly at these four categories: person, mind, intention, and activities:

*Person* – There are the three lower realm beings, beings in different continents, the desire god beings and the form and formless realm beings. These beings are not able to cultivate the path of meditation. The great Brahmin state is quite an arrogant mind, hearing the Dharma will then be quite shallow, one needs a humble mind to hear the depth of the Dharma.

*Mind* – This is the only way to cultivate the path of meditation.

*Intention* – All phenomena are the object of shamatha, whereas the busy mind is constantly changing the object so one needs to slow the mind down, to concentrate on the one object, being extremely important to stay with the one object. It is very important to remember the object because the secondary mind is where all the defilements are. The secondary mind can get very distracted, so if one develops mindfulness, it can help the secondary mind; this then helps the primary or principal mind. The secondary mind needs to focus on the object so the mind is occupied. As long as one remembers the object, we cannot think of other things, like the past or the future. The primary mind cannot see the past and future, so if the secondary mind is placed on the object, then one can develop the still-mind. If the mind is moving from object to object this is not meditating, just as if the body is not flexible, one needs to practise yoga!

*Activities* – A vigilant mind keeps the discipline going, keeping the mind in check. The main obstacles are the sinking mind and the wandering mind.

- The sinking mind is unclear of the object, then this becomes a habit and develops a dull mind. The antidote is to inspire oneself, to think about the good fortune in being born as a human and the excellent opportunity

to practise and hear the Dharma; this can wake one up and provide inspiration.

- The wandering mind goes from past to future; this is not meditation. This is harmless compared to the negative mind, but it is not helping one's practice of shamatha. The antidote here is to think about impermanence and how one is wasting one's precious time, for every single moment passing by is priceless.

In the higher the stages of shamatha one uses less effort. For example, when in the eighth stage of meditation, the ninth stage will be effortless. Keep up one's experience; as one continues the body gets lighter, the mental condition changes.

When the preparatory steps of each state have been completed, the respective actual meditative absorption is perfected. At least one if not all of these worldly actual meditations must be accomplished in order to make the mind firm and establish a proper state of one-pointedness.

When we speak of shamatha and vipassana, we have a concept of separate minds. They are not separate, neither are they one, but the less one 'stirs the water', the very shamatha becomes the vipassana. For example, consider a plant and a flower. The plant equals shamatha, the flower equals vipassana; they are not separate, but not one.

Supramundane meditation involves habituating the mind in the realisation of ultimate reality, to stabilise the realisation gained during the path of seeing.

In beyond worldly (transcendental) meditation, the enlightened meditation is defined as already attaining the dharmadhatu; the object is the same as being on the first bhumi as in the path of seeing – it is the non-dualistic view. Again, there is a division between the shravaka, pratyekabuddha and bodhisattva levels. Mahayana meditation is on the conventional and the absolute view, whereas the shravaka is on emptiness. The object is the four noble truths, each having the nature of four aspects, so there are sixteen objects to meditate on. The truth of the nature of suffering conventionally are impermanence and suffering, whereas the absolute meditation is on emptiness and selflessness. The Truth of the origin of suffering is that dualistically one must learn or

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study, contemplate and then meditate. The Mahayana is realising the supreme reality, the supreme absolute, being free from the selflessness of phenomena. There is no contained or container. Being free of the four extremes, one must meditate on this supreme truth. Since beginningless time up until this present moment the mind is habitually used to the grasping of things, the more one meditates there is a realisation of the supreme truth, then one is able to let go of this grasping, taking more time in meditation.

The path of meditation removes two obscurations:

1. the obscuration of the dualistic mind
2. the obscuration of obscuration, the non-dualistic mind.

The path of seeing recognises this. When the greedy mind arises, one must remember emptiness or if the mind is meaningless or a problem arises conventionally, remember one can do many things, anything is possible. The meditative state of dharmadhatu is being free from the four extremes, then in meditation and in the post-meditative state the object is merit and wisdom. This is the path of accomplishment or the path on no more learning.

Again, the three destinations are:

1. arhatship or shravaka – one will be there for a very long time
2. pratyekabuddha or solitary realiser – is an individual environment
3. buddhahood is the clarity aspect – the alaya consciousness is the nature free from the four extremes, the Buddha nature, and where the Buddha physically sits in Bodhgaya – the demon is gone, free of the demon mind. The demon or mara is the obscuration, so one has had the realisation to abandon this.

The supramundane meditation involves habitualising the mind in the realisation of ultimate reality, to stabilise the realisation gained during the path of seeing. Bodhisattvas who have gained the supramundane path of meditation may also engage in the mundane path of meditation in the post-meditative session, during which many thoughts arise in the

mind, either related or unrelated to the supramundane meditation session. The supramundane path of meditation seeks to habituate the mind in the realisation of emptiness, so that it adheres to the mind not only during meditation but also in the course of daily life.

With respect to the 'things to be abandoned' on the path of meditation, there are variations among the three yanas. According to the Hinayana schools, there are fourteen defilements or 'things to be abandoned' on the path of meditation. According to the Madyamika school, the Mahayana paths of meditation (second to the tenth bhumis) discard only the obscuration of phenomena, since the bodhisattva has already uprooted the obscuration of all kinds of defilements while on the path of seeing, before developing his mind-stream into the path of meditation.

The Sanskrit term for the path of meditation is 'bhavanmarga'. 'Bhavana' means becoming familiarised with what one has previously realised or seen, that is, emptiness or selflessness.

### The path of no more learning:

Buddhahood is attaining the diamond state, there is no more to cleanse, whereas the mind is completely cleansed. The dharmadhatu state of mind is known as 'double purity'.

1. The buddha and sentient beings have the same nature of mind, yet the buddhahood state is free from the four extremes.
2. Through this path we have purified the obscurations – meaning we have cleaned the junk that has been obstructing the real nature of the mind.

The path of seeing is uprooted, there is more meditative absorption and the completion of cleansing the mind as to help all mother sentient beings.

This fifth path is the path of complete accomplishment, known as the path of no more learning. It has three divisions:

1. the path of no more learning of the shravakayana – by attaining the

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Hinayana destination becoming a shravaka arhat

2. the path of no more learning of the pratyekabuddha – by attaining the pratyeka becoming a pratyekabuddha
3. the path of no more learning of the Mahayana – also known as complete and perfect buddhahood, being the final destination for Mahayana practitioners.

In brief, shravaka arhatship is achieved in all the realms of desire realm, form realm and formless realm – with the exception of certain states within the three realms.

‘Shravaka arhats’ are not all the same. If a shravaka arhat is engaged in the actual meditative absorption of one of the form realms, then in addition to being free from defilements, he also possesses other qualities, such as clairvoyance, the ability to perform miraculous displays and so forth. But the qualities of the shravakas are limited compared with those of the buddhas.

‘Pratyekabuddhas’ are higher than shravaka arhats. There are two kinds of pratyekas: those who mingle with crowds and those who isolate themselves from others. The isolated, or rhinoceros-like pratyekabuddhas isolate themselves not only physically but also vocally. When they go out to beg alms, they impart teachings to disciples and patrons by performing miracles. Pratyekabuddhas come into this world when all the sangha and shravaka disciples of the Buddha have left and the future Buddha has not yet appeared.

Even when Hinayana schools describe the attainment of buddhahood through the path of the bodhisattva, they mention only the selflessness of person. ‘Selflessness of phenomena’ is therefore a term used exclusively by the Mahayana schools.

According to the Hinayana tenets, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni realised only the selflessness of person. He attained buddhahood on the basis of a human body and was born in the royal caste. Hinayana does not accept any other buddha besides Shakyamuni. With regard to Buddha’s knowledge, they accept that he is omniscient, but they claim that he knows everything step by step. Hinayana schools say further that shravaka arhats, pratyekabuddhas and buddhas cease when they die, and there is no continuation.

According to Mahayana, a buddha has three bodies or kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. The Hinayana schools, on the other hand, do not accept three kayas. According to Mahayana – or, more specifically, the Madhyamika school – complete buddhahood is attained within a very pure realm called ‘great akanishtha’, on the basis of the enjoyment body or sambhogakaya. From that body, the buddha emanates various forms, such as Shakyamuni Buddha. Manifestations of the Buddha are not exclusive; they will arise in every realm. In terms of abandonment, the complete and perfect buddha has abandoned all possible obscurations along with their residues.

With respect to the etymology of the phrase ‘the path of no more learning’, the Sanskrit term for this path is ‘asaiksa-marga’, which means ‘completion’. This path brings both the elimination of the things to be eliminated and the knowledge of phenomena. Therefore, it is ‘the path of completion’. Since it is free from defilements, it is also known as ‘free from defilement’. Even though the path of no more learning does not abandon anything, since there is nothing left to abandon, it is also called ‘the antidote,’ because it prevents the defilements from returning.

## The ten bhumis of the noble bodhisattvas

In Mahayana Buddhism, the ten bhumis refer to the ten specific levels of realisation that a bodhisattva progresses through on their way to enlightenment. The five paths can be thought of as general paths and the ten bhumis describe the levels of the bodhisattva’s journey.

*Bhumi 1: extreme joy* – The bodhisattva unifies method and wisdom for the first time. There is the perfection of generosity. There is great confidence ‘Oh now I am on the path to Buddhahood, to great joy’. In the past you wanted to help sentient beings but you were limited. The bodhisattva is now free to provide help.

*Bhumi 2: Stainless* – The perfection of ethical discipline. There are no differences in the meditative state but there are differences between bhumi 1 and 2 in the post meditative state.

*Bhumi 3: Luminous* – Khenchen Appey Rinpoche said in Clarifying the

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Sages Intent that the third bhumi is like a fire consuming the fuel of knowable objects. It is likened to the sun. The bodhisattva attains the perfection of patience.

*Bhumi 4: Radiant Light* – Wisdom is like a fire. The copper coloured light first seen in the third bhumi increases and becomes even more intense. The bodhisattva now engages the perfection of diligence.

*Bhumi 5: Difficult to Conquer* – The bodhisattva at the fifth bhumi cannot be defeated by maras. Nothing can destroy their intention to help others. The bodhisattva's meditation is stabilised.

*Bhumi 6: Directly manifest* – The bodhisattva abides in the perfection of wisdom in the sixth bhumi. True grasping has been cut off but the residues of grasping and other conceptual grasping remain.

*Bhumi 7: Gone far* – This means gone far from conceptual grasping and discrimination. This ability emerges in the sixth bhumi and resolves in the seventh bhumi. On this bhumi the bodhisattva attains the perfection of methods. The bodhisattva is able to enter into and arise from meditative absorption.

*Bhumi 8: Unshakeable or Immoveable* – This is the perfection of prayer or supplication. All prayers are answered. There is no reversing and the bodhisattva will go direct to Buddhahood. There is no conceptual grasping from the eighth bhumi onwards. There is no need to remain in meditation any longer.

*Bhumi 9: Good Intelligence* – where the bodhisattva accomplishes perfect understanding of individual dharmas, individual meanings, characteristics, individual confidence.

*Bhumi 10: Cloud of doctrine* – accomplishes the perfection of wisdom. It is like rain falling from the clouds and helping the crops to grow. Through his wisdom, the bodhisattva bestows teachings and those receiving them develop virtuous seeds.

The Vajrayana tradition is the 'diamond' vehicle or the 'indestructible' vehicle. It is a tantric vehicle that cuts through swiftly. It emerged from the Mahayana tradition. There is a more detailed classification of Vajrayana into four schools – kriya yoga, carya yoga, yoga tantra and anuttatarayoga.

The first three – kriyayoga, charyayoga, and yogatantra – are called the outer ascetic vehicles because they emphasise ascetic conduct such as ritual purification. There are various empowerments or initiations by a guru that one must have in each of the different schools.

## The four Vajrayana schools

*Kriyayoga or action tantras* – concern mainly external conduct, for purification and protection. This is usually taught for practitioners of lower ability. There are water and crown empowerments which ripen into the dharmakaya and the rupakaya. The view is that the nature of mind itself is the wisdom of empty clarity and is ultimately beyond the extremes. One views the aspects of relative experience as the characteristics of the deity. Ultimately one attains enlightenment as one of the three buddha families, Vairocana (enlightened body), Amitabha (enlightened speech) and Akshobhya (enlightened mind).

*Carya tantra or performance tantra* – places equal emphasis on the outer actions of body and speech and the inner cultivation of samadhi. There are five empowerments (vajra, bell, name, water and crown) and various samayas. Charya focuses on skilful means such as visualisation of the deity, and meditates on the syllable, mudra and form of the deity. Non-conceptual meditation is on absolute bodhicitta. One attains the level of a vajradhara of the four buddha families: Vairocana, Amitabha, Akshobhya and Ratnasambhava.

*Yoga tantra* – emphasises inner yogic stabilisation and meditation upon reality rather than external activities. It is matured through the five empowerments (water, crown, vajra, bell and name) as well as the six empowerments of the master (the empowerment of irreversibility, seeing secret reality, authorisation, prophecy, confirmation and encouragement). The view is that all phenomena are beyond conceptual elaboration – clear light. Yoga tantra involves the practices of meditation, the use of mudras, deity yoga and use of subtle energy channels and centres (chakras). One attains enlightenment as the four buddha families mentioned previously and Amoghasiddhi.



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*Anuttatarayoga or highest yoga tantra* – emphasises inner yoga and teaches the path of passionately pursuing wisdom, that all phenomena are the creative display of the unity between absolute space and wisdom. It works with the subtle energy systems of the body- the chakras, channels and winds. In meditation, one practises non conceptual samadhi and the conceptual deity practice of mandalas and mantras. One focuses on subtle energy, the clear light level of the mind. One accomplishes the five paths and ten stages to become the level of Samantabhadra.

## 4. A Vajrayana path: the Lam Dre

Whilst the 'lam dre' teachings also known as the 'path with its result', are espoused by the Kagyu and Gelug schools, it is the Sakya school that we draw on here to explain it.

The 'triple vision' is the path of lam dre which lays out the ground, the path and the result. The lam dre means that the path includes the result in that, we use the result to attain the path. Lam dre is an entire Vajrayana teaching. You could see it as an entire and complete meditative system with the view that the result of the practice is contained within the path.

### History of the lam dre

Within the Sakya tradition, the lam dre is the 'path with the result'. It is the path I follow and it is considered a complete path to enlightenment which needs a teacher or guru and which has empowerments and transmissions.

The history of the lam dre begins with Virupa. Virupa came from a royal family in what is now Bangladesh in the sixth century. He renounced his royal possessions and entered Nalanda Monastery. He eventually became the abbot of Nalanda. He taught Mahayana by day, but by night he practised the secret Mantrayana or anuyoga practices and he did this for a very long time. Even though he practised for a very long time he didn't experience any progress. He decided he didn't have any karmic connections with the teachings so decided to abandon the Mantrayana practice and devote himself full time to the Mahayana teachings.

On that very night he saw a vision of Vajra Nairatmaya who told him

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that his decision to abandon his Mantrayana practise was wrong, that she was his karmic link and he needed to continue on the Mantrayana path. Shortly afterwards and for six nights in succession he saw the pure vision and received great empowerments and realisations. On the first night he attained the first bhumi and on each following night, one bhumi after another, until he reached the sixth bhumi. He began the Hevajra lam dre system, became a great Mahasiddha and performed a great service for the Buddhadhama.

His followers were Krishnapa and Dombipa. Virupa's pith instructions in the form of Vajra Words, a short teaching on the Tripitaka and Vajrayana, were passed onto Krishnapa and onto his followers. The instructions were passed to Gayadhara who went to Tibet and gave this teaching to a great translator Drogmi Lotsawa who gave teachings to his disciples, among whom was Seton Kunrik. Seton Kunrik attained high realisation and passed the teaching to Zhangton Chobar who gave them to lama Sakyapa who was born of the Khon family. Khon Nagarakshita was one of the first Tibetans to receive full ordination as a Buddhist monk.

They eventually started the Sakya order and Khon Konchag Gyalpo, a disciple of Drogmi Lotsawa, built a monastery in 1073. He was the father of the great lama Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. Sachen Kunga Nyingpo received the teachings from his father and Zhangton Chobar. Zhangton Chobar said he should not disclose even the name of the teachings for 18 years. During this time, he studied and mastered the teachings. At one point in the 18 years, he was ill and forgot many of the teachings. Remember these were strictly oral teachings so he became very worried. His teacher had already passed away. Sachen Kunga Nyingpo prayed and Zhangton Chobar came to him in a dream and gave him the teachings again. Virupa, founder of the lam dre teachings, also appeared to him. Kunga Nyingpo gave these teachings to his sons and disciples and they have continued to the present day.

## Whispered lineages

You can see from the history that there is an uninterrupted lineage of the Lam Dre from Virupa to today. We call it a whispered lineage because it is oral uninterrupted blessings passed down through the great lamas to this day, this is the Clear Vision by the Master Virupa up to present day Sakya Trizin Rinpoche 42nd and 43rd and so forth in an unbroken lineage.

Whenever you are listening and you get a tiny bit of wisdom of the great lineage holders and of all the great masters, you are connecting your mental mind stream to all these great masters. You are a child of the lineage. But you never remain a child, you grow up and one day you become a parent of this family. So when you grow up then you can produce many children to the Dharma in the future. This is a good way to have a family, to produce a family in other ways you have such a hard time and don't know how to survive as children can be such a headache. This is good way to have a family!

## Triple Vision

The triple vision is the path of lam dre that is the path that includes the result. In it, we use the result to attain the path. Lam dre is an entire Vajrayana teaching. You could see it as a meditative system with the view that the result of the practice is contained within the path.

According to the Sakya masters, in the triple vision, there are three levels of spiritual perception:

1. the impure vision, which concerns all that we have learnt thus far in our course – the nature of suffering, impermanence and the illusory nature of phenomena culminating in renunciation a sense of dispassionate disenchantment.
2. the vision of experience, comprising loving kindness, compassion and the thought of enlightenment which was taught primarily during our second Mahayana year
3. the pure vision, which comprises the instructions on the enlightened

body, the enlightened voice and the enlightened mind. This is our concern here.

## The pure vision

We have covered many of the topics of the impure vision during the Hinayana year, and the vision of experience during the Mahayana year. Here we take excerpts from Ngorchen Konchog Lhundrub *The Instructions on the Pure Vision in Order to Produce Enthusiasm* to explain about the pure vision. This is the final concern of our Vajrayana year.

It may be asked, 'Well then, what is the need to diligently enter into the path of Mantrayāna and treat each experience individually?'

(The answer is) to gain the result of Buddhahood, as stated in the *Root Treatise of the Vajra Verses*.

*For the ornamental wheel of the Sugata's inexhaustible  
enlightened body, voice, and mind is the pure vision.*

Moreover, 'Sugata' (i.e., the Buddha) means having thoroughly gone through the path of the two accumulations (of merit and transcendent wisdom) to the result of the four enlightened bodies. The special qualities of the Sugata are:

1. The ornamental wheel of the inexhaustible enlightened body,
2. The ornamental wheel of the inexhaustible enlightened voice,
3. The ornamental wheel of the inexhaustible enlightened mind.

## *The Ornamental Wheel of the Inexhaustible Enlightened Body*

The 'enlightened body' has two aspects: the inconceivable secret of the enlightened body and manifesting all forms. The inconceivable secret enlightened body means that the body of a Buddha is not able to be measured by anyone ...

Manifesting all forms means that, whatever form is required to disciplining those to be trained, the Buddha accordingly takes that form, such as any form from that of the excellent emanation (of the Nirmāṇakāya) to that of a rabbit,

tiger, lion, boat, raft, bridge, and the like. Having taken that form, he works for their benefit.

### *The Ornamental Wheel of the Inexhaustible Enlightened Voice*

The 'enlightened voice' also has two aspects: the inconceivable secret of the enlightened voice and manifesting all voices. The inconceivable secret of the enlightened voice means that though one hears the Buddha's speech from a short (or long) distance, such as a mile, seven miles, and so forth, the volume is not less. Manifesting all voices means that the Buddha is able to teach the Dharma in the language of each of the realms of living beings individually, such as from that of the pure language of the gods to that of serpent-spirits, demons, cannibals, and the like.

### *The Ornamental Wheel of the Inexhaustible Enlightened Mind*

The 'enlightened mind' also has two aspects: the inconceivable secret of the enlightened mind and manifesting all minds. The inconceivable secret of the enlightened mind means that no one knows all knowable objects as (the Buddha) does.

For example, though the noble Arhat Maudgalyayana, who was endowed with miraculous powers, did not know where his mother was reborn, the Buddha knew. Since none of the Arhats knew that the householder dPal-skyes was endowed with the seed of the liberation, they would not ordain him. However, the Buddha knew that during his seventh previous lifetime, dPal-skyes had been born a dog. At that time, being chased by a pig, he circumambulated a stupa and thus created a seed of virtue. Because of that, the Buddha ordained him.

Manifesting all minds means the Buddha possesses the transcendental wisdom which completely knows the nature and characteristics of all phenomena. Knowing the nature of all phenomena means knowledge and mastery over the uncontrived ultimate nature of all entities. Knowing the characteristics (of all phenomena) means knowledge of the conditional

relation of the cause and result of all phenomena, such as the reason for sharpness of a thorn, the roundness of a pea, the squareness of pha.wang stones (stones found in Tibet that are naturally square in shape. When broken, the pieces are also square in shape), the colourfulness of peacocks, and so on, without confusedly mixing them up.

With regard of the ornamental wheel, 'ornamental' means beautified. It is beautiful because the purpose of both self and others spontaneously and effortlessly arises.

'Wheel' means the wheel of transcendental activities. Having achieved full and perfect enlightenment, the Tathāgatas turned the wheel of Dharma and 100 billion sentient beings gained enlightenment. Also, each one of them taught the Dharma and caused an equal number of sentient beings to gain enlightenment. Further, each one of them taught the Dharma and caused more sentient beings to gain enlightenment, and so forth. In brief, until the world of existence is emptied, the wheel of activities for the sake of others will continue without a break.

With regard to the instructions on the pure vision, 'pure vision' means that at the time of buddhahood, through realising that all phenomena of the world of existence (saṃsāra) and of liberation (nirvāna) are the display of one's own undefiled transcendental wisdom alone, there is neither an unpleasant world to be discarded here nor a good state of liberation to be attained elsewhere. Rather, both worldly existence and liberation are seen to be of one taste (that is, nondual). Previously one was a sentient being, but through the power of practising the path, one has become a buddha; hence the mindstream of a sentient being and that of a buddha are one. Previously there was the practitioner on the path, but through that path dissolving into the result, both the path and the result are of one taste. Previously all conceptualisations were to be discarded, but through the power of habituation to discarding them, all conceptualisations are dissolved into the ultimate truth, so the conceptualisations to be discarded and their antidotes are of one taste. Moreover, one is endowed with inconceivable qualities, such as the nonduality of rejection and acceptance, the nonduality of abandonment and obtainment, the one taste of worldly existence and the state of liberation, the

one state, the appearance of one mindstream, and so on.

To contemplate the meaning of this, one should think, 'Having entered into this path of the Vajrayana and through relying upon the treatment of all experiences of the path in accordance with the teachings, I shall gain such a state of Buddhahood, which is endowed with inconceivable qualities, such as the ornamental wheel of a Sugata's inexhaustible enlightened body, voice, and mind, and the like. Thus, I shall become an unceasing wheel of transcendental activities which spontaneously and effortlessly works for the welfare of sentient beings.' Therefore, from this moment on, one should meditate with enthusiasm (that one will gain such a result).

## Guru student relationship

The guru student relationship is an important part of Vajrayana practice. The guru forms a special relationship with the student, transmits the teachings, gives empowerments and blessings and personalised guidance. The guru transmits the lineage and is a spiritual guide and mentor for the student. There is a lot to know and to look for in the guru-student relationship as background so we offer the following guidance.

The 'four reliances', a teaching attributed to the Buddha, guide us on how to approach and rely on the guru. The four reliances show how to understand the student's relationship to the Dharma generally and the guru specifically. The four reliances serve as a reminder to practitioners to approach the teachings with discernment, to seek direct experience and understanding, and to rely on wisdom rather than external authorities or ordinary consciousness.

The guru student relationship is a critical part of all this and the four reliances provide a framework for navigating the path of spiritual development and realising the true nature of reality.

We are very fortunate to have teachings from several masters on 'the four reliances'. Several versions of the four reliances are found in the Mahayana sutras, such as *The Teaching of Akshayamati* and the *Sutra of the Questions of the Naga King Anavatapta*.



## The four reliances

The four reliances are:

1. rely on the meaning, not on the words
2. rely on the Dharma, not on the individual
3. rely on wisdom, not on the ordinary mind
4. rely on the definitive meaning, not on provisional meaning or interpretive meaning.

The order of the reliances may differ in different texts, but this is not important.

In the following paragraphs we will outline the four reliances, firstly showing Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche's direct text then secondly, drawing on several other masters' commentaries to explain the text. A little about each of these masters. Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche (1846-1912) was a student of the famed Nyingma master, Patrul Rinpoche, and was the principal teacher of Shechen Gyaltsap Rinpoche who went on to teach beloved teachers such as Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro. In this booklet we show excerpts from Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche's *The Sword of Wisdom*.

We also draw on video commentaries on the four reliances by His Holiness Ratna Vajra Rinpoche the 42nd Sakya Trizin. His Holiness bestowed this teaching by video at the request of his devoted students. His Holiness the 42nd Kyabgon Gongma Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, is the eldest son of His Holiness Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). He is considered one of the most highly qualified lineage masters of Tibetan Buddhism. Renowned for his erudition and the clarity of his teachings, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin the prestigious Khon family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding masters.

Jamgon [Mipham Rinpoche](#) says in *The Sword of Wisdom*:

*If you do not have such understanding,  
Then, like a blind man leaning on his staff,*

*You can rely on fame, mere words or what is easy to understand,  
And go against the logic of the Four Reliances.*

***1. Do not rely on the individual, but on the Dharma***

*Therefore, do not rely on individuals,  
But rely upon the Dharma.  
Freedom comes from the genuine path that is taught,  
Not the one who teaches it.*

*When the teachings are well presented,  
It does not matter what the speaker is like.  
Even the bliss-gone buddhas themselves  
Appear as butchers and such like to train disciples.  
If he contradicts the meaning of the Mahayana and so on,  
Then, however eloquent a speaker may seem,  
He will bring you no benefit,  
Like a demon appearing in a buddha's form.*

***2. Do not rely on the words, but on the meaning***

*Whenever you study or contemplate the Dharma,  
Rely not on the words, but on the meaning.  
If the meaning is understood, then regardless of the speaker's style,  
There will be no conflict.  
When you have understood what it was  
The speaker intended to communicate,  
If you then continue to think about each word and expression,  
It is as if you've found your elephant but now go in search of its footprints.  
If you misinterpret what is said and then think of more words,  
You'll never stop till you run out of thoughts,  
But all the while you're only straying further and further from the meaning.  
Like children playing, you'll only end up exhausted.  
Even for a single word like 'and' or 'but',  
When taken out of context, there's no end to what it might mean.  
Yet if you understand what is meant,  
Then with that the need for the word is finished.  
When the finger points to the moon,*

*The childish will look at the finger itself.  
And fools attached to mere language,  
May think they've understood, but they will find it difficult.*

**3. Do not rely on the provisional meaning, but on the definitive meaning**

*When it comes to the meaning,  
You should know what is provisional and what is definitive,  
And rely not on any provisional meaning,  
But only on the meaning that is true definitively.  
The omniscient one himself in all his wisdom,  
Taught according to students' capacities and intentions,  
Presenting vehicles of various levels  
Just like the rungs of a ladder.  
Wisely, he spoke with certain intentions in mind,  
As with the eight kinds of implied and indirect teachings.  
If these were to be taken literally, they might be invalidated,  
But they were taught for specific reasons.*

**4. Do not rely on the ordinary mind, but rely on wisdom**

*When taking the definitive meaning into experience,  
Do not rely upon the ordinary dualistic mind.  
That chases after words and concepts,  
But rely upon non-dual wisdom itself.  
That which operates with conceptual ideas,  
Is the ordinary mind, whose nature involves perceiver and perceived.  
All that is conceived in this way is false,  
And will never touch upon the actual nature of reality.  
Any idea of real or unreal, both or neither—  
Any such concept, however it's conceived—is still only a concept,  
And whatever ideas we hold in mind,  
They are still within the domain of Mara.  
This has been stated in the sutras.  
It is not by any assertion or denial.  
That we will put an end to concepts.  
But once we see without rejecting or affirming, there is freedom.*

*Although it is without any subject object grasping,  
There is naturally occurring wisdom that illuminates itself,  
And all ideas of existence, non-existence, both and neither have ceased  
completely—*

*This is said to be supreme primordial wisdom.*

The definitive meaning can either be understood conceptually, by means of ideas, or it can be experienced directly as the object of non-conceptual awareness wisdom. As long as you are caught up in the conceptual extremes of negation and affirmation, existence and non-existence and so on, you have not gone beyond the realm of the ordinary mind.

His Holiness the 42nd Kyabgon Gongma Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, gives an account from *Amanya Sutra*, where Akshyamatri asked the Buddha to give the teaching on the four reliances. These four reliances are very important, for without us knowing this teaching it is difficult for us to understand the actual teachings.

His Holiness explains that when we say reliance, it means ‘on which we rely’, or ‘in which we should accept’, or ‘in which we should believe’, or ‘in which we should trust’, and ‘in which we should not trust or believe’. This is the meaning of reliance and not reliance.

The Buddha’s four lines of advice are very important, and these four lines are explained by many great scholars, such as Ananda, in his commentary on *Madhyamikavaratara*. There are many other Indian and Tibetan masters who have explained these four meanings.

In the following section, we quote from His Holiness’ explanation of the four reliances.

1. Rely on the meaning, not on the words

Meaning we need to check what is the reality. We need to depend, to trust and believe on the reality or we need to rely on the fact, not just on the words. Sometimes, people might say pleasant words and nice words, or people can use nice expressions, but it may not be true, so such nice expressions we should not rely on, we should not trust because it is not fact it is not true. Especially nowadays in this world there are many people who can deceive, can express things in a nice way but presenting a false information or not

a fact. As well as sometimes people can write in a nice way, but it may not be true. It is important to not just depend on how they write or express themselves, we need to check if this is the reality or not, if it is true or not. If it is true, we need to believe, we need to trust whether it is explained or presented in a nice way or not, we then need to accept. What I am saying is that some expressions cannot be true but this does not mean that all nice expressions are not true. Some can be true, and some can be false, therefore for us to judge whether this is true or not if there is a fact then of course we should believe and accept and we should trust. So, this is the meaning of the first reliance.

2. Rely on the Dharma, not on the individual

Here, Dharma means logical reasoning. If there is a logical reason behind a statement, then this is true and something we need to accept. So, it doesn't matter who is saying this, what matters is what is said. We must not judge what is true or not because who is saying this, but we should judge if it is true or not through what statement is said and what logical reasons have been expressed or not.

So, we cannot say something because it is said by a poverty-stricken person or beggar, or by a homeless person, whatever they have said, this is not true. If we go by this then we are relying on the person we are not relying on Dharma or logical reasons. Although some may be poor or homeless what they are saying can be true, it can be something that we can accept, we should trust and believe.

On the other hand, in this world there are many wealthy people, powerful or famous, but whatever they say may at times not be true, sometimes can be true but may not. So, just because something is said by a wealthy, powerful or famous person, because of this it is true, if we say like this then we are depending on the person not depending on the Dharma or logical reasoning. What we need to do is to depend on Dharma and logical reasons, not just one person. Not who is saying but what they have said is more important than who is saying it. So, sometimes a poor person can speak what is true or can say false, likewise a rich or famous person can say true or false. We cannot just say if this person is always saying 'this' then it is true, if this person is

always saying 'this' it is always false – we cannot judge like this. We should judge by logical reasons we should judge by Dharma, not by individuals or people.

3. Rely on wisdom, not on the ordinary mind

In this world people make many decisions without thinking properly or without analysing it properly. People make many hasty decisions or people make decisions but later on they realise they have made a mistake, then having regret. So, these kinds of decisions are made by the ordinary mind not with wisdom. Wisdom here means wisdom that is gained through meditation or through experience. Such wisdom with a problem, this wisdom can make a good decision, the right decision. Therefore, the ordinary mind can make a false decision, but wisdom cannot make a false decision, it will always make a good decision. So, it is important in our life to make right decisions all the time. We can see or hear sometimes when people make a wrong decision and then face great consequences from their own wrong decisions and sometimes, we can also see or hear, people make right decisions and can get great results. So not only in our lives, not only in a worldly way but in a Dharmic way also we make the right decision we will then have success in our spiritual practice and our spiritual activities, so it is important for us to always make the right decision. Actually, our mind, or our consciousness have two parts, the positive part, and the negative part. Most of the time our negative mind is stronger than our positive mind and because of that we make many mistakes, we carry out many negative actions, then due to this we then experience great suffering, and we face many problems, and we experience lots of difficulties, therefore it is always very important to depend on the wisdom.

4. Rely on the definitive meaning, not on provisional meaning or interpretive meaning

In the Buddha's teachings there are two main categories, actually we can divide the teachings in many different ways, so one of the ways to categorise is to categorise into these two – the definitive meaning and into the interpretive meaning. Sometimes, the teachings have provisional meaning, which means we cannot just take the little meaning of the Buddha's teaching. If one takes the little meaning of the Buddha's teachings all the time, then one will not

get the real meaning or one will not understand the real meaning. This can cause us to have a great misunderstanding. So, therefore it is important to know which are the definitive meanings and what are the provisional or interpretive meanings.

In our world, in English mostly, if something good happens then on top of that another good thing happens, people may say it is 'icing on the cake'. Icing on the cake is an interpretive meaning, you cannot take the literal meaning of it, it means on top of one thing another good thing happens. We cannot take the literal meaning of this, similarly, in the teachings also there are many provisional meanings so we should know these aspects. Because sometimes within the Buddha's teachings there are some words which we should not take literally or it can indicate some other meaning, therefore it is important to know which one is best to rely on and which one is not to rely on. If we know this then it will help us to have a better understanding of the Buddha's teachings and it will also help us to make better decisions in our lives and will help us to know what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned, in other words what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected. If we know these things, then it will help us in a great way to improve ourselves and to move forward on the right path and to avoid us from the wrong path. If we are able to do this then we will have happiness and good results in our present life as well in all of our future lives, therefore, it is really important to know or to understand these four reliances. I hope everyone of you can understand the meaning of these four reliances and not only to understand but can implement them into your daily lives and into your studies.

### The fifty verses of guru devotion

Here are some broader observations on the guru student relationship which you may find helpful. They are a few verses from *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*. This was written by Ashvagoshā, an Indian poet, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE who was previously a non-Buddhist but became an extremely devout follower of the Buddha.

*Verse 6:* In order for the words of honour of neither guru nor disciple to

degenerate, there must be a mutual examination beforehand (to determine if each can) brave a guru-disciple relationship.

We should try to examine a spiritual teacher before beginning a guru-disciple relationship with him. Similarly, a guru should examine a student before accepting him or her as a disciple. This is very important, right from the start. Before cultivating such an intimate relationship both should check each other very carefully because if, once established, this relationship is broken, it is a transgression of samaya – bad for both guru and disciple. However, once we have accepted a teacher as our vajra guru, we shouldn't continue examining him. That is to be done before accepting him as guru, and once we have done so we should only regard our guru as an enlightened being. Further examination can only lead us to the vajra hell. Jetsun Milarepa said that when we are with our vajra guru we shouldn't seek out his faults; we should cultivate a proper outlook and regard him as a perfect being. If we are successful in this, we will be successful in our practice. If we want to practice properly, we must cultivate proper guru devotion. Without it, despite diligent practice, we won't achieve anything worthwhile.

One great practitioner said: 'No matter how much you try to seclude yourself in an isolated area, if you regard the buddhas and your gurus as enemies, your practice will be of no value because it will lack the root of substantial achievements.' Guru devotion is essential for success in practice. Certain sutras recommend that examination go on for as long as twelve years, if necessary. It is very important that such examination be done properly. When both guru and disciple are satisfied, the relationship can be established. If the guru-disciple relationship is established without proper examination from either side, the sacred words of honour are in danger of degeneration. Therefore, we have to be very careful in this.

The guru who is to be relied upon or avoided the character of one to be avoided.

The character of one to be avoided

*Verse 7:* A disciple with sense should not accept as a guru someone who lacks compassion or is prone to anger, vicious, arrogant, possessive, undisciplined or boastful of his knowledge.



#### 4. A VAJRAYANA PATH: THE LAM DRE

This verse explains the kind of guru we should not cultivate; it mentions some disqualifications. An intelligent disciple should not cultivate such a guru.

He should possess great compassion – the wish that sentient beings be free from suffering and its cause. This is the most important qualification. If our guru is not compassionate there's the danger that he'll give up on us at the first sign of bad behaviour. If he has great compassion, then no matter how offensive our actions, he won't forsake or neglect us. Therefore, it's very important that our guru have great compassion. As stated in the great commentary on Lama Chopa by Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen, 'However the mischievous child offends his parents and misbehaves and worries them, they won't lose love and compassion and will continue to value him. Although I, a vulgar rascal, don't deserve your compassion, please don't forsake me, and guide me as parents' guide their child.'

He shouldn't be prone to anger.

He shouldn't be sadistic or hold a grudge.

He shouldn't be arrogant.

He shouldn't have a strong desire for possessions or wealth or cling strongly to material things.

He should not be loose of character of body, speech, and mind or careless in his practice of morality. If the guru gambles and takes intoxicants, his disciples will follow the same path. We should try not to fall under the influence of such a guru. If possible, our guru should be like Nagtso Lotsawa's: he lived with Atisha for nineteen years during which time he couldn't see the tiniest stain or fault in him. We should try to cultivate a guru like that – one in whom we can't find even a single shortcoming. Similarly, Khädrub Rinpoche offered praise to Lama Tsong Khapa: 'No matter how the buddhas, with all their wisdom, try to see if you have breached any of your vows, even a minor downfall, they won't be able to find a single one.' This emphasises that we should choose a guru who keeps his vows properly.

He should not boast of his abilities or be fond of revealing his qualifications all the time.

The character of one to be devoted to

*Verse 8:* (A guru should be) stable (in his actions), cultivated (in his speech), wise, patient, and honest. He should neither conceal his shortcomings nor pretend to possess qualities he lacks. He should be an expert in the meanings (of the tantra) and in its ritual procedures (of medicine and turning back obstacles). He should also have loving compassion and a complete knowledge of the scriptures.

This verse explains the kind of guru we should cultivate; it mentions some of the qualifications we should look for in a guru, the characteristics of the kind of guru who should be cultivated by an intelligent disciple.

Stable means that he should have very subdued actions of body; he should abstain from non-virtuous actions of body, keep his bodily actions proper and moral; immutable.

Cultivated refers to his speech; he should abstain from non-virtuous actions of speech, keep proper morality of speech, not hurt others by means of speech, sharp words, etc.

Mentally, he should abstain from the three non-virtuous actions of mind as well as from pretentiousness; his mental attitude should be very pure. He should possess intelligence and discretion; if he doesn't, he can't lead us on the path to liberation.

He should possess the three types of forbearance, or patience: forbearance of harm received from others; the ability to endure hardship; and the ability to hear profound teachings without being terrified.

He should be true and unbiased, or impartial; not biased towards near relatives or repulsed by enemies; he should be even minded towards all sentient beings.

He shouldn't be pretentious or conceal his shortcomings. Pretentious means pretending to have supernatural knowledge that he doesn't have and concealing his shortcomings means always trying to hide his faults from others, especially with the intention of getting offerings.

He should have the power to drive out interferences by means of mantras and tantric practice.

He should be able to practice medicine, which actually means to help and benefit others by means of his teachings; to really pacify them.

#### 4. A VAJRAYANA PATH: THE LAM DRE

He should possess great compassion, the wish that all sentient beings' suffering be alleviated.

He should have profound knowledge of the scriptures, especially the Tripitaka.

## Brief introduction to Mahamudra

In the Sakya school, besides the Lam Dre we also have mahamudra. Mahamudra is also found in the Kagyu and Gelug schools. Mahamudra is considered a profound and direct path to awakening. It is called the 'great seal', realisation of the ultimate nature of one's mind and its lack of inherent nature.

Mahamudra is said to be the path to realising the 'mind as it is', said [Jamgon Kongtrul](#).

Mahamudra refers to the one who recognizes the true nature of mind. Mahamudra can only be understood through one's own experience of meditation practice. Chogye Trichen Rinpoche said this is because the ground, path, and result are only the same for one who has recognised emptiness, the true nature of mind.

I will give a very brief introduction here, but you should know that to really do the right practice of Buddhadharma through mahamudra, you must first study sutrayana and mantrayana. If you don't study these, you may have a good calm mind, a good way to express things, but if you don't have a background in sutrayana and mantrayana, you will not be learning the Buddhadharma. You may believe what you are taught without really checking whether it is part of the Buddhadharma or not. This is quite dangerous.

In the Sakya tradition, the mahamudra path can only be taken after a practitioner has been initiated into and followed various other practices using sutras and tantras. Sakya rejects the view held by the Kagyu and other traditions that mahamudra can be practised without tantric initiation. Mahamudra practice is only taken on after having been [initiated into tantric practice](#) and practising the creation and completion stages of [deity yoga](#).

It is important not to be misled by incorrect mahamudra teachings. The mahamudra is very important. The mahamudra is vajrayana mantrayana language. It's not mentioned in the sutras.

Mahamudra is a vajrayana method for meditating on emptiness. When you follow mahamudra, or the pith instructions of mahamudra, you need to abandon seven things – the three mistakes and the four wrong directions. If you do this, you will not fall into the three mistakes, and you will not go in the four wrong directions. I will briefly talk about these mistaken approaches.

## Three mistakes

First, when we meditate, we do shamatha meditation, it's important that you be present. Second you must have clarity of mind. Third you must be in a non-conceptual state when you meditate. If you fall into a blissful state when you meditate and you get attached to that, it leads to you desiring god beings. And then when you meditate and you become attached to the clarity alone, that leads you to the form realms. Then when you meditate in a non-conceptual state, if you become attached to that, it leads you to the formless realms. Even if you do the meditation, if you have attachment it's a worldly path.

Only the right meditation brings you the result. But if the result of meditation is within samsara, if, when you meditate, you become attached to pleasure that leads to the worldly god, the desire realm god, if you become attached to clarity, you will be led to the form realms. And if you are attached to non-conceptual state you will be led to the formless realms. So it is important not to make these three mistakes.

## Four wrong directions

Then secondly, you must make sure your mind does not go in the four wrong directions.

The first wrong direction is if, when you meditate, you say everything is empty, but don't hold everything as empty, you think mahamudra is

emptiness.

The second is if you think the meditation is mahamudra. If you think mahamudra is emptiness, then you cling to emptiness. That is not mahamudra. When you meditate mahamudra is the path, that is not mahamudra. It's just the path.

Third, if when you meditate, you think 'I am meditating the mahamudra' then you are clinging onto meditation itself.

Fourth, if you say emptiness is a seal with appearance, and you think mahamudra is sealed with the appearance, you are holding onto that.

If you hold all four of these, that is not mahamudra.

To practise the Dharma you must have the right conditions and be free from obstacles. There are obstacles in the eight restless states. If you do the wrong type of mahamudra, then in the end you will be reborn in long-life god, one of the eight restless states. Then you won't have the opportunity to practise Dharma. Just forget about reaching full enlightenment. You're doing something that will lead to you being reborn where there is no opportunity to practise the Dharma, so it's a danger.