

CLEAR ELUCIDATION OF TRUE NATURE

An Esoteric Instruction on the Sublime Approach of Ati

theg mchog a ti'i man ngag gnas lugs gsal ston

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also

Miscellaneous Tidbits of Advice

gzhan yang zhal shes 'thor bu

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Clear Elucidation of True Nature
An Esoteric Instruction on the Sublime Approach of Ati¹

- Homage to all genuine gurus.

This is the way to cultivate the true nature in the Natural Great Completion according to three specific processes for persons of best, average, and lesser capabilities. The foundation is laid by receiving the proper introduction to the nature of the ineffable, having first applied finely-honed discernment in the process of searching for the mind. The actual way to cultivate it is as follows:

Best Capability

For a person of best capability, mind is mind when it is still, and it is mind when it moves. Once you are convinced that mind is empty, there is no difference at all between stillness and movement. Whatever thoughts arise, whatever appears, is all the play of pristine wisdom. It is the profound perspective of all victorious ones: emptiness. Without adulterating it in any way, rest within that itself. Although occasionally there are regular thoughts, since they are liberated automatically within that state, it is only meditative absorption (*samadhi*). It is dharmakaya. It is innately occurring pristine wisdom. It is the Great Seal (*mahamudra*). It is the perfection of transcendent intelligence (*prajnaparamita*). It is like a burned rope: it cannot tie you up because it is empty of essence.² The thought-like occurrence is actually the shining radiance of emptiness. There is no difference between thought and emptiness. So the Great Orgyen³ said:

Since the essence of thought is empty, know it as dharmakaya.

If you were to meditate, it would be conceptual, so be without anything on which to meditate. Rest in regular thought. If you meddle with it, then it is the deluded chain of ordinary thought, so don't contrive in any way. When you wander from resting in that immediacy it is real delusion, so there must be no wandering. Just that is enough. A non-distractedness without focus on any reference point. Dzogchen Guru Zhiwa said:

Not experiencing meditation, not experiencing departure from it:
Do not depart from the meaning of no meditation.

That is to say, since whatever arises is meditation, there is no mind-made thing to meditate on, hence "not experiencing meditation". Since there was never any way to deviate into meaninglessness, resting in that immediacy is "not experiencing departure". "Do not depart" ever from that kind of "meaning of no meditation".

Persons of varying capabilities of the best need not pursue this undistractedness for more than seven or fourteen days or one month. Without striving, there will come an ability to rest without effort in whatever arises. In the Great Completion this is called "the perspective of eternally free open space." It is like "the minding of innate clarity" in the Great Seal. By cultivating the continuity of that without interruption, there won't be a speck of difference between the manifestation of ordinary mind and the regular thoughts of a worldly person. However, the clarity and transparency of not grasping to an essence there relieves the sitting meditation of object, and the post meditation will be empty of basis. Mind polished of habitual conditioning, even without recognition, still experiences thought-like occurrence. That is the actual dharmakaya. In the Mind Class teachings of the Great Completion, the phrase "without having thoughts, anything is clearly knowable" refers to this. The accomplished Mitradzoki⁴ said:

When one rests directly in whatever occurs, it is spontaneous presence free of activity.

In this way, if thoughts are naturally freed by themselves, then the objective, external objects, such as form, sound and so on, will also be liberated as a natural consequence of this innate freedom. Thus, the visual objects of good and bad forms, the pleasant and unpleasant sounds in the ears, and similarly good and bad smells, tastes, objects of touch, mental attachment to happiness and aversion to suffering, enemies, friends, earth, water, fire, wind, and so on -- in short, whatever arises, whatever appears -- the point is to rest without fabrication in that very thing. As is said in the Great Completion:

When the clinging thoughts of mind do not enter
the clarity of the five sense consciousnesses --
that is exactly the perspective of the victorious ones.

And from the standpoint of Pacification⁵:

Knowing how to unlock the secret of thought --
when thought arises it is the great stillness,
when blatant afflictive emotion, it is illuminating wisdom.

Therefore, the perspective of the Great Completion is not to reject whatever arises, but also not to follow after it. Resting in that itself without meddling is exactly it. That being so, there is no thing to reject, no remedy, no do's and don'ts, no keeping and discarding, etc. Since there is no mind-made phenomena whatsoever, "non-conceptual dharmakaya suchness" is also this.

This is according to the level of best capability. You should know how to guide those of the three subdivisions of the best --best, average, and lesser -- by applying it to their individual mental abilities.

Average Capability

People of the three kinds of average capability should be guided by means of the combination of calm abiding (*shamatha*) and superior insight (*vipashyana*).

Gyalwa Yangön⁶ said:

In pristine meditation, do not meditate with the intellect.
Do not contrive an undisturbed state through fabrication.
Do not regard thoughts as faults.
Do not meditate for the sake of non-thought.
Rest in mind's own way, and keep watch from a distance.
Meditate, and you will arrive at the core of calm abiding.

By becoming adept at just that with persistence, the movement of mind will decrease and mental stillness will become more stable. When mindfulness is applied to this, it is the combination of calm abiding and superior insight. Maintaining that continuity and meditating, all subtle and blatant thoughts are stopped. The essence of that absorption is empty of any existence whatsoever. In that clarity without thought there is no sensation of having a body and mind. There arises an experience of bliss in which you can scarcely bear to be parted from that absorption. If that is prolonged in meditation, the qualities such as "five eyes"⁷ and clairvoyance⁸ will occur. This is called "meditative concentration" (*dhyana*). Meditating in that deep calm abiding, there will occur four concentrations,⁹ and single-pointed absorption in four spheres of perception¹⁰. Ultimately, what are called "the nine equilibriums of abiding"¹¹, will occur. These nine are also possessed by the tirthikas¹², and so it is the common path of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

But if there are too many active thoughts and you cannot reduce them, you should first pursue calm abiding. However, without superior insight¹³ there can be no progress in the stages and paths. Therefore, when you practice with just the aspect of mental abiding, and you feel pleased that thought is not emanating, just recognize that thought and look at its very own essence. Then it will dissipate. It has become one with the abiding. This, then, is called the unity or combination of calm abiding and superior insight. The Dvagpo Kagyupas call this “collapsing the boundary between stillness and movement.” Essentially, it is a mind-made meditation. You need to have mindful recognition constantly, and so the Kagyupas call it “mindful holding of emptiness”. Maintaining the continuity of this itself in meditation, that mindful holding will become the mindfulness of innate clarity. Just being undistracted in that is very important. In just one month you will be able to integrate it with daytime appearances. Gyalwa Göstangpa¹⁴ said:

Do not meditate on the emptiness of all appearance,
nor meditate on their non-emptiness.
If you are mindful and hold whatever arises,
then just one month is sufficient.
The innate abiding in the first stage of freedom from
embellishment¹⁵ will come.

To wrap it up: the self-recognition of the initial absorption of calm abiding is the combination of calm abiding and superior insight. That is the Great Seal and the Great Completion. It is summarized in this quotation from Yangön:

The movement of conceptual thought is the door to true nature.
Self-recognition of it is the crucial point of practice.

The Average and Lesser subdivisions of the Average

The average and lesser of the average type may not be able to accept that the regular thought process is the meditation, so you should look at whatever thoughts arise and they will all disappear in emptiness. Within that disappearance, while one thought subsides another arises. Again watching that, it disappears as before. It is maintaining the continuity of just that. As in the song:

Mind, unidentifiable, is the expanse of emptiness.
The variety that arises is the door of awareness.
Free of concept, stark, empty, clear.
Resting within this, regard the expanse.
You will arrive at the pith of superior insight meditation.

Make it so. In this regard Mitradzoki also said,

Identifying whatever arises
awareness is liberated in its own ground.

This is simple but of great impact.

All three subdivisions of Average

The meditation held in common for the best, average, and lesser of the average capability is as taught in this song:

No distraction: sharp mindfulness is not lost.
No meditation: true nature is not fabricated.
No desire to speak of unthinkable awareness.
Continuing, uncorrupted by permanence or nihilism,

Meditating, the union of calm abiding and superior insight will come.

This is easily understood. With undistracted mindfulness, do not meddle with whatever arises. Although it arises, do not regard it as existent. Although it disappears, do not grasp it as non-existent. Without suppressing them, just let the thoughts go, sustaining mere recognition. As is stated in the Mind Section of Great Completion:

From within the very expanse of original purity,
mindful each moment of the immanent arising of awareness,
it is like finding a gem in the ocean's depths.
Nobody has contrived or tampered with dharmakaya.

In this way it is revealed.

Three kinds of Lesser Capability

The three types of individuals of lesser capability for the most part do not believe in superior insight¹⁶ and are not able to generate calm abiding alone. Alternating between torpor and agitation, meditation does not arise. Therefore, you should complete the entire Preliminary Practice. Then, sit in cross-legged posture on a comfortable seat with hands in meditation, tongue touching the palate, eyes falling in front of the nose, and so on -- all seven positions of meditation. Do the nine-breath exercise to clear away stale breath, and meditating on the lama above the head or in the heart, pray. Within a state of relaxation of body and mind, look right at whatever thought arises and relax directly in that itself. When another arises, as before relax directly into it. When thought has vanished into emptiness, don't rejoice, and when it multiplies into many, don't see it as problematic. Do not entertain either hope for meditation to go well or fear that it will not occur. Relax right into whatever arises. If you are too relaxed, there comes an

experience of no conscious thought process whatsoever, a lack of thought similar to non-thought.¹⁷ Then you should tighten up your attention with mindfulness, because without recognition you will not feel the discursive undercurrent, which is like trenches of water underneath husks of grain. It won't cause any harm immediately, but eventually it will win out and withhold genuine meditation, so close attentiveness is necessary.

Obvious discursiveness is the time for the identification of the conscious thought process, so stay relaxed directly on that. At some point, thoughts might proliferate and you will get irritated at yourself. You think "meditation is just not happening for me". No problem. That is the first meditative experience, "like a waterfall off a steep cliff". The Kagyupas call it "undivided attention that is distracted by the waves of thought". It is the occasion of the lesser undivided attention.¹⁸ If you bear with that and continue meditating, sometimes it will stay, sometimes be active. It's like a little bird in the water, sometimes slipping in and out of the water, sometimes resting for a bit on a rock. This is how the second meditative experience arises. If that is prolonged further in meditation, from time to time there will be occasional mental activity, but for the most part there is abiding. For example, it is like an old person who sits still most of the time. This is how the third meditative experience arises. When that is prolonged continually, at some point mental activity will not be in evidence, like water in the small rivulets of the underbrush. At that time, mindfulness needs to be somewhat tightened. This is how the fourth meditative experience arises. If the continuity of that is prolonged in that way, eventually the mind will be still day and night without budging. Thirst and the desire for clothes won't even arise. Abiding without any movement, days and months will pass. The example is that of a mountain. If this goes wrong and gets excessive, it becomes the absorption of a shravaka.¹⁹ If it goes well, after attaining the total refinement of body, it will be supreme calm abiding. This is how the fifth meditative experience arises.²⁰

This description, however, is according to the majority. It is likely that the process varies according to the individual's energetic constitution and capability.

That process will certainly occur to the best level of the lesser type of capability, but for those average and lesser of the lesser, it is difficult for stillness to occur. Therefore, such individuals should assume the physical posture as described before, and then plant a stick at the level of the eyebrows about four cubits in front of you. Mingling the mind, the visualization, and the subtle wind, focus on (the stick). In making just this support for de-activating the mind, if you are too tight you will become easily jaded, and if too loose the meditation will go astray. So practice with moderation, doing many short sessions. Then gradually change to fewer, longer sessions. Once the mind begins to dwell over there, imagine a white letter AH on the tip of the stick and meditate as before. Then change the AH for a white sphere, a yellow sphere, and so on, meditating accordingly on each visualization support for one or three days or for as long as you don't become jaded. Again, replace the stick with a pebble and go through the meditation process as before. Then, using the visualization support of letters and spheres, meditate on the three places of your body, and in the inner forehead, throat, and heart in the appropriate way. Gradually, the abiding will become stabilized. It is important not to become impatient, but to keep up the process until you establish familiarization without becoming jaded.

At this time of calm abiding, don't push too hard, just remain undistracted in the initial way of placing the attention, like the proverbial swordsman at battle. There was swordsman who was not distracted even for an instant and could catch all the arrows shot by an archer in his sword without being struck. But then for one instant his eye was distracted by the movement of a beautiful woman and an arrow struck him. At the moment of death he said:

I am done in not by the arrow but by distraction.
Henceforth, all you swordsmen,

do not be distracted for even an instant.
In distraction life is lost.

Saying that, he died. As in this example, it is extremely important not to be distracted.

Superior Insight

Now for the presentation of superior insight: What is called superior insight is the perfection of transcendent intelligence. Without it there is no progress through the levels and paths, so it is explained that without it the other perfections are as if without eyes. Like when the Lord Gampopa told Milarepa that he could remain for seven days in a single meditative equipoise and Milarepa pointed out the gods' absorption of the fourth concentration.²¹

Superior insight has three divisions. The superior insight of fully discerning phenomena is said to be the cognizance of unmistakable superior insight, the main perspective of all sutras and tantras. Superior insight which knows just as it is the true nature of mind's natural purity is the meditation on what has now been revealed. Once this is familiar, the superior insight of actualizing the unmistakable true nature arises in the fruition of attaining buddhahood.

Now, as with the calm abiding, there is an explanation of meditative equipoise concerning thoughts. However it is sufficient to rest in mere recognition. Even when various thoughts move, just rest within the state of mere recognition. In short, whatever arises and whatever occurs, rest within the state of merely recognizing it. That's it!

Meditating, there is absolutely no meditation subject. Looking for a remedy by rejecting something, and pursuing any kind of accomplishment does not get beyond the cause and effect of cyclic existence. The antithesis of

meditative absorption is discursive thought, but there is no need to reject it. Rather, let it rest in itself. Resting, it will become naturally pure. As is said:

Not averting nor rejecting the fixation of deluded appearances;
the antithesis itself is complete as the remedy.

The lesser type of those of lesser capability might do that, but if your mind is not ready you should identify whatever thought arises and look at how it exists and where it goes -- then it will become naturally pure. By maintaining that continuity, afterwards you won't need to purposefully pursue it -- the thought will liberate itself. This is called innately occurring pristine wisdom. That is what is meant by:

When mental movement is minutely investigated, thoughts will vanish
into the expanse by that alone.

In general, what is called "ordinary mind" means not to meddle with whatever thought arises. If you are not distracted from this, it alone is sufficient. This will not work for those of lesser capability, so you should cultivate the sitting practice with effort. Though you look at whatever thought arises, without the ability to calm it down, there will be greater mental activity and the body posture will collapse. The one that is emanating thought -- let that one emanate. Then look at its own state. It calms down in its own bed. Since mental activity and stillness are both the mind, they become one in their own bed. By engendering forbearance in meditation, it will be planted deeply. It is taught in this example:

Like the crow that takes off from a ship:
Circling, circling, again it lands on board.

The crow that was tied with fine wire to its feet when the ship was near the coast must be sent off after arriving in the middle of the ocean. Flying upwards it finds

that the sky is empty, and flying back down the space between is empty. Below there is nothing but water. Flying up and down and in all directions, it finds no place to go, no place to land. So it returns to the same ship and lands there.²²

It is fine if thought emanates, it is empty. It is fine if it does not emanate, it is empty. It is fine if it abides, fine if it moves -- it does not get beyond empty. Whatever way it arises, it will fall back on itself. So even those of lesser capability who practice the technique of placement meditation of the best capability will do well with this training if they persist fastidiously and develop discernment.

This is how the practice methods are taught, divided into the nine parts of the three capabilities of best, average and lesser. The perspective in the aural lineage of the Great Completion is described thus:

Best capability can meditate directly with view.
Average capability can meditate directly with meditation.
Lesser capability can practice directly with activity.

In any case, one must engender fortitude in meditation. The old adage is certainly true: though the Dharma be profound, without meditation the profound instructions are left behind in the scriptures. Even though meditation affects your mind at present, if you don't meditate continually your mind becomes stubborn and practice becomes stubborn and it won't help at the time of death. So take care. Gyalwa Götsangpa said that six things are needed:

Outer retreat is to stay put in isolation.
Inner retreat is to stay put in the retreat hut.
Secret retreat is to stay put on the mat.
Stay put upon the non-dual view.
Stay put upon undistracted meditation.
Stay put upon unattached conduct.

Generally, in meditation there is both "to take hold" and "to be held".²³

In the mind that is not ready ²⁴, one needs to take hold (of the meditation subject) and not be divorced of mindfulness. Then when the thought itself holds you, whatever arises all becomes meditation. Then that becomes a state of no-fixation in ordinary mind itself.

Though a great meditator gives up meditation,
meditation does not give up a great meditator.

To bring that about, you have to meditate continuously. Without meditation, even if a few minor experiences occur now, they will dissipate. This is the so-called “rainbow meditation”. “The hook” is when you hold with mindfulness. Without holding, there will be nothing. You must tighten the watchguard of non-distraction. So-called “separation of two” is when there is mindfulness but it is not combined with compassion. For that, you should think, “I will meditate for the welfare of all sentient beings” at the start of every session and dedicate at the end of the session with “may all sentient beings attain awakening”. The Great Orgyen said, “Without compassion the root of Dharma is rotten.” This is extremely important.

So-called “non-ownership” is to engender meditation and then not maintain it, but to discard it. Draw the mind inside and enter meditation. “Intermittent placement” means that sometimes the meditation happens and sometimes not. For that, practice by focusing directly, whether it is happening or not, indifferently. “Around-the-clock” is when the mindfulness that is applied in the daytime also occurs at night. This is when you are held by meditation.²⁵ The so-called “sublime yoga” is when one is free from acting and striving in the Great Completion. In the Great Seal it is also called “no-meditation”.²⁶

Again, there are the individuals of “cut-off family” who are not appropriate recipients of *trekchö* and *tögal*. Those type should receive empowerments, train in practices of the channels and winds, and focus on

karmamudra. The proper sequences of the four pleasures that arise from the intercourse of the two organs will reveal the essence of bliss as empty. This is said to be entering the mind guidance as described above. However those who cannot do it should engage in the ways of gradual liberation through skillful means, such as liberation through wearing, liberation through seeing, and liberation through tasting.

In the general Mind Section of Great Completion and in the Great Seal teachings there is what is called “general clarity of pristine wisdom”. It is explained as “the view that holds mental examination until stability is attained”²⁷. However, for Great Completion practitioners, once there has been the revelation and meditation upon it, all externally appearing objects and the active or still inner mind which grasps them arise as pristine wisdom. This is the famous “perspective of unbiased self-display” of the Great Completion.

In any case, from the time that mind has been revealed, you cultivate the practice directly upon appearances. Entering into *tögal* practice from the dark retreat guidance or appearance guidance, when practice is maintained directly upon lucent empty form, innately occurring pristine wisdom will become manifest. Thus liberation in the intermediate stage (*bardo*) of dharmata is assured.

For someone like me, without meditative experience, and even without experience of the esoteric instruction which I have heard but mostly forgotten, it is as Lord Barawa²⁸ said:

Devoid of meditational experience,
feigning meditation instruction
based upon the black letters of the scriptures
becomes a walk down the wrong road.

And,

Even without the qualities of attaining the stages,
attaining forbearance²⁹, and doing the four activities,
with the firm root of compassion

one may yet work for the welfare of beings.

Even without attaining forbearance it is appropriate because I have some compassion in my stream of being and especially, having mixed my mind with the Dharma, I am ready for meditative absorption and established in whatever I recall of the teachings of the buddha-like holy lamas. Master Shri Singha said:

First, reach the meeting point.
Next, rest in the resting place,
Finally, let go to where it goes.

That is, first of all meet the lama who knows how to give guidance, minutely investigate the mind, and reach a level of refinement. In the middle, rest in whatever arises without any contrivance or fabrication. Finally, let it go without fixated attachment in the play of experiential meditative absorption.

This is culled from the guidance manuals of the Great Completion Mind Section. May it benefit all.

Some miscellaneous tidbits of advice

Various signs of meditative experience may arise, the handprints of meditation, that result from the force of a positive mind-frame. But since they are not permanent, do not be trapped into clinging to their validity. This is crucial. Now, without regard for mindful holding, whatever arises becomes stark innate freedom. Know that those experiences are completely pure, the right path.

Though there is (the visualized) appearance of the lama's body, creation phase of the yidam, and so forth, it is open, stark non-appearance. Doing recitation and such within that state, those appearing forms are appearances without intrinsic existence, clarity without thought, and bliss without attachment. With those three characteristics, the natural radiance of emptiness appears vividly without obstruction. If you do recitation and so forth within that state, you don't particularly need to meditate on the lama on the crown of your head and so forth in order to make it more effective.

As for the configuration of ground, path, and fruition in terms of the path: At the time of the path, the ground is the mind-as-such -- rootless, unbiased, pervasive. Within that, the path is maintaining innate clarity without resting in clarity as an object. As a result, the concurrent natural arising of the deity's body and the melting and bliss of completion phase is counted as the fruition of the path.

Furthermore, a classic scripture of the Great Completion³⁰ teaches "introduction directly to one's own nature". The mind of nowness is free of thoughts of the three times. Within that unadulterated natural state, recognizing in a forthright manner the open transparent pervasiveness, innately occurring pristine wisdom is revealed.

"Decide directly upon one thing" means that while the previous thought has ceased and the next one has not yet arisen, in that mind of nowness when the

mind of conceptual thoughts ceases and the intrinsic awareness is free of three parts out of four, one abides in fresh, totally non-conceptual pristine wisdom -- wakeful, vibrant, immaculate openness. It is this very thing. "Free of three parts out of four" refers to past, future, and present, the three times of conceptual thinking, and to the non-conceptual present, that freshness uncorrupted by thoughts of the three times. So of these four times, it is the totally non-conceptual time that is free of the three conceptual times, that is "free of three parts out of four". It is the perspective of dharmakaya beyond intellect.

"To have confidence directly in liberation" means to look nakedly at whatever arises without corrupting it, and then relax into that state. By that, the thoughts will disappear without a trace like the swells subsiding in the sea. Have confidence in whatever arises as innately liberated without rejecting it or using a remedy.

The crucial points of both the Mind Section and the Space Section of the Great Completion are contained in the Esoteric Instruction Section. In meditative equipoise within primordial purity, all appearances of the world and beings are determined to be mind-as-such,³¹ innately occurring pristine wisdom, the indescribable dharmakaya. That summarizes the crucial point of the Mind Section. Determining that itself as being the space of true being, altogether free of effortful action, summarizes the Space Section. Therefore, all the practices of the Mind and Space sections are contained in the *trekchö* practices of the Esoteric Instruction Section. Thus the pinnacle of the sublime path of Great Completion is the Esoteric Instruction Section. The method of hitting directly on the crucial point of reality without rejecting or accepting samsara or nirvana instantly arouses the innately occurring pristine wisdom beyond intellect. This means that it is the supreme sublime method which manifestly confirms the innate clear

nature of the true being of all phenomena, and thus reveals spontaneously present clear light pristine wisdom that abides as the basic ground.

Of these two: integrating the innate freedom of whatever arises to the six sense groups into the spiritual path, and applying the seal of deity and mantra (to those appearances), the former is certainly more effective. Yet to know how to integrate effortlessly on the path the dynamic appearance of the innately free natural state as the natural radiance of deity and mantra is indeed the special approach of unity.

Various experiences arise in stark awareness, yet whatever arises does not shift from mindfulness itself, and can be maintained without depending on mindful holding. This is basically similar to the “abiding experience” of the four stages of experience in the Great Completion tradition, and the “single-pointed abiding” of the Great Seal tradition in that there is certainly a glimpse in the direction of mind’s essence. However, you may think that, other than just the attainment or lack of stability, there is no special thing to be seen or realized other than this. In terms of personal understanding of reality in an appropriate way, mind is similar to undeluded wisdom. But if you wonder about whether there is not something more, it becomes the conceptuality of intellectual clinging to the self of phenomena. When you look nakedly and starkly at innate awareness, that basic character is free of embellishment, with no clinging whatsoever. That and the emptiness that is merely understood are two different ways of experiencing. You must understand this.

Moreover, the phrase “to see the essence of mind” refers to merely the general seeing of the example pristine wisdom that is skillfully introduced. Other than that, the authentic essence of totally non-conceptual pristine wisdom of natural intrinsic awareness is only realized by those who have attained the level of the noble ones. If even those who have applied total control in meditation results and reached ascertainment on the path of application do not have it, then

no need to talk about those meditators on the path of accumulation or those who have not entered the path at all. Therefore these need to be differentiated.

There is training within the state of mindful recognition of dreaming, and training without the mindful awareness of thinking “it’s a dream”, that brings greater clarity than in the daytime. In terms of recognizing, refining, increasing, and changing dreams, the former is unchanging and stable, and later on will greatly enhance the practice. The latter occurs as a consequence of the application of virtue in the daytime, and since it is the mere appearance of experience, it has little effectiveness in developing stability in recognizing and refining dreams. For the most part, at the time of deep sleep, clear, empty intrinsic awareness is free of the tarnish of conceptual thought, and you can maintain its nature. From its dynamic appearance comes the ability to arouse the emanations and transformations of dreams. It can then be counted as holding the clear light of sleep. If that’s the case, then when you arise in the dream, even if you do not recognize it with mindfulness during dream time, it is still effective.³²

At the time of *tögal*, many people think that remaining in and habituating to a state of non-thought in regards to the appearing signs of empty form that are drawn from deity appearance is merely calm abiding and not the discernment of discriminating intelligence, so it is not considered superior insight. However, it is explained in the Kalachakra Tantra and others that non-conceptual pristine wisdom is born from habituating to absorption without conceptual thoughts, and just that is the birth of the superior insight of discriminating intelligence.

In particular, in the tradition of Great Completion itself, with the three unmoving states³³ of the physical postures, visual gazes and winds as the basis, gradually the channels and winds will reach the crucial point and discursive thought will cease. Since it is the field of actual clear perception, there is freedom from the added designations of discernment. Abiding in the nature of true being, mother and child combine. Since this is the decisive leap into the original

expanse, unblinkingly focusing with the visual gazes on the appearing signs of spheres with vajra chains, rest without distraction or fabrication within the transparent nature of those appearing signs themselves. Only by this does it become effective.

During the dharmata bardo, the measure of a day of meditative stability is difficult to determine. Having integrated sitting meditation and post-meditation, the arising of the experience of spontaneously present pristine wisdom goes beyond an allotted period for meditative absorption. So you can't say just where it ends. But to generalize, while sitting in meditative stability, however long you stay without interruption from discursive thought, that is how long you have meditated.

It is important that the potential for your ability to be liberated in the dharmata, which is the four visions of clear light, is present in yourself now. You can certainly determine this by whether or not the practice of dreams has measured up.

Even though mental activity arises in the face of meditative equipoise, if you can just barely carry through with mindfulness, it arises endowed with the bliss-clarity experience. If you don't fall into clinging to that experience or the desire for experience, then it will become effective.

With the absolute conviction that whatever arises is your own mind, then mind-as-such, rootless, clear and empty, arises without fixation. In the face of sitting meditation, body, appearance, mind and all fixation on distinctions are naturally purified and you dwell in stark wakeful openness without outside, inside, or in between, without holding on to regular conceptual thoughts. Though they arise, merely recognizing them, let them appear. That is the combining of appearance and mind. Though appearances seem to arise as meditation, from this point on you have to differentiate whether or not you need to depend upon the mindful holding of emptiness. When it happens that this fresh appearing awareness arises as innate awareness clarity free of attempts to

achieve or stop something, then appearance has arisen as meditation, and indeed there is no need of mindful holding left. Therefore even with effort, if you don't fall into fixation, then whatever occurs arises in the expansiveness of innate freedom, and it has become effective.

Again, cultivate the continuity of virtuous practice by the threefold "freely resting".³⁴ Having looked with naked freedom at the essence of that realization: Outwardly, looking at dualistic phenomena, you relax without attachment in the state of realizing that the deluded appearances appear without validity, like an illusion. Inwardly, looking at true being, you relax without fixation in the state of realizing objectlessness, like the sky. Secretly, looking at the essence of intrinsic awareness, having realized emptiness, clarity, and unimpededness, you relax without effort in that state.

The immediate benefit from that meditative equipoise is that you will be in complete control of immeasurable qualities such as the "eyes" and clairvoyances, and the afflictive emotions will be freed in their own ground without difficulty. The qualities that arise from the initial thorough training and subsequent actualization will gradually increase and become the profound method of accomplishing buddha wisdom. This I heard many times directly from the lord, the holy Lama. Thus with confidence I hold it to be the truth. And since others also advise thus, keep it in your heart.

The essence of the view is the realization, without individual reference to all dualistic phenomena, of intrinsic awareness, free since forever, spontaneously present, empty, clear, free of embellishment, vast, unbiased, the many of one flavor. Then anything at all can appear and you won't panic. However, until the mind of ego-clinging subsides, when something like anger or desire seems to arise in response to objects, even though the theoretical view is excellent, the direct experience may appear in contradiction to it. This is natural. So when that happens, you should directly integrate the natural freedom of whatever arises into the path and it will become effective.

Therefore, the crucial point is just to maintain the state, as if abiding since forever in the great wide vast expanse which is naturally free of limitations, transcending the investigations of philosophical schools, the objective appearances of attachment, and mental operations. In any case, just like anything might sprout from the ground in summertime, the experiences of a yogin might be high or low -- it is not all of one type. What to say of the overall thought pattern that includes good and bad thoughts?

The view is free of limitation, the expression of the natural radiance of non-thought. The meditation is not bound up with antidotes. The conduct is letting whatever arises be in its natural freedom. The fruition is free of the dualistic fixation to hopes and fears.

If you fall into the mind-frame of desiring to experience whatever appearance arises, then it has become like medicine that does not dissolve and turns to poison. So at that time remain in the state of total conviction itself, not bound up by fixation and attachment. If you always proceed at the natural pace of undistracted non-meditation, it is indeed sufficient.

Though you may always recognize your obvious dreams, just recognizing them is not enough. Henceforth, having purposely tamed the appearances of the six consciousness groups in the daytime without falling into fixation, when it's time to go to sleep, fall asleep without losing³⁵ the force of the awake mindfulness. Then the progression of experience and realization of the clear light will arise.

Whatever kind of experiences occur, do not corrupt them with thoughts of practicing or preventing, accepting or rejecting, but rather remain in the face of whatever arises. The hosts of dualistic thought clear away like the dispersed clouds in the sky, and the seed of cyclic existence is exhausted. In the expanse of naturally pure space, naturally pure intrinsic awareness dissolves and mother and child combine. Then unchanging non-dualistic pristine wisdom is transcribed in space. Like waves dissolving into water, thoughts are purified into

the expanse, and the gap between cyclic existence and transcendence collapses.
The five paths and ten levels are traversed all at once, and you are free.

Notes for Clear Elucidation of True Nature

¹ *theg mchog a ti'i man ngag gnas lugs gsal ston*, folios 663 to 689 in *rdzogs chen sems sde* of the Collected Works by Za Patrul Rinpoche, Jigme Chokyi Wangchuk (1808-87).

² A burned up rope still has the appearance of a rope when the ashes stick together, but as soon as one attempts to use it, the ashes disintegrate because there is no pith or essence to them.

³ The Great Orgyen [*o rgyan chen po*] is one name for Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche, the great master from Orgyen [Skt. *Uddiyana*], the crucial figure in bringing Buddhism to Tibet.

⁴ Mitradzoki or Mitrayogin, a mahasiddha from Radha in Orissa, Eastern India, who later came to Tibet. (Blue Annals, p.1030 - 1043)

⁵ Zhije [*zhi byed*], a lineage of teachings originating with Pa Dampa Sangye, (c. 11th-12th centuries).

⁶ Gyalwa Yang Gönpa (Gyaltzenpel) [*rgyal ba yang dgon pa, rgyal mtshan dpal*] (1213-1258, alt. 1153-1198) Yangönpa, a disciple of Götsangpa, and one of the main masters of the Drukpa Kagyü lineage.

⁷ The five eyes or five levels of clairvoyant vision [*spyän lnga*] are the physical eye, divine eye, the eye of knowledge, the dharma eye, and the buddha eye [*sha'i spyän, lha'i spyän, shes rab kyi spyän, chos kyi spyän, sangs rgyas kyi spyän*].

⁸ Clairvoyance or super-knowledge or actual knowing [*mngon shes*], usually refers to the six super-knowledges: the capacities for performing miracles, divine sight, divine hearing, recollection of former lives, cognition of the minds of others, and the cognition of the exhaustion of defilements.

⁹ *bsam gtan bzhi* - the four dhyanas or meditative concentration states: 1) joy and reflection. 2) joy and absence of reflection. 3) being free of joy, and equable concentration states. 4) supreme equanimity.

¹⁰ *skye mched mu bzhi* - Fourfold spheres of perception. The mind states or absorptions that constitute the four formless realms: Infinite Space, Infinite Consciousness, Nothing whatsoever, and Neither Presence Nor Absence of conception. Also called the immaterial states.

¹¹ Usually, the nine concentrations of equilibrium [*snyoms 'jug gi bsam gtan dgu*]. These are the four concentrations, the four formless states, and the sravaka's absorption of peace. Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche (KPSR) adds that it is best to call them the '*gog pa'i snyoms par 'jug pa dgu*, "the nine equilibriums of cessation".

¹² *mu stegs pa* Teachers of non-Buddhist philosophy who adhere to the extreme views of eternalism or nihilism.

¹³ Khenpo Palden Sherab's definition of superior insight [*lhag mthong*; Skt. *vipashyana*] is interesting here: *lhag* means special and *mthong* means seeing, and what is seen is non-self. The *tirthikas* strive to realize the great self (*brahma*) or the individual self (*atman*), but essentially this is not different than ordinary people, since everybody normally has a sense or perception of a self. Therefore it is not special [*lhag*]. Only Buddhists see non-self, and therefore it is special or superior insight [*lhag mthong*].

¹⁴ Gyalwa Götsangpa Gönpo Dorje [*rgod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje*], 1189-1258. Götsangpa, literally, 'Vulture Nest Dweller,' was a great master in the Drukpa Kagyü lineage and was named after a cave where he did intensive practice.

¹⁵ *spros bral*, the second of the four levels or yogas of mahamudra: [*phyag rgya chen po'i rnal 'byor bzhi*]: one-pointedness [*rtse gcig*]; free of embellishment [*spros bral*]; one taste, [*ro gcig*]; non-meditation [*sgom med*].

¹⁶ i.e. cannot believe in emptiness (KPSR).

¹⁷ *rnam rtog med pa'i mi rtog pa 'dra mo*, explained as a dull or dark, unconscious state without thought [*rnam rtog med pa*], similar to but not really the genuine meditative experience of non-thought [*mi rtog pa'i nyams*] that is the result of effective shamatha practice.

¹⁸ *rtse gcig chung ngu*, the lesser of the three phases (lesser, middle and greater) of the first level or yoga, called single-pointed or undivided, in the mahamudra tradition. See note 15.

¹⁹ *nyan thos 'gogs pa'i* [*ting nge 'dzin*], of the stages of samadhi or meditative absorption this state of the cessation of all sensation [*tshor ba med pa*] or conceptualization [*'du shes med pa*] is considered the highest. Here, however, in the explanation of superior insight in the mahamudra and mahasandhi perspectives it is seen as a possible trap.

²⁰ These five meditative experiences of absorption [*ting nge 'dzin nyams lnga*] are also called, respectively, wavering [*gyo*], attainment [*thob*], familiarization [*goms*], stability [*brtan*], and consummation [*mthar phyin*].

²¹ *bsam gten bzhi'i lha'i ting nge 'dzin*, which can last for years or eons, thus showing Gampopa that his accomplishment, much touted in his Kadampa sect, was no big deal without prajna and commonly achieved even by non-Buddhists.

²² Khenpo Palden Sherab comments: In early times when ships sailed the seas, there were sea-monsters [*chu zin*]. Sailors were scared and uncertain. So they sent a crow or a pigeon off. There was no land around, so if the bird did not return, it meant that it had landed on the sea-monster's head. If it returned, all was clear.

²³ *phar 'jus tshur 'jus*. "The first is in the beginning, since the mind is so perturbed, thinking that you need to meditate, calm the mind and so on -- in other words, making meditation a distinct object [*bzung ba*]. The latter is when the essential empty nature of thoughts are automatically seen, and then meditation is natural and inseparable, not the object, but rather the subject itself [*'dzin pa*]." KPSR

²⁴ *las su ma rung* "The mind that is not independent, a person who has no control or ownership of their own mind [*bdag po kyab ma tub pa*]." KPSR

²⁵ *'tshur 'jus* see note 23. "Around the clock" [*'khor yug ma*] means that mindfulness is naturally present during dream states and so on, thus totally integrated as inseparable, or "to be held".

²⁶ *sgom med*, the fourth of the four levels of mahamudra. See note 15.

²⁷ "That is, it is called a view, although it is a meditation, because it still maintains some degree of mental examination." KPSR

²⁸ A Drukpa Kagyu Lama

²⁹ *bzod pa* In this case, referring to the meditative stage of forbearance on the path of application.

³⁰ The following is a brief commentary on the famous teaching attributed to Garab Dorje called "Three Words that Strike the Crucial Point" [*tshig gsum gnad brdegs*] or "The Special Teaching of the Wise and Glorious Sovereign" [*mkhas pa sri rgyal po'i khyad chos*] and its commentary by Patrul Rinpoche himself. See The Lion's Gaze, Sky Dancer Press 1998 for a translation of the whole text and commentary by Khenpo Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal.

³¹ "Mind [*sems*] refers to dualistic conceptuality. Mind as such [*sems nyid*] refers to the true being [*chos nyid, dharmata* or 'dharmaness'] of mind, the emptiness". KPSR

³² "Because you are always abiding within dharmata" KPSR

³³ The three unmoving states [*mi 'gul ba gsum*] are "without moving from the postures of the body, the energy channels and currents are relaxed of their own accord; (2) without moving from the gazes of the eyes, appearances are enhanced; and (3) without moving from the state of the unfabricating mind, the expanse and awareness are integrated." (Jigme Lingpa)

³⁴ *cog bzhaq gsum* - the threefold "freely resting", usually: 1) freely resting mountain [*ri ba cog bzhaq*], 2) freely resting ocean [*rgya mtsho cog bzhaq*], 3) freely resting awareness [*rig pa cog bzhaq*].

³⁵ Though the text reads "while losing" [*shor ba*], it seems that it must be in the negative [*mi shor ba*] to make any sense here.