



# A STRING OF PEARLS

A COLLECTION OF DHARMA TALKS



Translated by Khenpo David Karma Choephel

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Many of the texts contained in the *Collected Works of Gampopa* are not writings of Gampopa *per se*. Instead, they are records of his oral teachings that were written down by his close disciples, who became great masters in their own right and had such formidable memories that they could write down his words verbatim after the teaching. The majority of these texts are notes on the profound instructions he gave some individuals or on questions and answers between him and his close disciples. But there are also some in the genre called in Tibetan *tshogs chos* (literally “teachings for groups”) — what we, in English, would call dharma talks.

The area of Dakpo, where Gampopa spent the latter part of his life teaching dharma, was remote and unpopulated when he first arrived there. But first one person came requesting teachings, then another, and eventually Gampopa had thousands of students staying at his monastery or scattered in the caves in the surrounding mountains doing strict meditation retreats under his guidance.

These were the people who would have gathered for his dharma talks, and accordingly, many of the dharma talks in Gampopa's *Collected Works* discuss topics that are appropriate mainly for such dedicated practitioners.

In contrast, the talks in *A String of Pearls* speak less about lofty views or advanced practices and more about the motivations we must continually foster if the dharma is to become the path — if it is to become truly transformative rather than a mere bandaid for temporary ills. Most of the talks open with reminders of impermanence and the futility of samsara. They exhort us to rouse loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta and to be scrupulous about karmic cause and effect. The words are plain-spoken, no-nonsense, and direct; they speak to issues that affect practitioners of today just as much as they did the people who gathered around Gampopa and listened to him teach some 800 years ago. Taking them to heart will surely benefit anyone who is interested in genuinely practicing the dharma.

Though the talks in *A String of Pearls* are not numbered in Tibetan editions, numbers are included here for convenience.

A STRING OF PEARLS  
A COLLECTION OF DHARMA TALKS



LORD GAMPOPA SÖNAM RINCHEN



I prostrate to the exalted gurus.

- (1) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice dharma, it is important to first meditate on impermanence. Unless you do so, there is a danger that all the dharma you practice will aid and abet your wishes for this life. What is the purpose of meditating on impermanence? It is to turn the mind away from this life. From meditating on impermanence, you know that all phenomena of appearance and existence, samsara and nirvana are transient, so you will not think of this life. That is why meditating on impermanence is necessary. If it does not turn your mind away from this life, meditating on impermanence is pointless. First, meditate on impermanence and turn your mind away from this life. Then meditate on the faults of samsara. You must turn your mind away from samsara in its entirety, so meditate on the faults of samsara, and then meditate on bodhichitta.

To meditate on relative bodhichitta, first plant, deep in your heart, the thought, “I shall make all sentient beings happy, free them

from suffering, and bring them to perfect buddhahood!” Then make everything you do be for the sake of all sentient beings, and do not do anything out of your own self-interest. Rousing the Mahayana attitude and focusing on others’ benefit is meditating on relative bodhichitta.

To meditate on ultimate bodhichitta, let the mind settle within the nature where all thoughts of apprehender and apprehended or self and different are not inherently established. If you practice in such a manner during all four types of conduct, it is called meditating on ultimate bodhichitta. Practicing in that way will bring the realization of ultimate bodhichitta.

I have no dharma but that.





( 2 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, at the present time, we must give a bit of thought. Think to yourself: this life is impermanent. It is like lightning in the sky, bubbles in water, and dew on a blade of grass. You must plant deep in your heart the thought that nothing you possess is of any use. Once you have done so, you must practice. To achieve buddhahood, you need a complete, unmistaken path. What is that complete, unmistaken path? That is what we call it when the preparation, main practice, and follow-through are all complete.

First, the preparation is the intention of thinking at the outset, “I shall make all sentient beings happy, free them from suffering, and bring them to perfect buddhahood!” Then the main practice is to make whatever you do the path of the six transcendences. At the very least, when you give something to a beggar, the thing you give is generosity. Giving peacefully is discipline. Not feeling an affliction toward them, even if their request is not skillful, is patience. Giving readily is diligence. Giving it without distraction and embraced by loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta

is dhyana. Knowing that the beggar, the giver, the thing, and the result are mere dreams and illusions is prajna. Practice the main path, understanding that it has all six transcendences. For the follow-through, stamp it with the seal of not focusing on it as anything at all. Then make everything the path, appearing within the nature of equality but not truly established.

In doing so, first mentally embracing it with the thought that it is for the sake of all beings is the Mahayana attitude. You awaken to buddhahood through the Mahayana; you cannot awaken to buddhahood, even in the slightest, through the Foundation vehicle. Thus it is important to rouse the Mahayana attitude. The main practice is the complete and unmistakable path of the transcendences. When the follow-through is imbued with the nectar of freedom from focus, there comes the awareness that everything is like space. By knowing that, you arrive at a point where imprints are no longer ingrained in the ground consciousness. Because imprints are not accumulated in the ground consciousness, there is no basis for karma. As there is no basis, you no longer have to follow good and bad karma. At that point, you will not take rebirth, so exactly that is called buddhahood. Knowing this is the complete and unmistakable path.

If now, at this time, you do not practice the complete and unmiss-taken path and do not accomplish all your aims, when you lie on your deathbed, sipping a drop of water as your last nourishment and taking your last breath, nothing at all can help you. Thus from this very moment on, you must put effort into practice and give yourself a reason to have confidence.

I have no dharma but that.



( 3 ) As for the dharma I would like to share with you all, you must practice the path of both accumulation and purification. Gathering the accumulations and purifying obscurations are important. This life is like lightning in the sky, so you do not know when you will disappear and go. It is important to plant deep in your heart the thought that nothing at all is of any use and to meditate on relative and ultimate bodhichitta. The meditation on death and impermanence is important because it leads to relative bodhichitta. Meditate on loving-kindness and compassion by contemplating the faults of samsara. Then you must give up your own self-interest and do whatever you can for others' sake.

In order to awaken to buddhahood, in the beginning, you need the wish to benefit sentient beings. In the middle, to awaken, you must act to benefit beings. Even at the end, once you have awakened, there is nothing left to do but benefit beings. So meditating on relative bodhichitta is first meditating on death and impermanence, then meditating on the faults of samsara, and finally solely

acting for the benefit of sentient beings with loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta.

When meditating on ultimate bodhichitta, three things must come together: training from past lives, your own effort, and receiving the guru's blessings. Without having trained in previous lives, the present precious human body with all seven qualities of the high realms<sup>1</sup> will not occur. That requires someone who has trained in gathering the accumulations in previous lives. But if you do not make effort, you will be left behind on the path of laziness and fail to achieve the noble path. If you do not receive the guru's blessings, you will not develop any qualities at all, and nothing will come of you. Even if something does, it will disappear, and your merit will be like water that has been cut off, as is explained in the quote:

Without a guru, there's no end to existence.

A boat with no one at the helm

Will not reach the other side.<sup>2</sup>

Thus first having the training, then practicing with your own effort, and following a qualified guru are the ultimate samaya of the path of secret mantra, so keep this samaya assiduously.

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1. The seven qualities of the high realms are a long life, good health, a fine body, good fortune, high caste, much wealth, and great prajna.

2. From *Accomplishing Wisdom* by Indrabhuti, DT rGyud 'grel wi, fol. 51a.

Merely knowing the words of the instructions does not help; it is like a parrot talking. The gurus achieved siddhi by practice, so we should also bless our continuums through devotion for the gurus and practice their instructions properly. This will bring various signs of accomplishment. Naropa followed his guru Telopa for twelve years. He was so devoted to his guru that, due to his dedication, even though Telopa did not give any actual instructions, he did whatever the guru said and developed various signs of accomplishment. Thus when a qualified guru and a receptive student come together, all the qualities can be accomplished in just an instant. First peace and stability will come, then clarity and nonconcept, and, finally, remaining like the flow of a river within the space-like meaning free of all elaborated predicates. As it says in the quote:

Perfect awakening in one instant,  
A single instance makes the difference...<sup>3</sup>

Thus, having faith and practicing meditation are all that is important. If you do not, when the time comes that you use your arms as a pillow and can swallow only water, nothing at all will help you but the dharma you have practiced. Thus it is critical to put effort into practice, starting right now.

I have no dharma but that.

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3. Cf. *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, v. 141.



( 4 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice dharma, you must know that there is no time to waste in this life. It is important to meditate with a great sense of urgency on loving-kindness and compassion. There are three ways to rouse these two: focusing on sentient beings, focusing on dharmas, and nonreferentially.

The first is rousing loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta by focusing on sentient beings. This means focusing on sentient beings who, not having realized suchness, have the suffering of dualism, and contemplating the thought, “If only sentient beings could be freed of suffering, encounter happiness, and achieve perfect buddhahood!” Then, in everything you do, no matter what, do not act out of your own desires. Instead, act for the sake of sentient beings, our lords. It is because of sentient beings, our lords, that we will awaken to completely perfect buddhahood, so it is important to focus on sentient beings. Developing liberation and omniscience is impossible if you have given up on any sentient being. Thus loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta

that focus on sentient beings are paramount; you should treasure them highly.

Rousing bodhichitta focused on dharmas means taking everything you do as a dream or illusion because all phenomena are dreams and illusions. As the quote says:

By meditating that illusory  
Phenomena *are* illusory,  
You'll reach illusory buddhahood.

Once you know that all phenomena are like dreams and illusions, since hatred is not established, hatred will be liberated on its own. Similarly, when you know that all attachment and aversion are like dreams and illusions, your mind will not engage in any attachment or aversion. When you practice all activities such as lying down or sitting as being dreamlike and illusory, the apprehension of appearances as true will collapse without difficulty. Through practicing that, you will have no difficulty in achieving the supreme siddhi in this life. This is what is called bodhichitta focused on dharmas.

Nonreferential bodhichitta is practicing the meaning that is devoid of all elaborated predication and that is not established as the essence of anything. For all those who have realized that meaning,



there is no way to feel anything but compassion for sentient beings, who are like deer caught in a snare. If you have not realized it, as Guru Atisha said, when you practice in such a manner the experience free of coming and going, free of the elaborations of meditation and meditator, it will come. These are the three ways to rouse loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta, so practice in this way.

I have no dharma but that.



( 5 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to teach you all, if at this time, we cut the ties to this life and never lack genuine faith as we practice, any dharma will be profound. At the end of the water tormas practice, there is a quote of the Buddha:

Do not do any misdeeds.

Practice abundant virtue.

Completely tame your own mind.

This is the teaching of the buddhas.

In addition to not doing any misdeeds, practice abundant virtue, and then tame your own mind. If you tame your own mind, that is exactly what we call the teaching of the buddhas. Practicing even just this one dharma is sufficient. From the *Wisdom at the Hour of Death*:

All things are impermanent, so meditate on the conception of having no attachment to anything whatsoever. Realizing

mind is wisdom, meditate on the conception of not seeking buddhahood anywhere else.

As this explains, all things are impermanent. The internal mind changes and is thus impermanent. There is nothing permanent about any external appearing object; about people who are older or younger; about friends, companions, spouses, jewels, or things. Thus you must grasp that nothing is true and practice. Your own body is on loan from the four elements, so it is impermanent — things that are borrowed are easily repossessed. Thus, since all things are impermanent, do not be attached to anything.

“Realizing mind is wisdom” means realization of the mind essence. This means knowing that self and other, appearance and emptiness, ultimate and relative, the expanse and wisdom are all inseparable. If you look for that nature anywhere else, you will not find it. You know it by looking at your own mind yourself. Realizing it is called buddhahood. As it is said:

From seeing the unseen, the path of seeing.

This is what is called the Joyous.

As that is the case, when you realize your mind essence as it is, that is called buddhahood. This is because it is seeing the unseen — your own mind, which you had never seen before. That itself

comes from realizing your own mind, so that is the meaning of “not seeking the buddha elsewhere.”

Likewise, if you cast all wishes for this life behind you and practice, no matter which gateway to the dharma you enter, you will accomplish your aims. It is important to give up all efforts for this life and then practice. If you teach dharma and act on wishes for this life, you will become what we call a worldly person telling dharma tales, so it is important to practice without mixing it with this life.

I have no dharma but that.



( 6 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, we individuals who practice dharma from the depths of our being need to think a bit:

This life is short, and there is much to know.  
We do not know how long this life will last,  
So like a swan who takes the milk from water,  
You must take willingly what you desire.<sup>4</sup>

Life is short and we haven't much time. Calculate it from the Four Great Kings to Akanishta, and then calculate the hells from that.<sup>5</sup> In comparison, human life is short, and within that, people in Jambudvipa have the shortest lives.<sup>6</sup> Even among them, nowadays

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4. From Atisha's *Entering the Two Truths* (*Sātyadvayāvatāra*, *bDen pa gnyis la 'jug pa*)

5. According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, the life span in the god realm of the Four Great Kings is 9,000,000 years, and the life span increases exponentially in each successive realm. In the first of the hell realms, the Reviving hell, a day is 9,000,000 years, and the life span is 500 years of 360 such days. Each successive hell realm has a correspondingly longer life span.

6. According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, humans on the other continents

everyone over sixty is living on borrowed time. Life is short, and there is much to know. There is no end of things to learn. Within the dharma, the shortest is the Water Torma of Jvalamukhi. It is said that there is someone down in Ü who wrote down everything he could find about the family of Jvalamukhi and filled an entire bookshelf. So you'll never run out of things to learn. If there is that much about Jvalamukhi — the shortest — why mention any other? As there is no end of things to learn, you cannot learn everything. Thus, like a swan who extracts the milk from water, you must take what you desire. For example, when cows cross the River Ganges in India, their milk drips into the water. Swans have a curdling agent in their bills, and when they stir the water with their bills, they can take the lumps of milk curd from the water to eat. Likewise, we need to take what we desire: Of all the various things we could learn, we need to take the instructions we desire.

It is necessary to practice the instructions because we must gain control over our mind and make it workable. Those who are interested in creation and completion need their mind to be workable for creation and completion. For everything else — whether the channels, winds, and bindus; the relative and the ultimate; mahamudra; or dzogchen — a workable mind is necessary.

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of Purvavideha, Godaniya, and Uttarakuru have life spans of 250, 500, and 1000 years respectively.

You might wonder what a workable mind is like. That is what we call it when we internalize the realization that mind is dharmata and then compassion arises automatically or when we realize the equality of ourselves and others. It means having little attachment to appearances as true. Until that occurs, we need to concentrate hard and practice. If we act on ordinary clinging to truth, even the high realms will be hard, let alone buddhahood. To quote from *Hevajra*:

No meditation and no meditator.  
There is no deity or mantra, either.  
In the nature without elaborations,  
The deity and mantra are truly present.

I have no dharma but that.



(7) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, individuals who have turned their mind away from this life should give up their own desires, resolve that everything they do be for the sake of sentient beings, and not let this depend upon their self-interest. Awakening comes because of sentient beings, our lords. We should rouse loving-kindness and compassion for sentient beings and practice with the hope and thought, “If only all beings could be happy and free of suffering!”

To sum it up and examine it, we must, according to the mahamudra tradition, practice the three freedoms from faults. Our practice must be free of the fault of appearance, free of the fault of emptiness, and free of the fault of nonarising.

How do we practice them? Freedom from the fault of appearance means that we should practice without apprehending appearances as true. Practice appearances as mere dreams and illusions. Practice them as appearing but having no nature. Knowing that appearances lack truth brings the knowledge that there is no truth



to suffering. When suffering is no longer self-existent, the dharma has become dharmā. When you know that all appearances of self and other lack truth, that is called being free of the fault of appearance.

Freedom from the fault of emptiness means being free of desire for emptiness. When you think, “It is empty, and I will realize it is empty,” and then want it to be empty, you have strayed. When you know that afflictions and thoughts are empty and that the objects that produce suffering are emptiness, they will not arise. That is called being free of the fault of emptiness.

Freedom from the fault of nonarising means that appearance and emptiness no longer alternate. Knowing that appearances do not arise and that emptiness also does not arise is called being free of the fault of nonarising. Just that is also called being free of dualistic cognition.

In actuality, freedom from the fault of appearance means being free of attachment to the extreme of appearance. Freedom from the fault of emptiness means being free of attachment to the extreme of emptiness. Freedom from the fault of nonarising means being free of attachment to the extreme of dualistic appearance. Thus, according to the scriptural tradition of mahāmudrā, freedom from the fault of appearance, freedom from the fault of emp-

tinness, and freedom from the fault of nonarising — the three freedoms from faults — are the qualities, the three kayas. Because of being free of the fault of appearance, the extreme of samsara is exhausted — it is the appearing and empty nirmanakaya. Because of being free of the fault of emptiness, you do not remain as a listener and in peace and happiness, so it is the unceasing sambhogakaya. Because of being free of the fault of nonarising, within the mind's desires, the wish for void emptiness is exhausted — the nonarising dharmakaya. To practice in that way is the great Brahmin Saraha's intent.

I have no dharma but that.



( 8 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, life is short. You must inspire yourself with the spur of remembering this in your being, and then entrust your mind to the gurus and the jewels. What this means is that life is impermanent. In the rare instance you live long, there is not much time to sit around, and there is no one beside the guru to show you the path. All the buddhas of the three times awakened to buddhahood because of gurus, so following a guru is important. As it is said:

Before you have a guru,  
There is not even the word “buddha.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus following a guru and listening to what they say is important.

You need to place your hopes in the source of refuge, the three jewels. For us practitioners, there is no other refuge than the jewels. If you truly entrust your mind to the jewels, there is no doubt that you will get all you want and need in this and future lives.

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7. Indrabhuti, *The Sadhāna of Accomplishing Wisdom*. DT rgyud 'grel wi, p. 41.

Once you have entrusted your mind to the guru and the jewels, the tradition of Aro Yeshe Jungne sums up the practice in three words: appearing, occurring, and being. You must practice these three.

What these three words mean is, what does it appear as? What does it occur as? If it is, what is it? When we look outward at appearances, they occur variously; they appear variously. When we look at ourselves, our own mind essence appears in various ways. Our own mind occurs in various ways. Both appearing and occurring are our own mind's thoughts. Those thoughts themselves are our mind essence. Since that is how it is, they arise from our mind essence, so it is the dharmata itself occurring variously. The occurrence of appearances is itself just the nonarising essence of our own mind. What makes appearances and mind indivisible is our mind essence itself. Thus they are appearances of the mind. Know that your own mind is nonarising and meditate. Also meditate that the variety of sensations are the nonarising, empty dharmakaya. Practice the nonarising nature of mind.

There is no need to be alarmed by appearances; they are your own mind. No matter what arises, whether bliss, clarity, or nonthought, none of it transcends the essence of the Mahayana dharmakaya, so it is important to meditate on the meaning of just that without

even a moment's distraction. If you apprehend all appearances as being true, even though all appearances are the dharmakaya, you will not transcend the three realms of samara.

Whether you are a layperson or not, do not have biased compassion. Even falcons and wolves have biased love, but it doesn't help. Saying you only have compassion for your own children and grandchildren lacks the essence of compassion. That is called attachment. Attachment can be confused with compassion — all you clever folks, give this some thought. Not having can be confused with not being attached. Since this is so, do not have compassion that is one-sided loving-kindness and compassion. Instead, meditate on it impartially for sentient beings, and instill it deep in your heart. Practice this until it becomes your heartfelt desire.

Regarding the practice, the dzogchen tradition sums it up in two sayings to be practiced: asserting that all phenomena that appear and exist are your own mind, and determining what that means. All phenomena that appear and exist are just this self-awareness. If you are happy, it is your mind that is happy, and if unhappy, it is your mind that is unhappy. As the scriptures say, “The higher realms, lower realms, external world, and inhabitants are your own mind.” In this way, determine that all phenomena of samsara

and nirvana that appear and exist are your own mind and then practice. That won't come in just a year or so. To practice it, determine that the nature of your mind is nonarising. Among all the phenomena that appear and exist, samsara and nirvana, there is nothing at all that is true and self-existent. Since they are empty of an essence, determine that the nature of mind is nonarising. There is not even any grasping them as being a mere dream or illusion. Since awareness arises impartially, determine that the mind's play is unceasing. Within the nature of mind, being nonarising and unceasing do not engage separately. Since they are like the ocean and waves, determine that the characteristic of mind is nonduality. Since mere nonduality itself does not dwell as an object of mind and cannot be analyzed by mind or logic, determine that the mind is inherently liberated, nondual in essence.

You might wonder why these four arguments are necessary. For the danger that appearances will become self-existent, the nature is taught to be nonarising. For the danger that it would become the extreme of emptiness, it is taught to be an unceasing display. For the danger that it would be lost to the extreme of dualistic appearance, it is taught to have the characteristic of nonduality. Since thinking it is nondual is called a view of conceptual experience, its essence is taught to be nondual. In this way, the four arguments teach the refutations of the reality of the four extremes,

so practice them until the mind's desires have been completely exhausted.

I have no dharma but that.



( 9 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice dharma, individuals who first give up all thoughts of this life and then wish to liberate themselves and all sentient beings from the ocean of samsara should begin by meditating on impermanence and turning their mind away from this life. If they then meditate on loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta, they will train their mind stream fully. If they do not, they will disgust people and not develop experience or realization. So do whatever you can to tame your mind. It is important to only give advice to yourself. If you tame your own mind stream within, the internal signs will appear externally.

That being so, to summarize, practice appearing, occurring, and being, and you will achieve all experiences, realizations, and results.

Know that various appearances are untrue, know that the mind is the nonarising dharmakaya, and meditate. Know that various sensations are also the nonarising, empty dharmakaya, and meditate



without distraction. By doing so, you will achieve all experience, realization, and results.

I have no dharma but that.



(10) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice the dharma, it is important to turn your mind away from this world and meditate on loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta. Never forget the thought, “I’ll free all sentient beings from suffering, bring them to happiness, and guide them to perfect buddhahood.” It is important to focus on the benefit of sentient beings from the depths of your heart without any wish for yourself, so do not give up on sentient beings. If you give up on a sentient being, you will part from both the Mahayana dharma and the spiritual friend, so it is a grave wrong. Selfishness and considering other people as enemies are inappropriate.

In terms of the secret mantra, all sentient beings are the male and female deities by nature, so how could it be right to feel afflictions toward a deity? In terms of mahamudra and dzogchen, the appearances of one’s own mind are the light, ornament, or display of the greatness of the ultimate dharmakaya. How could it be right to feel afflictions toward the light, ornament, and so forth of one’s own mind, the dharmakaya?

Instead of it being solely for the sake of our own mind, we must purify all beings' obscurations of body, speech, and mind. Thus for the sake of all sentient beings, we must dedicate all the virtue we have done with body, speech and mind to wandering beings.

To sum up the practice of that, the imprints have been with us for a long time, so we must concentrate on practice until we know that whatever appears is an illusion. Since we inherently have the five poisons, we must devote ourselves to practice until we can take the afflictions as the path. Because the end of time is far off, we must practice until samsara has been emptied.

The imprints have been too familiar for too long, so practice until you know that whatever appears is an illusion. This means that the imprints precede the actions, the imprints follow the actions, and the imprints are simultaneous with the actions. In this way, the imprints function in all three times, so take everything, however it may appear, as illusory by nature. By doing so, attachment to appearances as true will go away, disappearing like mist.

We inherently have the five poisons, so we must practice until we can take the afflictions as the path. We inherently have hatred. Even though it is nonarising, it is inherent, so when hatred simply arises, we say it arises even though it is nonarising. Merely knowing from meditation that hatred is nonarising and is a dream and

illusion is taking it as the path. Know that it is the same for all five afflictions. When you know that you are not tainted by the five poisons, you have taken them as the path.

The five poisons persist a long time, so we must apply ourselves until samsara has been emptied. As a general characteristic of the three realms, samsara has no beginning. But for an individual being, one can say that samsara has a beginning, because when they awaken to buddhahood, the beginning and end occur; that is all it is. Likewise, we are practicing for the sake of all sentient beings of the three realms and must meditate. We must meditate until we gain a stronghold ourselves. In the short term, when good and bad occur, there is the danger the bad might distract us and carry us backward. For example, if you extricate the rest of the elephant but not its tail, you have to go back for its tail, so we must meditate until we have severed the tethers to samsara.

I have no dharma but that.



(11) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice the dharma, this life is transient and time is short, so you must give away everything you can. You should train in giving with just fire and water. If you know you are unwilling to give even fire and water, you will be reborn as a hungry ghost with a blocked throat. If you get used to giving small things, eventually you will be able to give large things such as your head and limbs. You will become able to give your eyes with no difficulty. When you get to that point, you have separated yourself from samsara. So first train in giving fire and water, then minor things, and then you must give whatever you really need or really like.

In order to practice like that, in the tradition of the transcendences, samsara and nirvana can be summarized in two lines:

The way you grasp shows how you are afflicted.

Not seeing me or mine is said to be utterly pure.

As long as you have clinging, there are afflictions. Greed arises from ego-clinging, and hatred arises from ego-clinging. Hatred arises from clinging to children, and attachment arises from clinging to children. Hatred arises from perceiving enemies. Attachment arises from clinging to fame, and aversion from clinging to obscurity. Similarly, attachment comes from praise and so forth. Because of clinging to dualistic cognitions in various ways, instead of escaping samsara, we go to places of long-lasting suffering. Thus it is taught that we must do the opposite and make it so we cannot observe a me or a mine.

To practice that, look whether the self is true or not. Look whether the self is permanent or impermanent. Look whether the self has a nature or not. By looking in those ways, you see that the self is impermanent, freeing yourself of clinging to “mine.” If you have no attachment to a self, you are freed of all attachment. Up until that time, because of apprehending a me, mine arises. Because me and mine arise, we wander in samsara. Because me arises, there are my children, my enemies, my wealth, and so forth — many things that are mine. This makes us wander in samsara.

Know that “me” is merely a dream and illusion. Know that the self is impermanent. By knowing that, the self is not seen, and when the self is not seen, then no mine is seen. Thus the scriptures say,

“Not seeing me or mine is said to be utterly pure.” Since that is so, you must abandon all ego-clinging. Samsara is to be completely given up, so you must practice in order that me and mine cannot be seen.

Utter purity is a quality of nirvana, so also train in giving away everything from fire and water up to your own body, and abandon all attachment. Give up all greed. Identify all your faults and give them up. Look where all your secret faults are and banish them. You don't know when the next life will come. When illness strikes abruptly and death comes suddenly, having regret is bad karma, so strive and practice from this very moment on.

I have no dharma but that.



(12) **T**o offer you all some dharma, at this time, you must think a bit. You do not know when death will come. Once you are caught in the Lord of Death's noose, you will have no freedom. At this time when you have some control over yourself, you must cultivate the lasting harvest. First you must entrust your mind to the gurus, yidams, and jewels, and supplicate them fervently with faith, desire, longing, and dedication. Profit, fame, greatness, and praise in this life are no help to practicing dharma from your heart, so you must be able to jettison them. You must offer all your possessions and your body to the gurus and jewels and concentrate on practice. Thus, in order that all sentient beings may achieve perfect buddhahood, think that you will be generous, keep discipline, practice patience, be diligent, rest in the equipoise of dhyana, and develop prajna. Plant the thought that you must practice all six transcendences deep in your heart.

To sum up dharma practice, there are two things you should know, the ultimate and the relative. Relatively, there is karma and the ripening of karma. There are all the afflicted phenomena such



as birth, aging, pleasure, and pain. There is the utterly pure, nirvana, and the qualities, kayas, and wisdoms, as explained in the *Prajnaparamita*. Thus as long as, in the relative, we have thoughts of self and other, virtue and misdeeds are true. Thus we need to be extremely conscientious about virtuous and unvirtuous karma. If we accumulate virtuous karma now, the pleasure of a good result will ripen in our next life, but if we commit misdeeds and bad karma now, in the next, the resulting suffering of the lower realms will ripen.

No result occurs without a cause, and buddhahood does not come from a wrong or lesser cause. It is said in the “Chapter of Collecting Qualities” in the *Prajnaparamita*:

Until the roots of virtue are perfected,  
You won't achieve the highest emptiness.

If not supported by the cause — the ten virtues, the ten dharma actions, or the six transcendences — you will not achieve buddhahood. There is a great danger that the view will become empty talk and your mind will remain ordinary.

As long as you think yourself to be real, the six realms of samsara are also real. When you no longer cling to yourself as real, the six realms are also automatically liberated and disappear. Thus, until

your clinging to yourself as real is liberated on its own, the relative is true. As long as that is so, there is also cause, result, and the ripening of karma, so it is important to believe in karmic cause and effect.

When the relative has been liberated on its own and you have abandoned a “me” or a self, then it is taught that ultimately, there is no ripening of karma. The point at which that ultimate truth has been realized is when you are freed of desirous thoughts, the pride of conceit, and jargon of speech and words — all thoughts of self or other are purified on their own, and there is no appearance of self or other. At that point, you have realized the ultimate. Then there is neither karma nor the ripening of karma. When you have realized that reality, you are freed of self-interest, and you altruistically do whatever is helpful for sentient beings. As your realization improves, your compassion grows stronger. It is just as Master Vairochana said:

Although you realize the meaning beyond birth and death,  
Composite virtue must be continuous.

Have you realized the ultimate, or does the relative appear? You must look at yourself. Even if you have realized the ultimate, meditate on compassion for sentient beings. You must bring even more benefit to sentient beings. Master Nagarjuna said:

The dharma taught by the buddhas  
Is based on the two truths,  
The worldly relative truth  
And the truth of the ultimate meaning.

You must practice the two truths inseparably. I have no dharma  
but that.



(13) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, at this time, our lives are short. We must abandon what needs to be discarded in its entirety and apply the fine antidote that will prevent us from being reborn. A conscience and faith are important.

It is possible that faith might fade at times. At such times, if you have a conscience, it will frequently aid you in not parting from the dharma. The faith of having a good conscience might also develop, so a conscience is important. If you lack a conscience, when your faith grows stale, you might do too many nondharmic acts. Then you would have no difficulty doing acts considered wrong in this world, even killing your parents. Doing such a bad act a single time, you will lose all shame, and all your wishes will be blocked and disappear. Thus faith cannot stand on its own, so it is important to have a conscience. Similarly, a weakling cannot be a king. When faith and conscience come together, whatever you do becomes dharma, like refining gold with iron sulfate. Though gold is always excellent, refining makes it even better. Similarly, in addition to practicing dharma with faith alone, your

conscience will make you think, “How could embarrassing myself in front of others be for my own and others’ good?” Afraid of shaming yourself in front of others, you will be careful in your conduct from that time onward, accomplishing all benefit for yourself and others.

When faith and conscience come together in your practice, you must look to see how many qualities have arisen in your being. If you take all appearances as true and all pain, pleasure, self, other, wealth, things, followers, and servants to be self-existent truths, you are no different from an ordinary, worldly person. Thus you must decrease your defiled ego-clinging. If you do not have the aim that everything you do be for the sake of sentient beings, it becomes the Foundation vehicle, and you will achieve no result beyond that of the noble listeners. If you know that whatever appears is dreamlike and illusory, all you do will be like dreams and illusions. You will be acting for beings’ sake, and that is called having trained your mind in the Mahayana path. When you work for others’ benefit in a dreamlike and illusory fashion without any wish for yourself, that is called being a bodhisattva. Doing whatever helps sentient beings, our lords, without any thought of treasuring yourself and benefiting others without wearying of it is called being a bodhisattva. When the benefit for others occurs

effortlessly, spontaneously, and continuously with no conception of other, that is called perfect buddhahood.

That being the case, if you act on appearances as being self-existent, you will stray into being an ordinary individual. If you do not focus on benefiting others, you will stray into becoming a listener or *pratyekabuddha*. If that happens, dharma talk has not helped you at all.

Bodhichitta is the wish

For perfect buddhahood for others' sake.

If you do not dedicate all the virtue you do to others' benefit, it is difficult for even the dharma to become the path. You will not awaken to buddhahood through dharma that has not become the path. If you do not awaken to buddhahood, there is no happiness in samsara. For that reason, for the sake of sentient beings, rouse bodhichitta and make dedications. It is important to know that instruction and practice it.

Since that is so, first, faith is important. Let conscience be an aid to your practice. Then you need unfabricated loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta. For that, you must treasure others more than yourself. That requires that emptiness and compassion be simultaneous. From the *Mahamudra Tantra*:

Those who engage emptiness without compassion  
Have not found the supreme path.  
However, if you only meditate on compassion...

The meaning of this is that emptiness without compassion cannot function as the path, and compassion without emptiness also cannot serve as the path. We need to take emptiness as having the essence of compassion — as is said, “emptiness with the essence of compassion.” Practice emptiness and compassion simultaneously.

I have no dharma but that.



(14) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, those who have put this life out of their mind and strive toward the next life should request from an exalted guru the instructions on merging self and other. To practice them, whether they are explained as the nine vehicles of the Nyingma; the four tantras of the Sarma Secret Mantra; the three precious baskets from the vehicles of the characteristics; the three vehicles, four stages, and nine yogas of the essence cycle;<sup>8</sup> or the two or four truths, to summarize, all the conduct of a dharma practitioner is included in the four ways to digest food, the three ways to occupy a place, and the two types of conduct. These include all the conduct of a dharma practitioner.

With food, quite a lot comes to monastics, gurus, those who have faith, and so forth, and there are four ways to digest it. The best yogis have confidence in the view at the level of their realization,

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8. As Maitripa describes in “Taking the Pith Instructions of the Philosophical Schools as the Path,” (sgrub mtha’i man ngag lam du long ba), the three vehicles are those of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas; the four stages of those of the shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, mind only, and middle way; and the nine yogas are the lesser, medium, and greater of each of the three vehicles.



so clinging to appearances as true has collapsed, and they realize that appearances have no nature. Thus they are free of thoughts of food as good or bad and digest it naturally. This is digesting through realization, the best.

The next is digesting through meditation: Though dullness and agitation generally should be remedied by a meditation such as tummo, here all the external faults have been naturally dispelled by the meditation on the channels and winds itself. From meditating on the channels and winds, all qualities dawn, like space, free of center or edge. Digesting through that is the middling yogi.

The next is digesting through the meditation on loving-kindness and compassion in equipoise and post-meditation. It is long habituation to equipoise and is like the moon on the day after the new moon. When after the preliminary of loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta, you meditate and samadhi first develops, you simply see the essence of mind. When that happens, in postmeditation, cognitions that cling to truth decrease, and you digest in that way. This is the lesser middling yogi.

Next is the yogi who digests through effort at spiritual practice with body and speech, continually practicing creation and completion in the four sessions, or prostrating, circumambulating,

making tormas, and recitation. This is the lowest. Thus there are four: the best, the two middling, and the lowest.

There are three ways a dharma practitioner occupies a place. Occupying a place continuously by doing a mountain retreat is the best. Occupying a place by walling oneself in is middling. Occupying a place by receiving teachings and transmissions and keeping vows is the lowest.

Regarding the two types of conduct, the greater is to remain within dharma and additionally do whatever benefits sentient beings. The lesser is to be peaceful and subdued in conduct, inspiring faith in others.

In this way, the four ways of digesting food and the three ways of occupying a place are important. The two types of conduct are essential. That being so, all you monks, do not just digest your food any which way. You will not even be counted among the ranks of dharma practitioners, so you must have one of those methods.

Staying in a town where mental diversions arise and staying in a place where vows and samaya are not kept are aids for both you and others to go to the lower realms. If you do not have dharma yourself, you will denigrate others, so these three ways a practitioner occupies a place are important. If you do not have either

of the two types of conduct, you will not benefit either yourself or others. Thus have the vows in your being and be subdued in body, speech, and mind to benefit beings.

Among these, it is absolutely crucial for a practitioner to have one of the ways of digesting food, one of the ways of occupying a place, and both types of conduct. When they come together, benefit beings, and practice for the sake of yourself and others. As the scripture says:

Entering the path to accomplishing great aims for self and  
other:

By that great auspiciousness, may there be joy and goodness  
here and now.

Benefiting others accomplishes great benefit for yourself. That is exactly it, so that is what is called great auspiciousness. Practice like that.

I have no dharma but that.



(15) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, when you have truly been practicing dharma, it is impossible not to realize death and impermanence. This life is impermanent. There is no one who has been born but will not die. So no matter what, death is certain. We don't know whether we will die now or later. Life has no fixed length, so we do not know when we will die. Because the body has no essence, we do not know when we will die. There are many causes of death. Food sustains the body, but choking on food can be a cause of death. We clothe this body in clothes, but smothering it with clothes can be a cause of death, and so on — all of the favorable conditions can become causes of death. There are innumerable other causes of death, such as enemies, water, and so forth, so we do not know when we will die.

Well then, if we do not know when we will die, is there anything that can help at death? Nothing at all will help. The wealth you have accumulated will not help. Death is not fooled by a rich man's jewels. Leaving your wealth behind, you will go alone, bereft. Even being surrounded by relatives will not help at death; it

will harm you later. Well then, this body supports life, so will it help at death? you wonder. Nothing at all — your body or anything else — will help. You are overconfident and don't understand. Since this is so, death is certain. When you will die is uncertain. You do not know when you will die. Nothing at all will help at death. So how can you have the time to leave spiritual training to laziness? You must practice. You must think, "O my! What time do I have to sit and relax?" and plant deep in your heart a feeling of urgency, thinking, "That is foolish!"

When practicing, you must jettison all wishes for this life and follow an authentic guru. Without a guru, it is as if the path to liberation is lost. As a scripture says:

Though you may have all qualities,  
Without a guru, there's no end to existence.  
A boat with no one at the helm  
Will not reach the other side.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, it is also said:

All buddhas of the three times appeared  
Because of following gurus.  
On the other side, where there is no guru,

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9. From *Accomplishing Wisdom* by Indrabhuti, DT rGyud 'grel wi, fol. 51a.

There is not even the word for buddha.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore follow an authentic guru, and offer them your body, possessions, and all the virtue you have gathered in the three times. Dedicate all the virtue of the three times that arises from that to be shared with all sentient beings, and arouse bodhichitta. Whatever faith or devotion you have for the gurus and jewels, focus all of it on the benefit of sentient beings without any wish for yourself. It is important that all the virtue you have done with body, speech, and mind be imbued with the nectar of having no focus. If you do not focus on any phenomenon, that is samadhi. As long as you have attachment to anything and a focus, that is one-pointedness. When it becomes free of focus, that is freedom from elaboration. When you know that whatever appears is mind, that is one taste. When experience is continuous, that is the yoga of nonmeditation. By practicing in that way, you will accomplish your own and others' benefit.

I have no dharma but that.

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10. Ibid.



(16) **A**s for the dharma I am offering you great meditators, at this time, when life is impermanent and short, you should arouse the Mahayana attitude to some degree. To summarize dharma practice, you must practice what are called the three yogas: the yogas of mantra, substance, and phenomena. As said in *Hevajra*:

Mantra, substance, and phenomena:

If these three yogas are complete,

There is no point to staying in samsaric places.

The yoga of mantra is the yoga of entering the gate of any activity such as creation or completion. Meditating on deity yoga is the creation phase. Knowing that deity is like the moon in water, illusion, or rainbow, is the completion phase. Similarly, if you meditate on creation and completion in union, you will complete both accumulations. Through just that, you will awaken to buddhahood. Meditating according to the creation phase only will block the gateways to the lower realms. Meditating in that way is mantric discipline. That is the yoga of mantra.

The yoga of substance is knowing that all wealth and substance are like dreams and illusions. By practicing that, clinging to appearances as true falls apart and disappears. Due to knowing they are like dreams and illusions, you will reach the levels of the pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas. As is said:

By meditating that illusory  
Phenomena *are* illusory,  
You'll reach illusory buddhahood.

The yoga of phenomena is realizing that all phenomena are like the center of a clear sky and then realizing that self and other, is and is not, and so forth are all equal. As a scripture says:

By meditating that space-like  
Phenomena *are* like space,  
You will reach space-like buddhahood.

That is how you should practice the three yogas. If you are interested in the activity of mantric creation and completion, do the yoga of mantra. If the yoga of substance is easier, meditate on instructions of the dreamlike and illusory. If you are interested in the yoga of phenomena, meditate that all phenomena are like the center of space.



Well then, how do you practice all three yogas on one seat? First meditate on the creation and completion phases. Then in the four activities or postmeditation, meditate on the dreamlike and illusory. Whatever you do, afterwards rest without mental activity, with no focus on anything, like the center of space. By practicing like that, you will accomplish all benefits for yourself and others. Practice like that.

I have no dharma but that.



(17) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice dharma, at this time, with our present mind, we have gained the basis of a human body. We have the five sensory faculties. We have been born in a place where the true dharma has spread. Such a basis has arisen from the merit we have accumulated in past lives. Before we are stricken by a fatal illness, we must practice some dharma. What is important for us to practice is giving up the ten nonvirtues and accomplishing the ten virtues.

Giving up the ten nonvirtues is giving up the three of body, the four of speech, and the three of mind. Regarding the ten virtues, with your body, give up taking life and in addition, save as many lives as you can. Give up taking that which is not given, and in addition, give as much as you can. Give up sexual misconduct, and in addition, keep the vow of chaste conduct.

With your speech, give up lying, and in addition, teach the dharma. There are three types of divisive speech: forceful, insinuating, and clandestine. Forceful divisive speech is inserting yourself

between two parties. Insinuating divisive speech is finding a way to split them. Clandestine is covertly inserting yourself. Give those three up, and in addition, speak with gentle words. Give up idle chatter, and in addition, practice silence. Give up covetousness, and in addition, rejoice in others' wealth. Give up malice, and in addition, do whatever you can to help others. Give up wrong view, and in addition, confess the misdeeds you have done and meditate on rejoicing in virtuous acts.

In this way, give up the ten nonvirtues and practice the antidotes — the ten virtues and six transcendences. They must not be separated; all six must be complete in each one. Prajna and means are unified, so when you give a gift, know that the maturation and karma are dreamlike and illusory. Know that all six are dreamlike and illusory. In the words of the Victor, when practicing transcendent generosity, practice in a manner where even transcendent generosity is not observed and where the path has no attributes. He taught this for all six transcendences. Since it is so, the root or foundation of all dharma is giving up the ten nonvirtues and accomplishing the ten virtues — practicing the six transcendences for other's benefit.

I have no dharma but that.



(18) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, to truly practice dharma, you must know that worldly concerns are never a friend. It is said:

When we look out at this confused world,  
All acts are pointless, causes of suffering.  
If whatever you intend will be of no benefit,  
Always cultivate looking at your own mind.

That being so, with our present mind, we must always give a bit of thought to the mind.

When you look outward at worldly affairs, everything you have done has been pointless. No matter how many properties and houses you have, you must leave them behind and go, so building them is pointless. All your worldly acts have only been nondharma. In the daytime, you go to work and are in a state of busyness. Morning and evening are given to the stomach's wishes, so you have no chance to practice dharma. Thus your busyness and

hardship are futile. Anxious to sustain this life, you do not hold back from misdeeds, hardship, and ill-repute, tormenting yourself and leading only to suffering. It is suffering in this lifetime, and, as you will be reborn in the lower realms, it will be suffering in the next as well.

When we look at the three poisons, greed gets you worked up both externally and internally, so you act on it, disregarding your conscience. In this life, your mind falls under the sway of business and profit, and when you die, you will be born a hungry-ghost and suffer — it is pointless. Hatred riles and vexes you; you disregard death and your mind stream burns. It is suffering in this lifetime and, as you are reborn in hell, suffering in the next — it is pointless. Because of delusion, you do not recognize whether something is a virtue or a misdeed. You are mistaken in your behavior and unable to distinguish the nature of virtue and misdeeds. Though you may be clever and sharp, you swindle and cheat, and as you act, your cleverness destroys your wishes. In this lifetime, nothing satisfies you, and you are never content. With never a moment's leisure, it is suffering. Because of not recognizing virtue and misdeeds, in the next you will be reborn as an animal, and all that suffering will have been pointless.

Thus all worldly activities are pointless causes of suffering. If no matter what you intend, they will not help, think about it, all you clever folks. On the day of your death, nothing will help. You will be parted from dear and beloved children. You will leave everything — your home, followers, and so forth — and go. No matter how important it is, you will be unable to say a single word or see anyone. You are overconfident and haven't thought it through.

There is a quotation:

“If at the time of death, whatever I look to will be of no help, what should I do?” he asked.

“Child, nothing at all will help, so always meditate on your mind.”

Looking at your mind helps, and is simple. But what is the simple way to look? If you gather the causal accumulation of merit and then look at the resultant accumulation of wisdom, that is called looking at the mind. If you are interested in the creation and completion phases of mantra, that is also called looking at the mind. In equipoise, know that all appearances are mind and look at your own mind. It cannot be established as a shape or color. It is devoid of anything that can be identified, so on its own, it is

naturally liberated from all extremes of being or not being and from all elaborations. Looking at the mind in equipoise is when the mind is not engaging anything; this is truly looking at the mind. In postmeditation, meditating that it is dream-like and illusory is also looking at the mind. In this way, always cultivate looking at the mind.

By practicing in this way, the dharma will become an antidote for the afflictions. When it has become the antidote for the afflictions, then you are able to look at the mind. In the dharma, it is said:

To benefit all sentient beings,  
Who sink in the mire of ignorance,  
Their minds disturbed by the afflictions...<sup>11</sup>

This is how it is, so it is extremely important for the dharma to become the antidote to the afflictions.

Generally, if you do the best practice, you will realize the meaning that never dies. If you do middling practice, you will reach the beginning of the path. If you do the least practice, you will not be born in the lower realms. Thus, striving at practice is important, so meditation is important. Without meditating, few turn their minds away from desire or free themselves from dying. Because

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11. From *Reciting the Names of Manjushri*, v. 8.

of this, meditation is important. Meditation overcomes appearances so that all clinging to truth is liberated on its own, so meditation is important. If you ask whether there is a thing to meditate upon, it is as explained: “No meditation and no meditator.”<sup>12</sup> There’s nothing about which you can say, “This is what I should meditate on.” That practice of the ultimate is called meditation. Practice like that.

I have no dharma but that.

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12. *The Hevajra Tantra in Two Books*, DK rGyud nga, fol. 6.





(19) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, in this age, our life is but a brief, fleeting moment. At this time when we have the leisures, resources, and all our faculties, we might die before we have reached even the beginning of the path to enlightenment.

In order to awaken to buddhahood, we need the complete and un-mistaken causes. It will not happen without a cause or with mistaken or lesser causes. Thus buddhahood will not happen without gathering the two accumulations. It will not happen through an extremist view, meditation, and conduct or through the Foundation vehicle dharma of the listeners and pratyekabuddhas. You might wonder, “But why cannot buddhahood be attained through the dharma of the listeners and pratyekabuddhas?” If instead of rousing bodhichitta for the sake of sentient beings, you wish only to achieve peace and happiness for yourself and do not focus on benefitting others, omniscience will not arise.

Well then, how must we practice to achieve buddhahood? Practice without falling into the extreme of lacking the causes. Do

not practice a wrong or inferior path. In order to practice in this way, stomp on timidity. Cut the ties. Counter attachments. Identify your faults. Banish hidden faults. Take all pleasure and pain as the dharma nature.

First, to stomp on timidity, no matter what you are attached to, apply your conscience and so forth. Then to cut the ties, it is important to think that children, wealth, and so forth are like dreams and illusions. They are impermanent and untrue. They have no nature. To counter attachments, there is a quote that says, “Give away anything you are attached to.”<sup>13</sup> Relinquish everything you are attached to and give it away. To identify your faults is to view the three poisons as faults and thus give up the fault of ego-clinging. To banish hidden faults means to expel them from the land (the alaya) from fear of wandering in the three lower realms due to the three poisons.

Abandon those and make sure you have reached the beginning of the Mahayana path. Think of all sentient beings with loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhichitta. Implant deep in your heart for all beings the thought, “May it be just so for them! If only they were happy and free of suffering and achieved perfect buddhahood!” You should use your body, speech, and mind for virtue,

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13. From Saraha’s *The Treasury of Song*, DT rGyud ’grel wi, fol. 71.

so when you get out of bed every morning, rouse bodhichitta by thinking, “Today, for the sake of all sentient beings, I will use my body, speech, and mind for virtue.” If you do this, that resolve will make whatever you do during the day virtuous.

In all dharma, transforming it with bodhichitta is the main thing, so a good resolve is important. Whatever you do will become virtue. But if your resolve is negative, it will become a misdeed. A good resolve is like having an excellent internal servant, so even when you go to bed at night, your body, speech, and mind will be virtuous and thus be for the benefit of sentient beings; this is important. Doing this will make all you do virtuous, and by the power of that, you will reach the beginning of the path. Thus a good resolve is important. Rousing bodhichitta in this way will turn your mind away from all pleasures and pains and away from this lifetime, and your practice will effortlessly take you to the nature of the dharmakaya.

I have no dharma but that.



( 20 ) **A**s for the dharma I would like to share with you all, we must at this time turn our minds away from this life and practice. To sum it up, we must instill deep in our hearts the thought that nothing is of any use. Then for practice, we must practice the four yogas. The four yogas are first, the yoga of one-pointedness, then freedom from elaborations, the one taste of the manifold, and nonmeditation.

Of those four, the first, one-pointedness, is identified as being able, once you have caught your mind precisely with any of the techniques for holding the mind, to meditate at will. You can remain without your mind straying from a single focus. As you sustain that, the meaning of freedom from elaborations will dawn. Once you know that all phenomena are free of elaborated predicates, everything you have previously listened to or contemplated becomes like a husk on the outside, and your mind no longer has attachment. At that time, supplicate the guru, make offerings to the jewels, read and listen to profound dharma, and so forth. You must stabilize realization.

At that time of such realization, you might say, “There is no particular dharma to practice. There is no guru, no jewels, and no yid-am. There is no accomplishment and no siddhi to accomplish.” There is the danger then that you will lose devotion for the guru and that maras will come to obstruct you. It is important to supplicate the guru fervently, to make offerings to the jewels and yid-am, to meditate on loving-kindness and compassion without any bias, and to have no pride. If your devotion fluctuates, your experience will fluctuate, and you will have obstacles, so have continuous devotion for the guru. Experience and realization depend upon devotion, so the guru creates the path, experience, and realization. It is taught in the tradition of the vehicle of Secret Mantra that blessings are called the path of the guru. By practicing like that, experience and realization will come unceasingly.

As you sustain just that, the one taste of the manifold will dawn. As soon as that has arisen, you know that all appearances are mind. The mind arises one in taste with the empty, and the empty arises one in taste with nonarising. At that point, if you lose faith when you see your guru and vajra siblings, that is a mara creating obstacles. Thus at that time, offer your body and possessions to the guru and the jewels. Supplicate them. Compare your realization with dharma siblings of the same guru or with experienced great meditators. It is important to read the profound dharma

of the youth Chandraprabha and to listen to the sutras, tantras, and great treatises. Will there be obstacles after one taste of the manifold has arisen? Until thoughts cease, there will be obstacles. Once the one taste of the manifold has arisen, it is taught that it is impossible for envy to come, because pure appearances occur, so visions of the yidam and some clairvoyances may arise.

Whatever qualities arise, do not grasp at them as true. Knowing they are mind will refine your realization further and further so that the realization of nonmeditation will arise. Meditating while mentally grasping “meditation” as true is called lacking meditation, lacking loving-kindness and compassion. With nonmeditation itself, there is nonmeditation that lacks compassion and the two accumulations, but this is not that. Here, nonmeditation means that it never comes and goes and that it merges into homogeneity so that there is no clinging to realization to meditate upon or to nonmeditation. Mahamudra meditation is just that. Once all aims of grasping, fixation, clinging to truth, and wishing have been liberated on their own, just rest in the unaltered, natural state of the mind essence — that is all it is.

The way to practice this is to train first in one-pointedness, then in simplicity, one taste, and the great yoga of nonmeditation — the realization of mahamudra free of any exertion at the path.

The qualities that arise from that are gathering the accumulations and preparing the conditions for progressing along the path so that you realize your own mind and achieve the benefit for yourself, the dharmakaya that is like the center of space. Your body becomes the vajrakaya, so you achieve the sambhogakaya ornamented with the inconceivable marks and signs, appearing but devoid of nature, like a rainbow or cloud. In order to benefit others, nirmanakayas arise from compassion continuously and spontaneously and benefit all wandering sentient beings throughout space wherever there is someone to tame, without any need for effort and with no partiality, like rain falling from the sky.

All of us who teach dharma should know how to teach in each session the complete and unmistakable path of devoting our minds to the benefit of sentient beings as a preliminary, training in the virtue in the middle, and making dedications at the end. Those who listen should also understand it thus.

I have no dharma but that.



With constant assiduousness, Lama Gomtsul wrote down the teachings of the precious guru Gampopa in clear, square letters, not mixing them with other accounts and without omissions and additions. Please do not disseminate them to those not in the same tradition of gurus, to those who lack interest, or to those who do not practice.

This has two lineages, the mantra and the Kadampa. The lineage of mantra is from Vajradhara and the wisdom dakinis to Telopa and the Great Brahmin. They passed them to Naropa and Maitripa, who passed them to Marpa, then Milarepa, who gave them to Guru Gampopa. The other lineage is from Shakyamuni to Maitreya, Asanga, Shantideva, Suvarnavipa, Atisha, Dromtönpa, Chennagawa, Gyagom, Guru Gampopa, and Lama Gomtsul. From there, they have passed down successively. This completes the great dharma teachings. Virtue! Sarva mangalam.



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