



## Garland of Night-Blooming Water Lilies<sup>1</sup>

A Commentary on the Guru Siddhi Mantra

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*Homage to Padmasambhava, Glorious Great Bliss!  
Wisdom-kaya, unity beyond all training,  
Your dazzling smile is the play of immortal empty bliss.  
A resplendent moon new-birthered from a lotus,  
Arising in the city of the wheel of enjoyment,<sup>2</sup>  
You are the epitome of whatever brings joy!*

There are many ways to discuss this king of secret mantras. Now everyone—starting with young monks, barely able to fasten their belts, who perform ritual services for even the livestock of rich householders—recites the syllables of this mantra, loudly boasting tall claims. It appears that they have not, however, so much as approached gaining certainty about its meaning. So I will explain it in colloquial terms, using phrasing that is concise and easy to understand. My intended audience is neither the great scholar-practitioners of the Nyingma tantras, nor the orthodox scholars who adhere to the dry words of disputative intellectualists. This is not a point-scoring investigation concerned with being systematic; I am writing for the many town-dweller mantrins, neither monk nor bönpö, who mistakenly confuse the fundamentals of Secret Mantra with mantra of their own creation. Those of you with weak intelligence, unable to understand grand structures of meaning but interested nonetheless in reciting this mantra—you non-intellectuals, casually lend your ears and take in the nonsense of these words.

I will explain it in accordance with the life and liberation stories of Padma, Lord of Victors. That way, the mantra will be easy to bring to mind. There are two parts to this:

1. Recalling the qualities of the Great Master
  - 1.1. The main explanation of the Master's vast qualities
    - 1.1.1. The presentation of the general mantra [*om, ah and hung*]
    - 1.1.2. The presentation of [vajra guru,] the specific mantra according to the main events of Guru Rinpoché's life and liberation
  - 1.2 A description of [padma,] the name of the Guru who possesses these qualities
2. Supplicating him to grant all our wishes, perfectly and completely [with

siddhi *hung*].

## ***1. Recalling the qualities of the Great Master***

### **1.1. The main explanation of the Master's vast qualities**

#### *1.1.1. The presentation of the general mantra om, ah and hung*

The mantra begins with “*om ah hung*”. Generally, “*om*” is placed at the beginning of a mantra. *om* is the mantra of consecration: it imparts glory, makes good fortune abound, and much more beside. In short, it is explained in *The Tip of The Vajra*<sup>3</sup> and elsewhere that “*om*” embodies auspiciousness. In this context, however, all three syllables together—*om ah hung*—shall be explained as being the essence of the three vajras:

#### *The meaning of the syllable om*

“*om*” refers to the vajra-body of the buddhas. While generally all the buddha form bodies are vajra, it is primarily “*om*” that the scriptures call the “wisdom wind swirling in basic space.” In other words, wind can be the pure support for the great bliss of co-emergent wisdom, and, when it has gained strength or reached maturity, it thus can become of a single essence with the innate mind of great bliss. In the uncommon system of unsurpassed mantra, the coarse and subtle bodies are divided into three:

- 1) the inner coarse body,
- 2) the outer coarse body, and
- 3) the subtle body with its three thousand subdivisions, along which the wind element travels.

When all these winds are pacified within the complete and utter purity of basic space, the innate wind will arise as the mudra of the magical net of empty-appearance. This is given the name “the vajrakaya of the rainbow body of great transference.”

#### *The meaning of the syllable ah*

“*ah*” refers to vajra-speech. Moreover, as is taught in the *Magical Net*:<sup>4</sup>

“A” is not empty, nor is it not empty,  
Nor is it an objectifiable middle.

In that general context, vajra-speech is the totality of the tonal modulations of all the buddhas’ speech—limitless and in harmony with the different convictions and conceptions of all types of beings. Yet in the uncommon system of Atiyoga, the king of vehicles, the letter ‘A’ signifies the unchanging, definitive meaning. Another tantra states:

In the heart center it shines,  
Indestructible and pure, like a lamp;  
Unchanging and most subtle —  
“A”, the sacred lord.

This explains the syllable ‘a’ as symbolizing the drop of unchanging wind-mind. It holds the same meaning as the inexpressible bindu of empty-awareness—the inwardly radiant youthful body in the vase of the luminous vajra-peak. It appears as the natural sound of the chakra of wind’s expression.<sup>5</sup> It is also the basis for all expression that emerges from within basic space. This will be easy to understand if one becomes well-versed in the different stages of the wind’s expansion and gathering from birth to death.

*The meaning of the syllable hung*

“Hung” refers to the vajra mind of all buddhas. It is the luminous, naturally arisen wisdom which is of a single taste with the spontaneously present subtle wind, the quintessence of the vajra rainbow body of great transference mentioned above. “hung” is thus the true nature, the final character actualized of all that is; it is purity reaching its ultimate horizon. Ever-pristine empty-awareness is never not composed within the unborn nature that is free from all complexity; yet, incidentally, all pure qualities are there, totally complete and manifest, in their transience. All the infinite great qualities of the buddhas are indivisible—such as the ten powers and the four types of fearlessness—and so the word “vajra” is applied.

It is therefore rightly said that the vast collected qualities of the tathagatas’ three vajras are fully perfected within the nature of the inexhaustible wheel of adornment of the Lord Padmakara’s three secrets. It goes without saying that there are also the uncommon profound points within the systems of Sutra and Tantra in general, the unsurpassable system of Secret Mantra in particular, and especially in our system of the natural Great Perfection. Indeed, an explanation of these by an immature numbskull such as myself could probably fill a whole stack of pointless volumes. But, as I have said, this text is just an introduction for young venerables my own age, and for simple, older folk.

*1.1.2. The presentation of [vajra guru,] the specific mantra according to the main events of Guru Rinpoche’s life and liberation.*

“Vajra guru” translates into Tibetan as “dorjé lama,” [and into English as “vajra or indestructible teacher”]. As it says in *The Meeting of Father and Son*:<sup>6</sup>

So that the Great Hero, highly skilled in means,  
Would completely ripen sentient beings,  
The Victor, in millions upon millions of worlds,  
Displayed himself as the Buddha.  
Even now, O Guide,

You perform this display of many Buddhas.

In reality, the Lord of Victors Padmakara had already accomplished complete and great awakening uncountable eons ago. Yet, from the perspective of disciples with limited perception, Padmakara took birth within a thousand-petalled lotus that was bursting into flower on the waters of the Sindhu Ocean, a display of his having accomplished the deathless state of a 'vidyadhara in training'. Thus the Vajraguru is renowned as the "Great Ocean-Born Vajradhara." While the story of his life and liberation goes far beyond words, in essence he is one who became fully awakened through the path of Unsurpassable Yoga, the Vajrayana. To begin with, when Padmakara was invested with sacred royal power over Uddiyana, the land of the blind and wealthy King Indrabhuti, he was just like the glorious Saraha being empowered into the essence of the *Buddhakapala-tantra*.<sup>7</sup> Due to his training from the past, in this life he naturally perfected the path of accumulation—the development stage of the path of profound mantra, and the path of joining—the perfection stage wherein the vital points of the vajra places are applied.

Abroad, in shitavana, the great Cool Grove charnel ground, Padmakara performed the enhancement practices of yogic conduct. As Saraha, the Archer, taught:

Make song, dance and music  
Resound in all directions!  
As yoginis circle to the right,  
By going beyond reference points  
Your conduct will be effortless.

Through the power of the intrinsic vajra-samadhi of innate great joy, blissful yet empty, with its expanding display of pure realms, mantras, and the great assembly of innate yoginis, Padmakara effortlessly actualized the level of 'supreme Dharma', on the Path of Joining, according to the unsurpassable mantra.

When Padmakara went in secret to meet with Vihardhara, king of Zahor and with Indrabhuti, king of Uddiyana, both rulers attempted to burn his holy body.<sup>8</sup> Each time, the tongues of flame from the sesame oil-soaked sandalwood transformed into cool flowing streams of water, and Padmakara appeared fresh and cool upon the stalk of a magical flower. This is just one of the events that occurred. These were imprints of his accomplishment on the path of joining—his attainment of the unsurpassable level of 'supreme Dharma'. For even in the common *paramita* vehicle it is said that 'those in their final existence' will not die of themselves, nor will they die from others. From explanations in the basic Abhidharma alone, it can be ascertained that the bodily support of 'one of unsurpassable supreme Dharma' will become the unified form of a vajra-holder beyond transference. It goes without saying, therefore, that any harm inflicted on

Padmakara, arising from the inner or outer elements, could never actually touch him. Like the depths of the ocean, this and other kinds of magical, yogic conduct are difficult, in their profundity, for immature beings' minds to understand. Such is the great wave of benefit he performed for himself and others.

Furthermore, Padmakara actualized ultimate luminosity, which is the single taste and inseparable essence of the twofold profound insight. This, known as being 'endowed with all supreme characteristics', indicates the total pacification of the most subtle distinctions of dualistic experience:

- 1) in reference to innate wisdom, and
- 2) in reference to the suchness of phenomena.

To achieve this, Guru Rinpoché relied upon the swift means of *ganacakra* at Yangleshö, in Nepal, and so manifested the accomplishment of 'the supreme siddhi of mahamudra.' The one who fully perfected the supreme path, who is renowned as 'vidyadhara with power over life,' thus attained the path of seeing of unsurpassable Mantra. As it says in the prayer of vajra-words,<sup>9</sup> "In this sacred place, you attained the siddhi of mahamudra."

The omniscient Rigdzin Jigmé Lingpa explains that 'the supreme siddhi of mahamudra' corresponds to the path of seeing on the path of unsurpassable Mantra.<sup>10</sup>

In brief, the term "lama" in Tibetan [or "master" in English] is the equivalent of "guru." The word "guru" is derived from "guna," which means qualities, and "ru," which means weighty. Thus the Great Master's mind is filled and weighty with qualities. What is the cause for the heaviness? By what means has it become heavy? And just what are the qualities that make it weighty? As they say, "vajra is weighty in terms of being indestructible." The main cause for its weight is that it can never be destroyed by the adventitious stains of deluded thinking. Therefore it is known as the indestructible vajra mind, or innate mind—the luminous ground, the great liberation, the ground of the youthful vase body. The co-emergent conditions for this to occur are

- 1) the profound generation stage: the path which is similar in aspect to the subtle wisdom of inner clarity, the true state of the ground—the spontaneously present dawning of empty-appearance; and
- 2) the final, extraordinary completion stage—the realization that the three realms of samsara have always been liberated.

By these and other means, the result—the three vajras of the buddhas—is practiced, and thus it is known as "the vajra path, unsurpassed." What are these qualities, in essence? By relying upon the skillful means of the vajra path—the wisdom of the vajra ground—the expanse of the object becomes the innate nature of self-aware luminosity, the great vastness free from limitations. Within

this same expanse, the subject, the indestructible wisdom of the great perfection which has arrived at the six special attributes,<sup>11</sup> is brought to perfection as the essence of totally complete, spontaneously present vajra qualities. This is precisely the meaning communicated by the term “vajra.”

## 1.2. A description of “Padma”, the name of the Guru who possesses those qualities.

Who is it that possesses that ocean-like array of marvelous qualities, secret and unsurpassed? Here, on the occasion of this teaching, it is the one renowned as “Perfect Buddha Padma” within the infinite pure-lands of the three kaya buddhas.” Why was he named Padma? He was miraculously born within the bud of a padma, a lotus flower, and was thus named after his *origins*. Since Padma was the magical display of the omniscient wisdom of the heart of Amitabha, tathagata of the Padma family, the name Padma implies likewise to this same wisdom essence. One could also say the name applies to the whole *family*. As is written:

Isn't he the Lotus King, victorious over the cannibal demon Ravana,<sup>12</sup>  
Who has traversed the tenth bhumi by means of a consort?

Indeed, he could also have been named Padma because he is the lord of *enjoyment* who has accomplished union, the level of the great Vajradhara, by relying on the padma of the vajra-queen. He could also have the name Padma in terms of the *function* of being free from the bondage of desire—for the display of his illusory rupakaya appears to worldly beings like the moon's reflection in water, in the same way that a lotus rises from the mud but is not sullied by it. A name can be given for many reasons, in terms of:

- 1) *origins*, such as Of the Golden Womb;<sup>13</sup>
- 2) *family*, like Great God;<sup>14</sup>
- 3) *enjoyment*, like flower-eater;<sup>15</sup> and
- 4) *function*, like lotus-enemy.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore he has been given names such as Great Master Padmakara, Padmasambhava, and Lotus-Born (*padma skyes*). While it is well understood that most of these names have been ascribed in terms of the first way,<sup>17</sup> all four reasons apply to the name “Padma.” One could argue, “If the only reason for calling him Padma, from the perspective of *enjoyment* and *function*, is the extraordinary accomplishments he gained from the said perspectives (as explained above), then all the mahasiddhas of India and Tibet would likewise be called Padma.” Do not reason like an idiot! Bodhisattvas like Gaganagañja and Vajrapani have immeasurably great compassion but received different names due to the stories found in their lives and liberations. Likewise, Noble Avalokiteshvara, Surveyor of All, was given his name due to precisely this quality. “Why, then,” you might ask, “was ‘Padma’ written in the countless stories of the Precious Master's life and

liberation only from the perspective of his qualities, and not in terms of *enjoyment* and *function*?” I would say in reply that it is well-established that one can condense all the enlightened qualities into the above-mentioned *enjoyment* and *function*. Moreover, it is not necessary to give a name that encompasses all the qualities. In popular legend, Vishnu has qualities other than simply that of having slain the asura Kamsa<sup>18</sup>—an insignificant event. Yet even now Vishnu is known as Kamsarati, ‘Enemy of Kamsa.’ You could object, “But there are other names for Vishnu, aside from Kamsarati!” This is true, and likewise the Great Master has countless names, such as those of the Eight Manifestations, and those of the Twenty Emanations. However, it would serve little purpose to list all of them here, so that will be enough for now.

## ***2. Supplicating him to grant all our wishes, perfectly and completely [with siddhi hung]***

### **2.1. Requesting the object of one’s desire, siddhi**

Siddhi means “accomplishment.” Accomplishment, moreover, has two aspects: supreme and common. The former, supreme accomplishment, refers to the ultimate wisdom of no-more-learning, the unified kaya, and to enlightened activities beyond the imagination. According to this system, all the qualities of abandonment and realization of the four types of vidyadhara are called the supreme accomplishments. While the matured vidyadhara is still an ordinary tantric practitioner, this is nonetheless accepted by the Lord of Victors, Pema Ledrol<sup>19</sup> as a “supreme accomplishment.” Thus one should not assume that the supreme accomplishment only begins with the above-mentioned attainment of mahamudra. “Common accomplishment” refers to accomplishments that are common to practitioners of the development stage, such as the eight accomplishments and the twelve offices. Through these, one provisionally gains control over the manifold yogic disciplines of the four enlightened activities.

Thus, through the common accomplishments, one is able to accomplish a great wave of benefit for beings through the skillful means of subjugating and caring for others. And, by ascending the staircase of the four ultimate vidyadhara levels, the supreme accomplishments, one will swiftly and effortlessly attain the unity of no more learning, the level of the great sovereign Vajradhara. Thus one says, “such is the object of my desire!”

### **2.2. The quintessence of invocation, *hung***

“*hung*” is the mantra syllable that invokes the accomplishments of the three vajras, symbolized by the three characters *ha*, *u*, and *m*. Also, *hung* is the quintessence<sup>20</sup> of the vajra of enlightened mind, and so it invokes the full realization of the enlightened mind in bestowing accomplishment. The basis for that accomplishment is *hung*, but the symbolic meaning indicates the thusness which abides as the essence of one’s own three doors, which are primordially indestructible, innate liberation. Thus, the main cause for the wisdom which is

the supreme, primary accomplishment dwells within oneself. The co-emergent condition is the invocation of Guru Rinpoche's compassion, and the concordant factor is the ground for the arising of all common existence. In brief, *hung* summons accomplishments and is the quintessence of stability.

In conclusion, for those of you who have obtained the empowerments of the unsurpassed Mantra, these explanations will steady your faith in the syllables of this particular mantra. For those of lesser intelligence, this teaching is just a rough outline of the syllables' meaning. To those who are unable to comprehend even that much, I would explain that this mantra can be translated as: "You who are the identity of the three vajras (or you who are heavy and full with the immeasurably great qualities of the three vajras), we call upon you, 'Padma,' Lord of Victors! Bestow your blessings upon us!" The three vajras are the enlightened body, speech, and mind. What indicates these? "*om, ah hung* vajra" are their indication. "Weighty with qualities" means weighty in major and minor marks of the body, with completeness and timbre of speech, and with the omniscience of the enlightened mind. It's not heavy like the weight of coin, but heavy like the Earth itself. What shows this? "Guru," the condensation of "guna" and "ru," does. Padma is easy enough to understand: it is the name of the Great Master. As for what we call "accomplishment," even though there are many supreme and common accomplishments, we should explain it in a way that accords with modern people, whose minds are narrow as the eye of a needle. Thus it would run something like this: more food and yaks, higher yields in sheep and cattle, and no loss or misfortune on the full or new moons. *hung* is an invocation to bestow the siddhi of these accomplishments.

It would be excellent to explain this king of the vastness of mantra in terms of its connection to the whole body of the path, but for now I've just set down whatever came to mind, rather like beating a bag of tsampa. It's the work of a dull-witted simpleton; that much I know.

*Young roaming monks, content to receive donations,  
And new lamas refining thoughts like so much turmeric during rituals,  
If you don't understand even this much of the meaning of mantra,  
Your tears will fall later, when you consider how it will ripen —  
The eating of food that has been given in good faith.*

*The young Kunzang Jigmé Lhundrub uttered this commentary, in front of the self-arisen statue Palmo Jangdrol Ngayab Sarpa adorned with a flowered wreath. Its wording, based on projection, has been highly condensed. May it be a cause for the attainment of self-mastery!*





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- 1 The “kumuda” water lilies referred to here, often considered a type of lotus, are white in color and only bloom in the darkness of night.
- 2 The wheel of enjoyment (*longs spyod 'khor lo*) is the name of the chakra believed to reside in the throat.
- 3 That is *The Great Secret Yogatantra, the Tip of the Vajra* (Toh. 480, *vajrashekharamahagubhyayogatantra, gsang ba rnal 'byor chen poi rgyud rdo rje rtse mo*)
- 4 *The Magical Net* (*sgyu pbrul*) here implies the famous *Gubhyagarbha-tantra* (*rgyud gsang bai snying po*). For a translation of the relevant passage within the *Gubhyagarbha-tantra* and a subsequent discussion by Longchenpa (*klong chen pa*, 1308–1364), see: Gyurme Dorje 1987: 544 ff.
- 5 That is, speech.
- 6 *The Sutra of The Meeting of Father and Son* (Toh. 60, *pitaputrasamagamasutra, yab sras mjal bai mdo*).
- 7 Saraha is said to be the author of four works (Toh. 1652, 1655, 1656 & 1657) on the *Buddhakapala-tantra* (Toh. 424, *sangs rgyas thod pa'i rgyud*).
- 8 For a more detailed description of these and the other events of Padmakara's life mentioned here, you can refer to Jamgön Kongtrul's life-story of Padmakara.
- 9 The quotation stems from *Chapter Five of the Leü Dün Ma—the Prayer in Seven Chapters—The Prayer Requested by Nanam Dorjé Dudjom*.
- 10 Unlike here, in most texts the vidyadhara of mahamudra is associated with the Path of Meditation (*sgom lam*). For a more detailed explanation of vidyadhara levels and their correspondence to the Mahayana path see: Jigmé Lingpa 2004: 56–67. And Padmasambhava 2004: 179–180.
- 11 The six special attributes (*khyad chos drug*) define the process of gaining realization within the ground of being according to the Atiyoga teachings. They are: 1) awareness emerging from the ground of being, 2) perceiving its own manifestation, 3) distinguishing itself from any state of confusion, 4) gaining freedom in that distinction, 5) not relying on any external condition for its presence, and 6) resting in its own natural lucidity. (Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: fn. 104.)
- 12 Benjamin Bogin explained that Jigmé Lingpa, for example, identified Rama's opponent—the rakshasa king Ravana—from Valmiki's famous epic, the *Ramayana*, with the figure Padmakara defeated upon his arrival at the Copper-Colored Mountain, the rakshasa king Tötrenqtsal (Bogin 2014: 12).
- 13 An epithet of Brahma, who is said to have been born from a golden egg.
- 14 Skt. Mahadeva. An epithet of shiva.
- 15 Poetic term for a bee.
- 16 Poetic term for the moon.
- 17 That is due to his origins.
- 18 According to Hindu mythology, Kamsa was an asura demon who was slain by the god Vishnu.
- 19 Pema Ledrol (*padma las grol*) is another name for Longchenpa.
- 20 Quintessence (*bridaya, snying po*) here refers to an incantation (*dharani, gzungs*) that is considered to encapsulate the essence of a deity. It represents an essential method for attaining a supernatural result. It can be a single syllable, as in this case with hum. For more information on *bridayas*, see: Sánchez 2011, 37.