



A Brief Explanation of the Generation and Completion Stages for the Benefit of Beginners: Concise, Clear, and Easy to Understand

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Namo Guru Vajrasattvaya.

*To the one thing that is the true nature of all things—
Luminosity, the unconditioned nature of mind,
The dancer enacting the illusory web of union—
I pay homage. I will now briefly explain how to accomplish this.*

For those of supreme fortune who are disposed toward the Great Vehicle, who have thoroughly trained their minds in renunciation and the precious heart of awakening through the path of the common vehicles, whose mindstreams have been ripened by the four empowerments, who possess samaya, and who wish to train in the path of the two stages of generation and completion, I present the following explanation. In general, the generation stage has four special features:

- *The special ritual*, the application of the generation stage rituals as they are taught in the tantras.
- *The special specific fruition*, the ability to generate the power of mantra.
- *The special essence*, the nature of melting bliss and emptiness.
- *The special function*, the ripening of the practitioner for the completion stage.

The completion stage has three special features:

- *The special cause*, striking the vital points of the vajra body.
- *The special function*, purifying the subtle channels, subtle winds, and essence drops in the central channel.
- *The special form*, the unity of bliss and emptiness, the co-emergent bliss that is of a single identity with empty form.

These and other points are taught in the infinite tantras of unsurpassable mantra of the New and Early Schools, as well as in the pith instructions of supremely accomplished yogis.

The practitioner of the two stages should train in the genuine path of exact perfection, just as it is explained in these profound teachings. Nevertheless, those who are beginners may be unable to easily comprehend these points and apply them in practice, in which case, they should train in a semblance of this through aspirational practice.¹

As such a practitioner, you should first of all complete the common and uncommon preliminary aspects of the given ritual. Then, when you come to the main part of the practice, the generation stage, you should have some level of understanding and experience about how the objects to be purified—the habitual tendencies of the three states of death, bardo, and birth—are actually purified, as well as how the results of purification—the perfection of the qualities of the three kayas within the ground, and one’s own ripening for the higher paths of the completion stage—come about. With knowledge of these points you should then train in the cause, the pitching of the framework of the three samadhis; in the result, the generating of the mandala with the support and supported; and in the main focus, the training in the vivid appearance of the deity, and so forth, as taught in the instruction manuals.

The unobstructed dynamic expression of awareness that is the unity of emptiness and compassion manifests in form as the mudra of the deity’s body. Therefore, you should train in bringing to mind as vividly as possible the appearance of the support—the immeasurable celestial palace—and the appearance of the supported—the main and retinue deities with the details of their faces, hands, ornaments, attire, postures and the like. Although as a beginner, you will not immediately be able to develop the level of clear visualization that is described in the texts, nevertheless you should not feel discouraged or get caught up in hope and fear. Rather, you should gradually increase the duration of the practice by training frequently and repeatedly for short periods. When you train in this way and the visualization arises clearly, just let it be as it is and then set the practice aside. Likewise, when the visualization is not clear, again just let it be and then set the practice aside.

Ridding yourself of the faults of dullness and agitation—the poison of meditative concentration—you should gradually familiarize yourself with the practice. Once you have gained some familiarity, you should apply, according to your ability, the instructions on dispelling faults, on enhancing, and so on, as they are taught in the general instruction manuals on the generation stage of deity practice.

Vivid Appearance, Recollecting Purity, and Stable Pride

Most importantly you should train in the three qualities of vivid appearance, the recollection of purity, and stable pride.

Vivid Appearance

The visualization of the support and supported appears yet lacks true existence. It is vividly clear yet thought-free. It is blissful yet without grasping. It is the embodiment of the indivisible dharmakaya essence, sambhogakaya form, and nirmaṇakaya activity—a unity that, like a rainbow or the reflection of the moon in water, appears distinctly and perfectly complete. To train one's mind one-pointedly in this is to train in *vivid appearance*.

Recollecting Purity

The support and supported, the main and retinue figures with their faces, hands, ornaments, attire and other details are neither ordinary nor independently existing, but are the qualities of the dharmakaya buddha, manifesting as the symbolic seal. Primordial awareness—buddha nature, the great unconditioned indivisible profound luminosity—is never without the twenty-five undefiled qualities of the fruition. For like the sun and its rays of light, these are primordially beyond meeting and parting. They manifest as the various symbolic seals. Knowing this is the *recollection of purity*.

Stable Pride

This is not a conceptual notion of imagining something to be what it is not. Rather, it is the primordial natural state of original purity—the great freedom from elaboration, the state beyond bondage and liberation—that has always been present as the self-arisen primordial protector, the all-pervasive sovereign great bliss. To possess the profound certainty that this is so, to be impervious to ordinary conditions, and to remain as stable as a vajra is to train in *stable pride*.

If you possess these three qualities, your generation stage practice will become the genuine path. Otherwise, you are merely visualizing the deities as inherently existing forms with mouths, eyes, and ears. You are simply imposing on your own being the form of the wisdom beings who abide in the pure, awakened expanse. And as a result, you are imagining something which is not so. Such a mere semblance of pride is not the authentic pride of the unsurpassable mantra that we are concerned with here.

The Three Beings, or Sattvas

All phenomena consisting of the aggregates, elements, and sense sources are the natural, dynamic expression of ultimate awakened heart. They are from the very beginning the wheel of deities replete with the three seats.ⁱⁱ Training in this—the superior relative truth—in accord with the genuine natural state, is to train in *the samaya being*.

Basic space and primordial wisdom indivisible, never separate from the five undefiled qualities of the fruition—the superior ultimate truth—is naturally present as the essential life-force of original wisdom. This is *the wisdom being*.

These two superior truths are not separate from one another; by nature they are no different. This indivisibility appearing as the essence of samadhi is *the samadhi being*.

Those with vast minds who realize these three *sattvas* to be of equal taste, inseparable within the expanse of the intrinsic, true nature, need not go through the elaborations of conferring empowerment, sealing, inviting, and so on. There are many, however, who do not have such a profound understanding. Therefore, in order to purify their fixation on the deity as being separate from themselves, they should visualize themselves, the samaya being, as the deity, and then invite the wisdom being from basic space. The latter confers empowerment, seals it, and then dissolves inseparably into the samaya being. Once the offerings and praises and so on have been rendered, they should then engage in mantra recitation while performing the samadhi visualizations of projecting and absorbing light rays, and so forth.

Rendering Offerings

Here in the context of the extraordinary, unsurpassable mantra, the rendering of offerings and the other stages of activity are distinctly superior to those of the lower vehicles. For example, the four offerings—outer, inner, secret, and suchness—are connected to taking the four empowerments as the path.

The Outer Offerings

The outer offerings of sense pleasures relate to taking the vase empowerment as the path and are connected with the generation stage. All externally appearing objects—form, sound, and such—are empty appearances, like illusions. They manifest in the form of offering goddesses, such as Vajra Form Lady, and are savored and enjoyed in the manner of the divine reveling in the divine, in an illusory display that is free of clinging. As such, the two accumulations are perfected like a magical illusion.

The Inner Offerings

The inner offerings of amrita, rakta, tormas and the like are the offerings of samaya substances. Through the yogic discipline of enjoying them free of notions such as clean and dirty or accepting and rejecting, the pure elements of the subtle channels, subtle winds, and essence drops are increased. This is an aid to the path of the secret empowerment.

The Secret Offerings of Union and Liberation

Using either a karma or wisdom mudra-consort, the lord and lady engage in union, and thus the third empowerment is taken as the path. By these means, the immutable primordial wisdom of melting bliss extinguishes conceptual thoughts within basic space.

The Innermost Secret Offering of Suchness

The innermost secret offering of suchness is letting be, evenly, within the primordial wisdom of the fourth empowerment. It is the essence of ultimate luminosity, the primordial natural state, suchness free of elaborations, which transcends both the offering and the offerer.

Thus, the four offerings of unsurpassed mantra are distinctly superior by virtue of being more blissful and swift in effect than the offerings made on other paths.

All of these offerings are projected out from oneself and then presented back to oneself, as is done in *Delighting in Emanations*.ⁱⁱⁱ Free of any grasping at the offerer and offering as being separate, they are enjoyed within a state of nondual equality. In this way, the presentation of offerings is a crucial practice for developing the strength of the illusory samadhi.

The Four Stakes That Bind the Life-Force

The Stake of Concentrating on the Deity

Here you train in the practice of the deity's form replete with the three qualities of clarity, purity, and stability, as mentioned above. Meditating on this with one-pointed focus is the unsurpassable means for accomplishing mantra's calm-abiding (*śamata*).

The Stake of the Essence Mantra

Within the heart center of yourself, the samaya being deity, visualize the wisdom being, resembling yourself yet without ornaments and attire. This is the renowned tradition of the Secret Illusory Web. In some traditions, you visualize the wisdom being as an ornament or hand implement. In any case, in the heart center of the wisdom being, you visualize the samadhi being—the seed syllable together with the mantra garland. With undistracted, one-pointed focus on this, you perform the mantra recitation. This is done as mental recitation, subtle wind recitation, verbal recitation, or other manners of recitation. Recite the mantra like the flow of a river, without interruption from other words, and without the faults of reciting too loudly or too quietly, too fast or too slow, and so on. This is the means for invoking the life-force of the wisdom deity from its vital center. The mantra itself is the vajra speech of all the Thus-Gone Ones, manifest in form. Therefore, it has inconceivable power to bring about the accomplishment of activities and attainments unimpededly. It is important to develop deep confidence in this fact.

The Activity Stake of Projection and Absorption

Knowing appearances, sounds, and thoughts to be the mandala of deity, mantra, and the intrinsic nature, you visualize light rays projecting out and being reabsorbed into the life-force seed syllable and its mantra garland, and so on. By altering the visualizations, you accomplish the two aims of benefiting oneself and others, exactly as you wish.

The ultimate nature of mind is the unity of emptiness and compassion. The awakened activities are its natural, dynamic expression. Whatever activity you wish to engage in, such as pacifying or projecting, can be accomplished by altering the visualizations to accord with your specific intent. For instance, when engaging in pacifying activity, you transform the life-force syllable, mantra garland, and light rays into the color white and the nature of amrita. When engaging in increasing activity, you change them to the color yellow and create a downpour of jewels. By adjusting the visualization of projection and absorption in this way, the eight fears can be pacified, the six riches increased, and so forth. This is how the visualizations can be altered to accomplish each of the boundless activities as desired.

However, not everything can be accomplished solely through focusing on visualizations. The kayas, primordial wisdoms, awakened deeds, and activities are naturally present in the luminous natural state from the very beginning. They are the dynamic expression of the activity-accomplishing primordial wisdom. This dynamic expression manifests spontaneously and naturally, without thought or intention, as the inconceivable awakened activity of the illusory web, and influences beings according to their needs. Since this is emptiness manifesting as interdependent arising, the results will occur without fail. You need to develop complete certainty in this fact.

Furthermore, the basis for accomplishing the boundless activities of the awakened ones is that all appearances and sounds manifest as the three mandalas. This itself is the unobstructed, natural radiance of the primordial great secret—buddha nature, innate coemergent great bliss—manifesting in manifold ways. Everything—all conceptual phenomena consisting of the aggregates, elements, and sense sources—is in essence the innate three vajras, primordially present. With certainty in this fact, you should understand that when practicing you are simply bringing this to mind. You should not think that phenomena that were previously impure are now purified by the path and thus have been transformed.

The Stake of Unchanging Realization

As just explained, the visualizations, recitation, and the like are not conditioned creations of the conceptual mind. Rather, they are the natural, dynamic expression of the ultimate intrinsic nature. They are the great pure equality—all possible appearances manifesting as the ground, and present as the great self-arisen mandala. Within this, not even a single particle of dualistic conception is

present. There are no notions of self and other, of samaya and wisdom beings, of the goal to become accomplished and the act of accomplishing it, and of pure and impure. Within the expanse of nondual equality, samsara and nirvana are both primordially awakened. Once this has been resolved decisively through the view, the practice becomes the process of habituating and familiarizing yourself with this. If your practice is infused with this profound view of the natural state, no matter what kind of deity you practice, whether it is a wisdom being or a mundane being, you will never go astray. Moreover, your practice will be the unsurpassable, immediate cause for accomplishing the supreme attainment.

The Four Phases of Approach and Accomplishment

In the context of the ground approach,^{iv} on the first day of your practice, you prepare the substances and articles and then perform the ritual once. This is the *phase of approach*. Subsequently, for as many days as your practice lasts, during the first half of the practice you focus on projecting and absorbing white light rays, thereby purifying misdeeds and obscurations. This is the *phase of close approach*. For the latter half of the practice, you focus on projecting and absorbing red light rays, to bring the attainments towards you. This is the *phase of accomplishment*. On the final day you gather dark blue light rays into yourself, to receive the attainments. This is the *phase of great accomplishment*.

When applying these four phases to a single practice session, the beginning of the ritual to the stage of the three samadhis constitutes the *approach*; visualizing oneself as the main deity is the *close approach*; visualizing the consort, blessing her secret space, and visualizing the complete host of retinue deities is *accomplishment*; and conferring empowerment, sealing, inviting the wisdom beings, and so on, until the recitation, offerings and praises, and so forth—thus, all other aspects of the ritual—these are *the great accomplishment*. This is how it is explained in the *Kilaya Yoga Tantra*.

When you perform the concluding activities, such as the gathering (*tsok*) and the tormas offering, all the guests to whom you offer and give are the nature of sugatagarbha. They are identical in being the body of great bliss, primordial and spontaneously present. Currently, depending on whether or not they are encased in the cocoon of adventitious, dualistic delusion, they appear in all sorts of pure and impure ways. Yet, regardless of how they may appear, this is not the way they really are. For instance, whether or not you realize it, all conditioned phenomena are momentary by nature. Similarly, from the perspective of the way things really are, the intrinsic nature of all the guests is primordial liberation, which manifests

as the symbolic mudra in an inconceivable display of emanations—as the main and retinue deities, as their emanations, servants, envoys, messengers, and so on—in order to influence beings according to their needs.

In actuality, the mandala deities are beyond any distinctions in terms of higher and lower. Thus, free of any such notion, you should visualize the gathering torma and other offerings, which are in essence undefiled wisdom amrita, as the inner samaya substances of secret mantra—namely the five meats, five amritas and such. When you offer them, imagine that they are received within the expanse of nondual equality, free of dualistic fixation, of all notions of clean and dirty, of accepting and rejecting. Think to yourself that, as a result, temporarily the two accumulations are perfected, the two obscurations are purified, and all obstacles to the path of awakening are dispelled for both yourself and for all others. Think that ultimately this acts as an aid on the path to liberation, within a single gathering in the Unexcelled^v pure realm, the display of the great secret.

Furthermore, when receiving the attainments you must understand that in actuality the deity and you are not separate. Nevertheless, within the mere illusion of the relative—which is like a magical apparition conjured up by a magician—through the mechanism of the various practices on deity, mantra, and samadhi, all the supreme and common attainments are directly brought about like a treasure in the palm of your hand. Such is the inconceivable power of interdependent arising. You should have confidence in this, understanding that this is the way things really are.

When performing the concluding dissolution phase, you dissolve the entire mandala wheel of support and supported into luminosity, and let be within equality. When we die, the elements dissolve, one after the other, and, at the end, all of the eighty basic thought-states that are triggered by the subtle wind and by the white and red essences cease. At this point, luminous primordial wisdom that surpasses thought fully manifests, free of all obscurations and veils, just like the moon in the clear autumn sky. You perform the dissolution phase in order to take this process that occurs at the time of death as the path. You then re-emerge from within that state and assume the form of the deity of luminous unity. You visualize all appearances and sounds as the wheel of the deity and, through this, the extremes of permanence and annihilation are eliminated. You then close with aspirations and prayers of auspiciousness, these being the gateway of the skillful means of the unsurpassable Great Vehicle.

In between sessions, you should always maintain divine pride while engaging in your regular activities. It is of vital importance to practice in this way, applying all the preliminary and concluding aspects fully and correctly, for each and every aspect of the practice has a specific purpose and function.

In this way, your practice will become the unity of generation and completion, as well as the unity of the two accumulations. Visualizing appearances as the deity is the generation stage, the aspect of skillful means through which the accumulation of merit is perfected and the auspicious conditions for the form kayas are arranged. To remain completely free from grasping at the deity as truly existing, and to truly know that all appearances are the nature of innate luminosity—this is the completion stage of insight, through which the accumulation of wisdom is perfected and the auspicious conditions for the ultimate dharmakaya are arranged.

All of these seemingly real, yet appearing, conceptual phenomena are merely unexamined, superficial appearances. This is the relative truth. Emptiness, the natural state in which not even a jot of true existence is perceived, is the ultimate truth. These two truths—appearance and emptiness—are themselves not separate. Whatever appears, such as form, is empty and yet, from within emptiness, the whole array of interdependently-arising phenomena appears unobstructedly, without wavering from the innate nature.

You should resolve with certainty that the basic space of phenomena—the unity of appearance and emptiness—being free of imputations and doubt, is the actual, final ultimate, the profound view free of assertions. Then you should train in letting be, evenly within this state, free of removing and adding, of accepting and rejecting. In this way, you will gain direct experience in this, and as a result all conceptual elaborations will cease and you will arrive at the realization of the great Middle Way, the ground beyond extremes. These myriad appearances are but the natural radiance of mind, and the nature of mind is empty, essentially unborn. Clarity is mind's defining characteristic, while being empty is mind's intrinsic nature. These two qualities are primordially indivisible, beyond meeting and parting. They are the great equality, a unity that is essentially devoid of arising, abiding, and ceasing, the supreme state that transcends conceptual mind. Having resolved this with certainty, train in letting be naturally in this uncontrived innate expanse, without getting distracted and without intentionally meditating. By practicing in this way, all concepts will come to a halt. This is the practice of the path of Mahamudra, the Great Seal.

All phenomena of samsara and nirvana are perfect and complete within the expanse of awareness-bodhicitta. The nature of mind is in essence empty; this is dharmakaya. Its nature is clarity; this is sambhogakaya. The unobstructed dynamic expression of awareness is nirmanakaya. The three kayas, all beyond meeting and parting, are in essence primordially awakened by their very nature. The object, empty basic space, and the subject, wakeful primordial wisdom, are equally primordially beyond meeting and parting. This is the characteristic of empty awareness—translucent nakedness in which all phenomena are exhausted. Maintaining the natural radiance of this empty awareness and remaining untouched by even the most subtle concepts of striving, effort, hope, or fear, this is the fruition, the primordially liberated great perfection.

With this in mind, consider that which differentiates between subject and object—the locus of the attachments and imputations of the dualistic mind. This is the subject that perceives the relative truth. No matter how sharp you fancy the subject to be, or how profound the object, they are no more than conceptual elaborations of the conditioned mind. Therefore, they will never be able to bring to a halt the conceptions of dualistic fixation.

These are not separate—the object of observation, the one conceptualizing it, and realization itself. In essence, they are an ineffable equality. By resolving this, you see the adamant natural state, utterly void of all concepts of what is seen, of the one who sees, and so on. Inexpressible, inconceivable, and ineffable, it is seen in the manner of not seeing, like “seeing” the center of space. This is the primordial wisdom of the subject perceiving the ultimate truth. In a sutra, the Transcendent Conqueror said:

Understand that suchness is beyond words, impossible
to describe.

The true nature of things is like the sky,
completely free of the workings of conceptual mind—
it is the supreme, sublime great wonder.

And in *Rahula's Praise to the Transcendent Mother* it is taught:

Beyond words, beyond thought, beyond description, Prajñāparamita...^{vi}

These points are thusly illustrated by scripture. The natural state is contained within the primordial wisdom of the equipoise of noble beings. Nevertheless, it is

possible to practice an approximation of this when you apply the pith instructions of the lineage and rely on the guru's compassion and your own devotion. With the coming together of these auspicious causes and conditions, even in your present state as an ordinary being, this way of training is not beyond your reach.

The reason for this is that the intrinsic nature can dawn in your mind as an abstract image—like the example of the moon's reflection appearing on the surface of water. This is called *example* primordial wisdom. Due to the crucial fact that the intrinsic nature is beyond elaboration, when even an abstract idea of the intrinsic nature appears in your mind, a state of mind that is beyond elaboration arises. Of course this alone does not make you a noble being, since the obscurations associated with your level have not yet been discarded. For instance, a person on the path of seeing realizes ultimate luminosity directly, but nevertheless they do not become a buddha because they have yet to purify the stains to be discarded on the path of training.

The intrinsic nature is not something that arises anew; rather it is something already primordially present that is pointed out to the student, who then needs to become familiar with it. When in meditative equipoise, maintain this state without removing or adding anything, without accepting or rejecting. In post-equipoise, apply yourself to the countless methods for gathering and purifying that lead to the unity of the two accumulations. As you thereby continue to remove the stains obscuring your natural element, your perception will become increasingly pure. You will gradually become directly united with the unified primordial wisdom of the noble ones. All the sutras and tantras of definitive meaning agree in this regard.

Here in the context of unsurpassable mantra, it is not necessary to undergo the hardships and austerities entailed on the sutra path. Rather, from the very outset you possess the view of self-arisen primordial wisdom, understanding that it is not a conditioned phenomenon that can be created anew through effort, but is primordially present as the unconditioned, intrinsic nature of all things. This sovereign identity that is partless, universal, and pervades the whole of existence and peace is the very life-force of the whole of samsara and nirvana. This is pointed out nakedly and directly through the profound skillful means of ripening and liberation. This is then recognized decisively as the wisdom of the dharmakaya Samantabhadra, and is trained in accordingly. This is what is meant

by taking the fruition as the path. This is the accomplishment of the vehicle of skillful means.

In this way, all possible appearances are subsumed within the expanse of the view of great, pure equality. Suffering thereby arises as awakening, and the cause of suffering arises as the essence of the truth of the path. Clouds of great bliss bodhicitta, where truly existent impurity cannot be found no matter how hard you search, are manifest as the boundless purity of the wheel of deities. Thus ordinary concepts are bound within basic space. This is an extraordinary skillful practice that is free from any conceptual fixation on meditation, conduct, and fruition as being separate from one another. Through it, many eons of accumulations are gathered in each moment. As a result, those of sharp faculties and supreme good fortune merge directly with the unified state of Vajradhara within a single lifetime within this degenerate age.

Due to the overwhelming strength of the habitual tendencies of the deluded conceptual mind, driven by the impure karmic winds, the pure element of primordial wisdom is not manifest, in spite of being present as the essence. This is how things are in the context of the ground, when one is a sentient being.

When the antidote, the innate luminosity of primordial wisdom, is merged with samsaric phenomena (that which is to be purified) and dawns in the form of the path (that which purifies), the coarse aspects of the impure mind and subtle winds are overcome. The functions of the karmic subtle winds and those of primordial wisdom then come to compete side by side. This is the stage of the path of practitioners.

When the antidote is mastered, even the slightest aspects of the impure mind and subtle winds are eliminated without trace. At this point, the only thing manifest is the natural radiance of primordial wisdom and its pure subtle wind. That is the final fruition.

Thus, from the perspective of relative, conceptual analysis, three stages are posited based on the progressive purification of temporary obscurations and the manifestation of qualities. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the final, ultimate analysis, these three periods are indivisible—all are a single taste within the expanse of natural, great equality. They are not established as dualistic phenomena, such as pure and impure, in anyway whatsoever. This is why it is said that samsara and nirvana are primordially awakened within the expanse of nondual bodhicitta. Indeed, at the level of spontaneously perfected great bliss,

this is how it is, right this very moment. It is of crucial importance that you understand this point.

*I have cast aside the chaff of wordy explanations,
To offer my siblings of excellent fortune and similar goals
This barley shoot that condenses the meaning to its vital core.
Accept it as sustenance for the body of your experience.*

*Now that we have obtained the boat of the freedoms and riches
And the rudder of the guru's direct instructions,
If we fail to exert ourselves in crossing the ocean of saṃsara
We'll surely find ourselves endlessly adrift on waves of suffering.*

*The flower garlands of youthfulness wilt in the blink of an eye.
The inescapable shadow of the Lord of Death is fast approaching.
Our lifespan is like lightning's dance: unreliable and unsteady.
So quickly, ever quickly, rouse the troops of diligence!*

*Now that we have the freedom to practice Dharma,
If we can refrain from the meaningless pursuits of delusion,
We have this one chance to accomplish what is truly meaningful, the sublime Dharma.
If we fail, we will certainly come to regret it later on.*

*The virtue of the beginning is to turn one's back on saṃsara.
The virtue of the middle is to ground oneself in solitary practice.
The virtue of the end is to unlock the treasury of twofold benefit.
May we have the fortune to see our wishes fulfilled in accordance with the Dharma!*

I, the deluded monk, Gyurmé Pema Namgyal (Immutable Lotus of Victory), offered this explanation to a pair of vajra siblings with pure samaya, as a piece of refreshing advice for the one-pointed practice they have pledged and aspire to. I mainly intended it to be easy to understand, and have therefore used concise language to write down whatever came to mind. Through this virtue, may the victory banner of practice stand ever-firm, and may our practice bear the fruit of the two attainments!

Sarva Mangalam. May all be auspicious!



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Bibliography

Tibetan Source

Zhe chen rgyal tshab 'gyur med pad+ma rnam rgyal. "las dang po pa la phan pa'i bskyed rdzogs kyi go don phyogs mtshon nyung gsal go bder brjod pa." In *gsung 'bum padma rnam rgyal*. Paro: Ngodup, 1975–1994. Vol.17: 271–289.

Secondary Source

Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche. *Luminous Essence*. Trans. Dharmachakra Translation Committee. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2009.

i As Jamgön Mipham Rinpoché explains in his treatise *Luminous Essence* (*spyi don 'od gsal snying po*): “Devoted training [*aspirational practice*] involves a mere meditation on general features, without having perfected absorption. This produces the ability to actualize the genuine path in one’s stream of being, and carries the benefit of accomplishing various temporary activities. *Definitive perfection* [*exact perfection*] refers to a path where meditation is perfected in the five gradual practices, such as great emptiness, as they pertain to the stages of death, the intermediate state, and birth. Based on this path, one actualizes the levels of the four knowledge-holders.” *Luminous Essence*, by Jamgön Mipham, translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee. Snow Lion Publications, 2009.

ii The forty-two peaceful deities of the three seats or categories are as follows: (1) the aggregates and elements are the seats of the five male and five female buddhas, and are called the seat of the buddhas; (2) the sense faculties and their objects are the seats of the eight male and the eight female bodhisattvas together with the six munis, and are called the seat of the bodhisattvas; (3) the limbs are the seats of the male and female wrathful deities, and are called the seat of the wrathful deities.

iii Delighting in Emanations (Tib. *'phrul dga'*, Skt. Nirmaṇarataya) is one of the celestial heavens in the desire realm. Gods in this heaven create and enjoy their own objects of pleasure.

iv Tib. *gzhi bsyang*, the “ground approach.”

v Tib. *'og min*, Skt. Akaniṣṭha. The Unexcelled Pure Realm.

vi The verse in full reads: “Beyond words, beyond thought, beyond description, Prajñāparamita / unborn, unceasing, the very essence of space / yet it can be experienced as the wisdom of our own awareness: / homage to the mother of the buddhas of past, present, and future!” A translation of this verse is found on Lotsawa House (www.lotsawahouse.org).