

Refined Essence of Oral Instructions

By Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal

Terma Revelation of Dorje Lingpa

Homage to the master! Lady Tsogyal of Kharchen served the Nirmanakaya Buddha Orgyen Padmakara from her eighth year, accompanying him like a shadow follows a body.

When the master was about to leave Tibet for the land of the rakshas, I, Lady Kharchen [Yeshe Tsogyal], having offered a mandala of gold and turquoise and having arranged a tantric feast, a wheel of gathering, implored:

‘Great master! You are leaving to tame the rakshas. I am left behind here in Tibet. Although I have served you for a long time, master, this old woman has no confidence about the time of death. So I beseech you to kindly give me an instruction condensing all teachings into one, which is concise and easy to practice.’

The great master replied:

‘Devoted one with a faithful and virtuous mind, listen to me. Although there are many profound key points of body – rest free and relaxed as you feel comfortable. Everything is included in simply that.

Although there are many key points of speech such as breath control and mantra recitation, stop speaking and remain like a mute. Everything is included in simply that.

Although there are many key points of mind such as concentrating, relaxing, projecting, dissolving and focusing inward, everything is included in simply letting it rest in its natural state, free and easy, without fabrication. But the mind doesn’t remain quietly in that state.

You may wonder, is mind nothing? It still shimmers and flashes forth, like haze in the heat of the sun. You may wonder, is it something? It has no colour or shape to identify it but is utterly empty and completely awake. That is the nature of your mind.

Having recognized it as such, to become certain about it, that is the view. To remain undistracted in the state of stillness, without fabrication or fixation, that is the meditation. In that state, to be free from clinging or attachment, accepting or rejecting, hope or fear, towards any of the experiences of the six senses, that is the conduct.

Whatever doubt or hesitation occurs, mentally call on your master for help. Don't remain in places of ordinary people, practice in seclusion. Give up your clinging to whatever you are most attached to as well as to whomever you have the strongest bond with in this life, and practice. Like that, although your body remains in human form, your mind is equal to the Buddhas'.

At the time of dying, you should practice as follows. When the earth element dissolves into water, the body becomes heavy and cannot support itself. When the water element dissolves into fire, the mouth and nose dry up. When the fire element dissolves into wind, body heat disappears. When the wind element dissolves into consciousness, you cannot but exhale with a rattle and inhale with a gasp.

Next you feel as if being pressed down by a huge mountain, being trapped within darkness, or being dropped into the expanse of space. All these experiences are accompanied by thunderous and ringing sounds. The whole sky is vividly bright like an unfurled brocade.

Now within a dome of rainbow lights the natural forms of your mind, the peaceful, wrathful, semi-wrathful deities and the ones with various heads begin to fill the sky. Some brandish weapons and utter "Beat! Beat!" "Kill! Kill!" "Hung! Hung!" "Phat! Phat!" and other fierce sounds. There is light like a hundred thousand suns shining at once. At this time, your innate deity will remind you of awareness saying, "Don't be distracted! Don't be distracted!" Your innate demon will disturb all your experiences, make them collapse and utter sharp and fierce sounds and confuse you.

At this point, know this: The feeling of being pressed down is not that of being pressed by a mountain. It is your own elements dissolving. Don't be afraid of that! The feeling of being trapped within darkness is not a darkness. It is your five sense faculties dissolving. The feeling

of being dropped into the expanse of space is not being dropped. It is your mind without support because your body and mind have separated and your breathing has stopped.

All the experiences of rainbow lights are the natural manifestations of your mind. The peaceful and wrathful forms are the natural forms of your mind. All sounds are your own sounds. All lights are your own lights. Have no doubt about that. If you do feel doubt, it throws you back into samsara. Resolve all this to be self-display, and when you then remain wide awake in luminous emptiness, simply in that you will attain the three kayas and awaken to enlightenment. Even if someone then casts you toward samsara, you won't go there.

The innate deity means undistracted presence of mind which right now arrests your thinking. From this moment, the most important point is to rid this mind of hope and fear, clinging and fixation, toward the objects of your six sense faculties as well as to fascination, pleasure and sadness. If you have already become stable in this, you will be able to reassume your natural state in the bardo and awaken to enlightenment. The most vital point is therefore to sustain your practice undistractedly from this very moment.

The innate demon is your present tendency for ignorance, your doubt and hesitation. Whatever frightful phenomena appear at that time, such as sounds, colours and lights, don't be fascinated, don't doubt and don't be afraid. Falling into doubt for even a moment will cause you to wander into samsara, so gain complete stability.

Next you may experience the entrances to a womb in the form of celestial palaces. Don't be attracted to them. Be certain of that! Be free from hope and fear! I swear there is no doubt that you will then become enlightened without taking further rebirths.

When this happens, it is not that you are helped by a Buddha, because your awareness is primordially enlightened. It is not that you can be harmed by a hell, because fixation is naturally cleared away, fear of samsara and hope for nirvana are cut from the root. Becoming enlightened can be compared to water cleared of sediments, gold cleansed of impurities or the sky cleared of clouds.

Having realized space-like Dharmakaya for the benefit of oneself, you will accomplish the welfare of sentient beings as far as space pervades. Having attained Sambhogakaya and

Nirmanakaya for the welfare of others, you will benefit sentient beings as far as your mind pervades phenomena.

If this instruction is given three times to even a great sinner such as one who has killed his own father and mother, he will not fall into samsara even if thrown there. There is no doubt about becoming enlightened. Even if you have many other profound teachings, without an instruction like this, you remain far away from enlightenment. Since you don't know where you may wander next, practice this with perseverance.

You must give this instruction to recipients who have great faith, strong diligence and are intelligent, who always remember their teacher, who have confidence in the oral instructions, who exert themselves in the practice, who are stable-minded and able to give up concerns for this world. Give them this with the master's seal of entrustment, the yidam's seal of secrecy, and the dakini's seal of protection.

Although I, Padmakara, have followed many masters for one thousand eight hundred years, have requested instructions, received teachings, studied and taught, meditated and practiced, I have not found any teaching more profound than this. I am going to tame the rakshas. You should practice like this. Lady, you will become enlightened in the celestial realms. Therefore persevere in this instruction.'

Having spoken, the precious master mounted the rays of the sun and departed for the land of the rakshas. Following that, Lady Tsogyal attained liberation. She committed this teaching to writing and concealed it as a profound treasure. She made this aspiration: In the future, may it be given to Guru Dorje Lingpa. May it then benefit many beings.

This completes the Sacred Refined Essence Instruction, the reply to questions on self-liberation at the moment of death and in the bardo. Samaya, seal, seal, seal.

This text by the treasure revealer Dorje Lingpa was translated in accordance with the precious oral instructions of Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche and his Dharma heir Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, by Erik Pema Kunsang.