

Now that I Come to Die

Now that I Come to Die

Intimate guidance from one of Tibet's greatest masters

Longchenpa

Introduction by Tarthang Tulku



DHARMA PUBLISHING



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All beings are transients, like past and future guests:

The old have gone; the young will also go.

This generation will not even last a hundred years —

Understand this thoroughly straight away.

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Introduction

All Knowledge, All Light

In the eighth century of the common era, three revered masters fulfilled an ancient vow to bring the Buddha's teachings to the Land of Snow. These great beings are known as the Three Founding Fathers: Guru Padmasambhava from the kingdom of Oddiyana, master of Mantrayana; Abbot Shantarakshita from the great Indian university of Nalanda, master of Sutrayana; and the Tibetan King Trisong Detsun, regarded as an incarnation of the Great Bodhisattva Manjushri, who invited the Dharma into his kingdom and lent it royal support.

Thus the oldest tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma School, was established. It was a most auspicious time, as the Dharma was in full flower in its original homeland of India, and the complete range of teachings could be transmitted in all their depth and vastness. From these early foundations the Nyingma tradition has continued uninterrupted for over twelve centuries. Despite the recent disruption of Tibetan civilization, its lineages survive unbroken even today, both inside and outside Tibet.

Nearly six hundred years after the time of the Founding Fathers, in 1308, at a time when the Nyingma school was thriving and new schools had been founded, the omniscient (Kunkyen) Longchen Rabjam came into the world. This incomparable master, known also as Drime Odzer, or simply as Longchenpa, is widely considered the most important explicator of the Dzogchen teachings of the Nyingma school. His writings and teachings, as well as the example of his life, have had an immense impact on Dharma practitioners for over seven centuries.

The Nyingma tradition, of which Longchenpa is a major exemplar, envisions nine vehicles or Yanas leading to the complete enlightenment of a Buddha. The first three Yanas are the Shrivakayana, Pratyekabuddhayana, and Bodhisattvayana. The first two focus on the teachings found in the Buddha's First Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma, while the third, the Bodhisattvayana, embraces all three Turnings of the Wheel.

The remaining six Yanas are based on the teachings of the Tantras. The three Outer Tantras are the Kriya, Charya, and Yoga Tantras. Hundreds of works related to these teachings are gathered in the Kanjur and Tanjur (the spoken word of the Buddha and their commentaries), including the Tantras followed by the Sarma or New Schools.

The three Inner Tantras, the Mahayoga, Anuyoga and Atiyoga, are the highest of the nine Yanas. They are preserved and transmitted only within the Nyingma tradition. These teachings are transmitted from the Adibuddha through Vajrasattva and the great Bodhisattvas into the human realm. Handed down in India for centuries under conditions of great secrecy, the Inner Tantras were brought into Tibet in the era of the Three Founding Fathers.

Atiyoga (known also as Mahasandhi, or in Tibetan as Dzogchen) is the ninth Yana, the highest of the three Inner Yoga Tantras. Atiyoga has its own view (tawa), practice (gompa), and action manifestation (shopa). The view is based on enlightenment itself. It is the nature of Dharmakaya as symbolized by the Buddha Samantabhadra (known in inadequate translation as the Primordial Enlightened One). The practice is the enlightened transmission of Dharmakaya from one fully realized master to the next. The action manifestation is teaching in accord with the needs of nine kinds of audience. The Atiyoga teachings are preserved in the collection known as The Hundred Thousand Tantras (Gyud Bum), which encompasses the million topics of all three of the Inner Tantras.

The transmission lineage of the Atiyoga passes from the Dharmakaya to the Sambhogakaya through the Buddha Vajrasattva. It enters the human realm through Garab Dorje

(first century CE). His disciple, Manjushrimitra, passed on the teachings to Shri Simha, who in turn bestowed them upon Vimalamitra, Jnanasutra, Guru Padmasambhava and Lochen Vairotsana (who also received visionary teachings directly from Garab Dorje). Together with the master Buddhaguhya, who trained countless disciples in the Mahayoga teachings from his dwelling place on Mount Kailash, these teachers – Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and Vairotsana – were instrumental in bringing the Inner Yogas to the Land of Snow.

In the early days of the Dharma in Tibet, the Atiyoga teachings were transmitted in secret, and few people even knew about them. This is because the teachings of the esoteric Inner Tantras proceed from the highest enlightened view of the Dharmakaya, and for those not ready for them, they are easy to misunderstand. Even those well versed in the Dharma may encounter this difficulty. Training in the traditions of the lower Yanas emphasizes certain specific doctrines (for example, the central importance of mind and consciousness, the role of karma and klesha, the workings of cause and effect, and the operation of past, present, and future). Scholars of Madhyamika, Abhidharma, and even Prajnaparamita tend to have commitments of one kind or another to such doctrines, which make it easy for them to misinterpret Atiyoga teachings. Therefore, the Atiyoga teachings were closely guarded

during the period when the Dharma was gradually introduced to the Tibetan people.

As part of the comprehensive Dharma transmission to the Land of Snow, three major transmission lineages for the Atiyoga were founded. The first lineage is that of Padmasambhava, who transmitted the teachings to some of his twenty-five chief disciples, such as Gyelmo Yudra Nyingpo, Kawa Peltsek, Chogro Lui Gyeltsen, Nyak Jnanakumara, and Nubchen Sangye Yeshe. The second transmission lineage originates with Vairotsana, who transmitted it to his five most important students: Gyelmo Yudra Nyingpo, Sangton Yeshe Lama, Pangen Sangye Gonpo, Nyak Jnanakumara, and Lady Sherab Dronma of Khotan. Finally Vimalamitra conferred the third transmission lineage of Atiyoga teachings on his five principal disciples: Trisong Detsun, Prince Mune Tsenpo, Nyang Ting nge dzin, Kawa Peltsek, and Chogro Lui Gyeltsen. These three major transmissions all continued intact until the time of Longchenpa.

TWO STREAMS OF TRANSMISSION

Longchenpa is considered the reincarnation of two individuals from this early period of transmission who each played a key role in the transmission of the Atiyoga teachings: the great sage Vimalamitra, and Princess Pema Sel, the daughter

of King Trisong Detsun. As the karmic connections made at this time ripened in his person, Longchenpa was able to unite the Atiyoga lineages passed down through Padmasambhava and through Vimalamitra.

Vimalamitra was born in Kashmir, an emanation of Manjushri. On his many travels he taught at Nalanda and Bodhi Gaya, in Bengal, in Kashmir, and in central India. At the time when Trisong Detsun took the throne in Tibet, Vimalamitra was residing in Oddiyana as the head of five hundred Mahapanditas, or great learned masters.

Having previously received Dzogchen teachings from Lochen Vairotsana, King Trisong Detsun sent emissaries to Oddiyana to invite Vimalamitra to Tibet to receive further instruction, for he had been told that this master was holder of countless enlightened lineages of the Mantrayana and Sutrayana. When the Kashmiri master arrived, however, Vairotsana had been exiled to the remote region of Gyelmo Rong, as a result of intrigues by courtiers who had succeeded in convincing the king that his teachings were false. Under these circumstances, Vimalamitra at first chose to keep the Inner Tantras a secret. When he eventually revealed them to the king, Trisong Detsun realized that Vairotsana's teachings were very similar, and he hastily invited Vairotsana to return from exile.

Vimalamitra stayed in Tibet for thirteen years, practicing intensively at the monastery of Samye, in Lhasa, and at other holy places and retreat centers. He transmitted, translated, and concealed for future discovery various texts on the Inner Tantras, including the works known collectively as the Vima Nying-tig. (Although these are esoteric terms with very precise meanings, in general the term ‘nying-tig’ refers to the heart of the heart, the center of all enlightened knowledge; literally, ‘nying’ means ‘heart’ and ‘tig’ means ‘drop.’)

From Tibet, Vimalamitra traveled to Mount Wu-t’ai-shan in China, a mountain closely associated with the Mahabodhisattva Manjushri. He chose this sacred location to pass away, manifesting the rainbow body and becoming immortal. Great masters and practitioners in later times reported meeting Vimalamitra in their meditations. In one of these spiritual encounters Vimalamitra promised two of his disciples, Chetsun Senge Wangchuk and Dangma Lhungyi Gyeltsen, that he would return to Tibet in an emanation-body once every century. One such emanation was Longchenpa.

Longchenpa’s other incarnation lineage traces to Princess Lhachen Pema Sel, the daughter of King Trisong Detsun. At the age of eight, the princess was stung by a bee and died as the result of an allergic reaction. Desolate with grief, the king took his daughter’s body to Samye Chimpu, where

Guru Padmasambhava was in residence, and begged for his help. Assisted by his consort Yeshe Tsogyal, the great Guru performed a special ceremony and brought the girl back to life: today a square rock in a cave at Chimpu still commemorates the site of this miracle. Guru Padmasambhava then bestowed on the princess the Atiyoga teachings known as the Khandro Nying-tig, empowering her to reveal these teachings in a future rebirth. Concealed for later discovery, they were found in the thirteenth or fourteenth century by Pema Leytrei tsel, the incarnation of Princess Pema Sel immediately prior to Longchenpa.

FIELD OF VAST KNOWLEDGE

Longchenpa was born on March 1, 1308, in the village of Todrung in the Dra Valley, located in the Yoru region of central Tibet. His father, Lupon Tensrung, was the son of a great master and renowned healer named Lhasrung, a descendant of a nephew of one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five chief disciples who lived to be 105 years old. Longchenpa's mother, Sonam Gyen, belonged to the lineage of the sister of Dromtonpa, a disciple of Atisha and a revered figure in the history of the Kadampa School.

Longchenpa's birth was marked by auspicious signs, and Dharmapalas (protectors of the Dharma) appeared to protect

and serve him. The young child displayed the character of a noble being and mastered Dharma studies with remarkable ease. By the age of five he had learned to read and write and began his studies, receiving initiations from his father. At the age of nine, he memorized the Prajnaparamita in 25,000 and 8,000 lines, and at the age of twelve he was ordained as a novice. Soon his fame as a scholar-practitioner began to spread, and within a few years he was acknowledged as a master by all Buddhist schools in Tibet. No one could match him in debate, no matter what the subject, for he completely commanded the Sutras and Tantras. In time he became known as Kunkyen Longchenpa, the All-Knowing Vastness Field of Knowledge.

As a practitioner, Longchenpa had countless visions of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, deities, Dharmapalas, and dakinis. It is said that when he beheld Saraswati, the goddess of learning, she revealed to him in the palm of her hand a vision of all the universes, a vision that Longchenpa contemplated without interruption for seven full days. He had hundreds of students, and he often gave initiations to thousands of practitioners at one time. Great scholars of both the Nyingma and Sarma schools regularly sought his guidance on points of doctrine and practice.

As an author, Longchenpa became renowned for the beauty of his poetry and prose as well as for the clarity of his

style. He is credited with more than two hundred works, both as an author and compiler, many of which, including a number of Sutra commentaries, have been lost. The works that survive are counted among the masterpieces of Tibetan literature. Most famous are the sNying-thig Ya-bzhi teachings that bring together the transmission of Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava; the works known as the *Seven Treasures* (mDzod-bdun), *The Trilogy of Natural Freedom* (Rang-grol-skor-gsum), *The Trilogy of Dispelling the Darkness* (Mun-sel-skor-gsum), and *The Trilogy of Finding Comfort and Ease* (Ngal-gso-skor-gsum; published by Dharma Publishing in three volumes as *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*). Each of the three trilogies was provided with commentary by Longchenpa himself. Other texts that have survived the centuries include an extensive Dharma history, a work on logic, and commentaries on the Uttaratantra of Maitreya and the Kunjed Gyalpo Tantra.

Longchenpa spent much of his life in Central Tibet, the region where he was born. In fact he spent so much time at Samye and its retreat center, Samye Chimpu, that he is sometimes known as Samye-pa. He helped rebuild many of the temples at Samye and the retreat centers at Chimpu, and later in his life established and repaired many temples in the land of Bhutan as well. For the most part, however, Longchenpa preferred to live on retreat in remote places, and he became

known as an example of a perfect Atiyoga practitioner: the embodiment of Dharmakaya.

Longchenpa's lineage continued through his disciples, including those known as the three accomplished ones, the five spiritual sons, the four spiritual benefactors, and the four accomplished yogins. Not all the Mahayoga and Anuyoga lineages he transmitted remain intact, but his Atiyoga teachings have had a powerful and enduring impact up until today. In later centuries, famous masters became his direct disciples by encountering him in visionary experiences after praying for his blessings. These include Lhatsun Namka Jigme (1597-1650), considered an incarnation of both Vimalamitra and Longchenpa; Kunkyen Terdag Lingpa (1646-1714), an incarnation of Vairotsana; and Kunkyen Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) also an incarnation of Vimalamitra and Longchenpa. Each of these supremely accomplished masters received Atiyoga teachings from the great master directly in mind to mind transmission. The transmission received by Jigme Lingpa in a series of visions at Chimpu was especially important, for through this transmission Jigme Lingpa thoroughly understood the great ocean of teachings and was able to transmit the cycle of Dzogchen teachings known today as the Longchen Nying-tig.

In later times, countless accomplished masters attained inner realization of the profound Dzogchen teachings through

practicing the Nying-tig lineages that Longchenpa united in his being. They included Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Patrul Rinpoche, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, Adzom Drugpa, and Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro.

IN THE PRESENCE OF KUNTUZANGPO

However deeply his accomplishments, realizations, and legacy are revered, there is still more to comprehend about why Kunkyen Longchenpa holds such a central place within the Nyingma School. It may be best to say simply that Longchenpa united and perfected in himself all aspects of the enlightened lineages. In mastery of the Sutrayana, he was the equal of Nagarjuna; in mastery of the shastra tradition he was like the six great masters of India; in mastery of the Mantrayana, he was the equal of all the Vidyadharas of the Vajrayana; and in mastery of meditation he was the equal of the great sage Milarepa. He was an honored scholar but also a great siddha, who preferred to dwell in sacred places and mountain caves and celebrated in his writings the beauty of untamed nature. He maintained the perfect discipline of the Great Arhats, and in his actions he so fully exemplified the practice of the Bodhisattvas that he might be regarded as the equal of Avalokiteshvara himself. Terton (treasure finder), pandita, visionary practitioner – Longchenpa is the greatest example of the

accomplishments that the Atiyoga lineage offers. His life story offers profound inspiration to all who reflect on it, for it reveals what it is like to live as a perfect master of the teachings.

At the age of fifty-six, having mastered the Dharma realms in the same way a chakravartin king becomes sovereign of the entire world, Longchenpa announced that he had achieved what he had set out to do in this life. Before entering parinirvana, he urged his students to prepare themselves well, taking full advantage of the opportunities that life offers for escaping the bonds of samsara. His teachings on this occasion are the source of the text published here as “Now that I Come to Die.”

On January 24, 1364 the master passed into parinirvana. The earth shook several times, and although it was mid-winter, flowers spontaneously erupted and blossomed.

*Now that the connection with this life has lost its karmic power,
Do not lament about this beggar
Who died happily and unattached,
But constantly pray that he be with you in spirit.
— Now that I Come to Die*

In his teachings Longchenpa placed a special emphasis on impermanence. With a few well chosen words and the example of his own life, Longchenpa shows how things arise and pass away, revealing that the truth of enlightenment is always

at hand. He reminds us that being aware of constant change and the shortness of life is a complete teaching in itself, encouraging us to maximize our time and energy while we still can. Furthermore he constantly advised his students that birth as a human being is rare and precious. Human beings are in fortunate circumstances, for they can practice with all their energy and all their hearts, studying in depth the nature of human awareness. Always reminding his students that intellectual and conceptual knowledge cannot penetrate to the level of enlightenment, Longchenpa teaches that we can see this for ourselves only after understanding how the mind works. On the basis of this understanding, we can embody the Dharmakaya. Having discovered that nirvana is not some distant realm, separate from ordinary experience, we can manifest enlightenment within our own life.

The major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism all have their great exemplars. For example, the Sakyapa honor Sakya Pandita, master of all the scriptures and all knowledge, while the Gelugpa revere Tsongkhapa, master of all the Sutras and Tantras. To the Nyingmapa, Longchenpa's attainments transcend all other attributes. Nothing in this universe is more precious than the teachings he left us, for those who study them perfectly gain direct access to the enlightened realm. His style of writing is profound and striking and his insights in the realm

of philosophy, psychology, and practice go beyond those of all others. In his own life and actions he set in motion a dynamic that can penetrate the rigid patterns of our mind, helping us transcend our limitations. The beauty of his teachings and the qualities through which he evokes understanding bring us directly into the presence of the Adibuddha.

THE HIGHEST REALIZATION

The highest realization a master in the Dzogchen tradition can achieve is the rainbow body, in which the practitioner attains immortality and leaves no body behind. In early times, Vimalamitra attained the rainbow body, as did several of his direct disciples, though he is also said still to dwell at Mount Wu T'ai Shan. The great Kadampa Deshek (1122-1192), founder of Katok Monastery, established a lineage in which practitioners focused on a more frequently attained goal, in which at the time of passing away the body simply vanishes, leaving behind only hair and nails. According to the meticulous records kept at the monastery close to a hundred thousand practitioners achieved this level of realization over the course of three centuries.

In more recent times, great masters such as Adzom Drukpa (1842-1924), as well as his teacher Jamyang Kyentse'i Wangpo (1820-1892) have attained the rainbow body. When the great

Nyak-la Padma Dudul (1816-1872) felt his life coming to an end, he gathered his disciples around him at a cave at the top of a mountain and entered a small tent to meditate. After seven days of intense practice in which his disciples participated, he vanished. All that remained on the ground where he was sitting were little heaps of his hair and nails. Numerous written accounts of similar accomplishments by other masters, dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were preserved in eastern Tibet.

Such attainments demonstrate that through practicing Atiyoga, highly advanced practitioners are able to enter the Dharmakaya directly. Having accumulated the necessary karma through meritorious action, their prayers and devotion allow them to communicate directly with the enlightened realm, no longer relying on the human mind. Human beings in turn can communicate with them, from heart to heart, until they learn to see with Dharma eyes. That possibility is what Longchenpa offers us, and that is why these teachings and practices, transmitted by Longchenpa with supreme clarity, have become so well known and highly honored.

ONE WAY TO APPROACH UNDERSTANDING

Rather than seeking explanation for such extraordinary achievements, which the human mind cannot comprehend,

it might be best to pass over such realization in silence. Still, an ordinary, conceptual understanding of these attainments may also be of benefit. Although my views at this level may be mistaken, I offer them here in case others find them helpful.

Suppose that all existence arises ‘within’ shunyata. If that is so, mind and shunyata are inseparable. To experience this inseparability of mind and shunyata implies union with the dharmadatu, and once there is union with the dharmadhatu, nothing is ‘outside’. Everything is included in the enlightened realm: ordinary substance, mind, karma and klesha, cause and effect, and conventional reason. No residues remain; light is everywhere.

Since nothing is outside this realization, the boundaries that appear to separate ‘this’ from ‘that’ or ‘you’ from ‘me’ no longer have a function. The entire realm of existence is simply appearance, and what appears is inseparable from shunyata. Realization at this level effortlessly transcends relative conceptual existence, giving immediate access to nirvana and enlightenment. In practical terms, this means that realization can be transferred from ‘one’ consciousness to ‘another’.

The great masters of the Dzogchen lineage understand this not only on the theoretical level, but as a living reality. They embody and transmit this reality to others spontaneously. Samsara, karma, and klesha all become part of the

enlightened process, a constant transmutation that itself constitutes the path to enlightenment.

At our level of practice and understanding, bridging the gap between samsara and nirvana, between ordinary mind and true realization, seems problematic and difficult. The leap from one realm into the other cannot be understood with the rational mind alone. Yet the difficulty itself arises only within the framework of samsaric logic and thought. From our relative perspective, the operation of karma generates thick clouds that leave us in the dark, unable to perceive reality, see the future, understand the past, or comprehend the nature and dynamic of time. With nothing to go on but ordinary rationality, we rely on relative convictions, which reason, science, and history all confirm.

How does our ordinary mind operate? First we frame a picture of the way we believe things are, and then we live within that frame. Whatever does not fit within the frame is referred to as a mystery: inexplicable, nonsensical, or perhaps supernatural. Concepts such as 'before the beginning', 'after the end', or 'formless form' leave us with no way to respond, speechless and confused.

At the enlightened level, however, the picture frame does not play the same limiting role. Things that scientists and philosophers are unable to explain, the practitioner may discover

within practice. For instance, a practitioner may suddenly grasp that form simply 'is' formless: that form and formless are inseparable.

Suppose that mind can exhibit mind to mind, like a story flickering across a television screen. Suppose we had access not only to the story on the screen, but to the technical 'production aspects' that contribute to making the story available. That would bring us closer to the realized perspective. The enlightened ones are perfectly aware that the fiction that unfolds within the frame is unborn and uncreated. In traditional terms, this is called perfect wisdom, Prajnaparamita, or dharmadhatu. If the kaya of dharmadhatu, the body of existence, is pervasive, then whatever arises embodies Dharmakaya. Nothing is left out. There is no inside or outside, no thing and no 'no thing'.

Within our personal picture frame, we continue to make comparisons and distinguish yes from no; we apply our logic of names and labels. But just because it 'makes sense' within the frame does not mean that it is the truth. The ordinary, conventional, samsaric frame of mind has been conditioned to operate in a certain way. Language, thoughts, senses, and the operation of karma and klesha all reflect that design, whose author is human consciousness. Mind designs and frames a picture of a future and a past, and within that frame

the truths of human civilization find their place. First there is a point of creation, then a history of mind. Gradually the rhythms of rhythm, the sounds of sound emerge. We develop language, pose questions and discover answers, and experience through the senses. All this presents itself in a way that facilitates agreement, leading to conviction. Reality is established: the domain of relative truth, known in Buddhism as *samvrtti satya*. In dependence on the structures of human consciousness, the three realms – the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm – come into being.

Even on the conceptual level, we can ask: Why do things work in this way? Why could they not work differently? Could there be a ‘higher’ realm, a higher truth, one to which we ordinarily have no access with our conceptual mind? Could this be what Western religions refer to when they speak of God, or what Buddhism is pointing toward when it speaks of the enlightened or awakened state, the dharmadhatu, or (at a more philosophical level) of prajna, wisdom, or shunyata? Could such a higher reality be understood as all encompassing, as more comprehensive than the reality framed by human consciousness? In naming such a possibility, do we move closer to that which is not necessarily substance or not-substance, not existence but also not the non-existence of existence? We can acknowledge that such a possibility goes

beyond our ability to see or sense it, but that does not mean that it is not there, or that it is not what *is* there.

Acknowledging such possibilities may be helpful, but we are still only speculating. We are still in the realm of language and explanations, concepts and constructs. Even if we glimpse something that seems real, it is at most the tip of the iceberg. It seems we are simply interpreting our own mind, or even the interpretations of our own mind. And when we do that, when we behave like philosophers, we are at best just knocking on the door to other realms, other possibilities. Stuck within the frame, we cannot enter a reality beyond the frame, cannot go deeper into other ways of being or see other dimensions of mind.

That is where the practice of Dzogchen or Atiyoga enters. The Dzogchen way of practice goes beyond mind. It transcends concepts and is not bound by words. As a lineage of realization, it leaves behind ordinary perception. Step by step it lets go of karmic manufacturing and the transmission forward of what is so, of cause leading to effect. It goes beyond all that, goes to a higher level.

But again this is saying too much. ‘Higher’ and ‘lower’ make sense only in terms of the relative level of comparisons and constructs. Actually, there is no hierarchy. Once more we see that words are not the right vehicle. We cannot forcefully

imagine another way to be, nor can we ‘deny’ the reality of what we experience. If words were needed, we might speak of ‘transcending’ or of ‘shunyata’, but when we do so we are again making use of mind and concepts.

Whenever we perceive, we are the perceiver; whenever we speak, we are the speaker. We are the pursuer and the one who engages the inquiry. The agent of these actions is always the ordinary mind, with its conventional opinions and views, and also with its sense that those opinions and views must be transcended. Even the most sophisticated therapy for samsaric mind remains an interpretation, based on language, concepts, and imagery, on pointing *to* something *from* a particular perspective. That kind of relationship keeps us bound to human patterns and the expression of human consciousness. Whatever its attractions, it is not a great achievement.

The all-knowing Longchenpa, in his life and in his teachings, showed a way out of this trap. He showed how to activate the teachings step by step. He demonstrated that the Sutrayana leads automatically to the Mantrayana and the Tantras, which lead in turn to the essence of the three inner yoga Tantras. He himself is the living embodiment of this realization: Longchenpa, Jnenendra, one with the great enlightened omniscient ones. He is present for us now, his knowledge uniting us with the Dharmakaya.

Those who take a religious view toward life may look for God; those who take a philosophical view may look for truth. Still others may look for love. Whatever they look for – whatever *you* look for – that is Longchenpa. Externally he expresses the blessings of the enlightened lineage. Internally, nothing is left: just the naked, perfect quality of enlightenment.

FOR ALL HUMANITY

How we can love Longchenpa? How can we enter into intimacy with the wisdom and compassion he manifested? His legacy is for all humanity. His whole purpose in appearing in this world is to help beings awaken from samsara, to perfect this universe, to transform and put an end to all misery, suffering, and confusion. Human beings are caught in a nightmare, and Longchenpa is here to rescue them from its grip. The path he teaches can free all beings from hunger and desire, stupidity and confusion, loneliness, hatred, and pain. Seeing through the human condition, we need no longer accept the product of suffering.

Longchenpa invites us to get started on the project of enlightenment. He shows us the steps we need to take to transform our ordinary life into an expression of enlightenment. His teachings illustrate that all elements of conventional experience are building blocks of wisdom: thoughts, concepts, emotions, senses, and feelings. All ordinary things

are transcendable and transmutable. There is no need to beat ourselves over the head with our shortcomings or to wallow in guilt. We do not need to claim our identity as the victims of our karma, nor do we need to suffer alone. There is a way out, and that way is perfect enlightenment.

In practicing these teachings we can unite with Longchenpa. The great master invites us home, embodying the best of human potential, accessible to each one of us. By opening our hearts to Longchenpa we receive his blessings, for he embraces us as we are. Longchenpa's love joins with our own. In the exchange we receive his compassion and his awakened energy, loosening the grip of samsara on our minds and hearts.

Reading *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, the English translation of the Ngal-gso-skor-gsum, offers a small taste of the beauty that Longchenpa makes available. Even though the translation is not completely accurate, the text gives a sense of how Longchenpa encourages the reader to start the journey on the path and of how he sees the nature of samsara. Notice that Longchenpa does not ask us to start by reflecting on the nature of the Buddha's enlightenment. Instead, he asks us to investigate the nature of samsara and of our own confusion. He implores us to do it 'straight away'.

Once we understand something about human nature and the functioning of the mind, we naturally begin to won-

der who we really are. How did we come to misunderstand our own being? What is it that we have lost, and how can we return to the wholeness of our being? As these questions become meaningful, we discover that Longchenpa, the ‘all-knowing’ master, gives us the answers we seek at the level we presently occupy. When we need explanations, he offers them. When we need to satisfy the questions posed by ordinary mind, he offers conventional truths. And when we ask how to wake up, he gives us the necessary practices.

Longchenpa is the master pandita and the peerless psychologist. He knows how to separate mind and wisdom. He stands ready to show us the path that leads to enlightenment and the path that leads to samsara, and how to connect the two. He reveals how to enter the path and engage the teachings, and he explains in detail whatever we need to know as we proceed. He clarifies the nine qualities of mind manifestation, helping us understand others. He unites knowledge, practice, and blessings into a complete teaching and a complete path. Truly he is the incomparable master, the perfect manifestation of the Buddha’s sacred realization.

Calling on Longchenpa

Here is a simple practice to connect with the master: Visualize Longchenpa as the Vajra Guru above the crown of your head, either about eighteen inches in height or the size of a human being. Seated on a lotus, he manifests the rainbow body of pure light, both hands resting on his knees. Chant the following mantra (or the Vajra Guru mantra):

Om Ah Hum Vajra Mahaguru Sarvajnana Siddhi Pala Hum

As you chant, regard Longchenpa as a living presence, the omniscient (Sarvajnana) great teacher (Mahaguru). You may wish to reflect that Manjushri is the essence of the knowledge of all the Buddhas, Vimalamitra is the manifestation of Manjushri, and Longchenpa is the incarnation of Vimalamitra.

After chanting for some time, pray silently for union with Longchenpa. Visualize rays of light emanating from his body: white light in the form of the Tibetan letter OM enters the chakra in your forehead; red light in the form of the Tibetan letter AH enters your throat chakra; and blue light in the form of the Tibetan letter HUM enters your heart chakra. As light enters the body, your prayer is granted, and you become

inseparable from the mind, teachings, and embodiment of Longchenpa, like water mixing with water.

Repeat this practice two to three times during a single session. Let the enlightened Dharmakaya blessings of Longchenpa become the very essence of your body, mind and spirit. Accept these blessings of joy and love, which are the foundation for miraculous displays (siddhi).

When great masters have practiced in this way with deep devotion, many miracles have happened. If you do the practice with complete confidence, whatever you consider less than perfect will be transformed. Longchenpa's blessings effortlessly overcome the power of the Kaliyuga, transforming your own weaknesses, the obstacles that stand in your way, and the most fearsome and potent displays of the marayas.

– Tarthang Tulku
Odiyan, January 2007

Prayer to Longchenpa

dzamling dzay pay gyen drug chog nyi dang
thuk kyi lung tog nyam pay thug nga wa
nag trod dam par bay pay tul zhug kyi
kor day cho kur dzog pay longchenpa
drimed odzer zhab la sol wa deb

The Six Ornaments and the
Two Most Excellent Ones of the whole world:
The learning and realization of their
enlightened hearts, your heart equals.
Hidden yogi practicing in
sacred forest groves, Longchenpa,
You are the perfect unity of samsara and
nirvana as Dharmakaya:
Drimed Ozer (Immaculate Rays of Light)
at your feet we pray.