

ADVICE FOR MOUNTAIN RETREAT

entitled

*Extracting the Essence of Accomplishment through  
Direct Instructions that are Easily Understood*

by H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche  
Jigdral Yeshe Dorje



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*To the feet of the glorious guru, whose kindness is unrivaled,  
I respectfully bow and go for refuge.*

Grant blessings that realization of the profound path may swiftly and unerringly arise in the mind streams of me and my disciples in this very life and that we may seize the ground of original purity.

In order to do so, due to the conjunction of previous aspirations and perfectly pure karma, now there is heartfelt trust in the doctrine of the profound and secret Mahāsandhi.<sup>a</sup> For all such blessed ones who now aspire to bring their practice to perfection, this entranceway is my advice for mountain retreat that places the knowledge for practicing the quintessential cycle of Mahāsandhi directly into their hands.

For that to occur, this can be known based upon three topics: the preparation involving the severance of compulsive attachment and fixation to bring your mind to the dharma through purifying the mind stream; severing all doubts concerning view, meditation, and conduct to precisely accomplish the practice; and by maintaining the vows of samaya during post-meditation, engaging in daily life activities by bringing them into the dharma.

*The Preparation*

Now, I will say something about the first topic. Alas! That which we call our mind—this lucid wakeful state—arose simultaneously with Samantabhadra.<sup>b</sup> Samantabhadra recognized self-appearances and was liberated, whereas we sentient beings failed to recognize and, as a result, have wandered in saṃsāra endlessly until now. Having taken on countless bodies in the six classes of beings, all of our activities have—for the most part—been meaningless. Now, having gained a single one among one-hundred opportunities: if we do not establish the sole means to avoid rebirth in the lower realms of saṃsāra, then there is no telling where rebirth will occur. No matter where we are born though, it will be within the six classes where suffering is inevitable and never transcended.

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<sup>a</sup> *dzog pa chen po (rdzogs pa chen po)*; Dzogchen, Great Perfection, Atiyoga

<sup>b</sup> *Kuntuzangpo (kun tu bzang po)*

It is not enough to simply have attained just a human body. Given the time of death is uncertain, it is necessary to engage in the genuine dharma immediately. In doing so, there will be no regrets at death and no personal shame as well. You must aspire to be like Jetsun Milarepa,<sup>a</sup> who told us:

This spiritual tradition of mine, Milarepa, is to not be ashamed of oneself. So, he spoke.

Even though you enter the path of dharma, it is not acceptable to merely adopt the outer appearances and activities of the dharma. Rather, it is necessary to sever all attachment to the desirables and cease to only rely upon this life's phenomena. Until that [attachment] is severed—even though you may have entered the dharma path by taking ordination or through renunciation with a chaotic attitude—if there is still attachment to homeland, wealth, possessions, relatives, friends, spouse, companions, and the like, then that mind of attachment is the root cause and the objects of attachment are the contributing circumstances that come together through the māras that create obstacles. Associating once again with ordinary worldliness, karma will become reversed. Therefore, being able to bear the loss of good food, clothing, and conversation—these three—and being free of attachment to the eight worldly concerns, focus the mind single-pointedly on the dharma.

In a solitary place where the thought of death penetrates your heart, the practitioner that completely relinquishes attachment seals the retreat boundaries of forsaking this life's phenomena and will no longer encounter the outsiders of the eight worldly concerns.

Hence, it is necessary to become like Gyalwa Yang Gonpa<sup>b</sup> [quoted above].

Otherwise, dharma mixed with the eight worldly concerns is like ingesting food contaminated with poison. This leads to disaster. The eight worldly concerns can be synthesized into two: hope and fear [i.e., expectation and disappointment]. This means having attachment and aversion. Inner attachment and aversion disguise themselves outwardly as kingly and haughty māras. As long as the mind is not free from attachment and aversion, unable to part from these māras, the time for obstacles to exhaust will simply not arrive. That is why you must be introspective and search your soul to see if there is fixation on this life's eight worldly concerns or not? Examine this repeatedly and persevere in driving out these faults. If the eight worldly concerns are harbored within yet you outwardly appear as a spiritual practitioner, any material benefit you might gain as a result of such deceit amounts to wrong livelihood.

As the saying goes, “Abandoning your homeland accomplishes half of the teaching.” Turning your back on your homeland, wander alone throughout uncertain environments and countries. Part amicably with relatives and friends, and do not listen to any words that try to discourage your pursuit of practice. Give away wealth and possessions and survive on whatever alms may

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<sup>a</sup> *rje btsun mi la ras pa*

<sup>b</sup> *rgyal ba yang dgon pa*

come your way. Knowing all sensual pleasures to bring on obstacles that cause bad habits, cultivate a mind free of desire. If still discontent with few possessions, then having one will just cause desire for two, making the temptation by the māra of sensual pleasures an easy job.

Whatever people say, whether good or bad, do not cling to the words as true or regard them with hope and fear, trying to adopt or discard them. Allow others to say what they will as though commenting about a corpse. Apart from a qualified master, the most honest advice would otherwise come from your parents; but even that should be heeded. Stand your ground and do not allow others to control you.

Outwardly, maintain a good-natured attitude, do not be annoying, and know how to be harmonious and cheerful. In fact, if anyone—whether superior or inferior—tries to interfere with your spiritual practice, be as unshakable as an iron boulder pulled by a white scarf. Do not be shallow and weak so that your head bends easily like blades of grass blown by the wind on a mountain pass. Resolve that, from the beginning until accomplishment occurs—whether lightning strikes from above, oceans well up from below, or rocks crash down from the sides—you will never abandon the commitment at the cost of life itself and you will complete the practice.

From the beginning of retreat, refrain from engaging in bad habits and set up a schedule for meditation sessions, sleep, breaks, and meals. In particular, whether the practice is elaborate or not, do not be sporadic. Make practice regular and do not leave even a moment for being ordinary. When beginning, seal the door of the retreat cave with mud; and if that is not the case, then at least do not meet anyone thereafter, talk with others, or spy on them. Completely relinquish the distractions of a restless mind. Expel the stale winds and assume the correct sitting posture. Abandon dualistic mental activities and rest in mindful awareness without wavering for a single instant, like an oak stake driven into the ground. Sustaining a strict outer, inner, and secret retreat format will swiftly bring about the signs and qualities.

In retreat, if you think, “This is an important exception; I must meet with this one person, and afterwards I will resume strictness,” it will be the cause for losing the momentum of the richness of blessings; and practice will become increasingly loose. Hence, if you make the initial decision to stay in retreat, the retreat itself should get increasingly strict. In that way, practice will not be dispersed by obstacles.

Although there are myriad ways to examine the characteristics of practice locales, generally, a suitable location is one that has been blessed by accomplished masters such as Guru Rinpoche, or a place where samaya violators have not lived, is extremely isolated, easy to gather the necessities, and where you feel comfortable and at ease. In locales such as charnel grounds where malevolent spirits dwell, both outer and inner auspicious connections can be quickly aligned. If you are capable of practicing in such places, then meditation will be enhanced. If you are incapable, then obstacles will increase. Once there is confidence with realization, adverse circumstances will arise as companions. It is then that it is particularly beneficial to engage in

secret conduct in charnel grounds and the like. Always relinquish outer and inner busyness, for abiding in a state of inactivity is the genuine locale of isolation.

The common practices are the four thoughts that turn the mind; and the uncommon are refuge, bodhichitta, purification of obscurations, and gathering meritorious accumulations. Exert yourself in each of these stages according to the practice manuals that delineate them until true experience dawns. In particular, hold the guru-yoga practice as the life essence of the meditation and be diligent. If not, progress in meditation will be slow. Even if there is some progression, you will be vulnerable to obstacles and unable to give rise to genuine realization. Thus, supplicate fervently with unfeigned devotion; and in doing so, before too long the master's wisdom mind will transfer to you, and an ineffable, extraordinary realization will certainly dawn from within. Master Zhang Rinpoche<sup>a</sup> said:

Although there are many who sustain stillness, meditative experience, and samādhi, it is rare to find those who gain realization through the strength of devotion to the master.

So, it is.

Hence, whether the meaning of the great perfection dawns in the mind stream or not depends entirely upon the preliminaries. Also, Lord Drigungpa<sup>b</sup> said:

Other traditions say the main practice is profound, while we regard the preliminaries as profound.

Thus, the wisdom intent of our lineage is just like that.

### *The Practice*

The primary practice involves the way to cut through misunderstanding regarding view, meditation, and conduct and how to bring this directly into practice.

First, the view that knows the way things are is the genuine, fundamental nature of mind that is free from all characteristics based upon mental fabrications and designations. By determining awareness in this way, awareness will nakedly dawn as self-occurring wisdom. There are no words to describe it and no metaphor that can do it justice. Saṃsāra does not worsen it nor does enlightenment improve it. It has never been born, never ended, never been set free, never been deluded, never existed, never not existed, never been limited, or never fallen to a single direction. In brief, since primordially it has never existed as something with material, elaborate characteristics, its nature is originally pure—great all-pervasive emptiness. Given that the radiance of emptiness remains uninterrupted, the oceanic phenomenal realms of saṃsāra and enlightenment self-appear like the sun and its rays.

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<sup>a</sup> *bla ma zhang rin po che*

<sup>b</sup> *rje 'bri gung pa*

Having never been an empty vacuity of nothingness, the intrinsic nature of this wisdom has magnificent, spontaneously present qualities. Likewise, the nature of this trikāya awareness is the unity of appearances and emptiness. To precisely realize this fundamental nature of the innate origin [of mind] is what is referred to as the view of the great perfection, which is beyond the intellect. The great master Guru Rinpoche tells us:

Dharmakāya beyond intellect is the nature as it is.

So, we actually hold the wisdom mind of Samantabhadra in our hands! How incredible! This is the ultimate meaning of the victorious ones' 84,000 categories of teachings and the core of the 6,400,000 verses of the Mahāsandhi tantras. Aside from this, not a cent's worth of dharma exists elsewhere; so it is crucial to determine it to be the crux of all teachings.

Now, after resolving doubts within you regarding the view, to sustain it continuously is meditation. All other attempts to meditate with focal points are mentally induced meditations and not the manner of meditation [according to this tradition]. Without losing the basis of the view, allow the five cognitive gateways to naturally settle at ease. Do not meditate by saying, "This is it." If you are "meditating", that involves intellect. In truth, there is nothing at all to be meditated upon, so do not allow yourself to be distracted for even an instant. If you wander from settling in natural awareness, that actually is delusion. Without being distracted, allow all thoughts to surface without attempting to pursue or block them in any way.

Well then, you may ask, "Then, what should I do?" Whatever objective appearances arise—without fixating upon what appears—remain like an innocent child looking around in a shrine room. Rest in the moment, without grasping after appearances. In their natural state, phenomena will not change form or color, nor will they lose vitality or luster. Although unsullied by thoughts of attachment and grasping, everything that appears will arise as the uncovered wisdom of lucid emptiness.

Otherwise, those of lesser intelligence will become confused by the abundance of the so-called vast and profound teachings. If I were to point my finger to the pith meaning—then once the previous or last thought ceases and before the subsequent thought emerges—between them, isn't there a moment of lucid, immediate awareness as wakefulness that has not had a hair's worth of adjustment? Yes! That is the way awareness itself naturally abides.

Nevertheless, you will not remain in that state of realization for long for, as we know, the next thought will suddenly emerge, right? That is the dynamic strength of the awareness. However, if you do not recognize that immediately, then thoughts will diffuse as autonomous and become what is called the chain of delusion—the very root of saṃsāra. If you simply recognize thoughts as they arise without trying to pursue them and rest in the nature of self-awareness, then whatever thoughts emerge will be effortlessly liberated in the expanse of the

wisdom dharmakāya. This is the actual practice combining view and meditation according to trekchö,<sup>a</sup> cutting through. As Garab Dorje<sup>b</sup> said:

Within the basic space of primordial purity, the instantaneous recollection of awareness that arises is similar to finding a precious jewel in the depth of the ocean. This dharmakāya is uncreated by anyone.

So, it is taught. It is necessary to meditate in this way throughout the day and night from the core of your heart. Without having a mere, hearsay knowledge of emptiness, bring everything into awareness itself.

Now, given that conduct will enhance the meditation, the way to bring this into your practice is as follows. As previously explained, the main point is to recognize the master to be an actual buddha. Never separate from this recognition for even an instant. Supplicating intensively from your heart is called the panacea of devotion. This excels any other method for dispelling hindrances and enhancing practice. In doing so, you will effectively and directly traverse all paths.

If meditation becomes faulted by lethargy and dullness, raise awareness. If elation and agitation occur, then relax cognition within. Unlike the forced mindfulness of the usual meditator, maintain a continuity of wakefulness that simply does not lose track of your nature during any occasion, such as eating, sleeping, moving, meditating, or the post-evenness experience of daily life.

Whatever passionate thoughts emerge based on joy or sorrow, relinquish hope, fear, acceptance, or rejection or any attempt to subdue them through remedial means. The nature itself is whatever feelings of joy or sorrow occur, so be primordially present with just that naked, initial moment of awareness.

Since all of this boils down to a single crucial point, do not burden yourself with many thoughts. There is no need to apply emptiness as an antidote, along with thoughts and passions that are meant to be purified. At the moment awareness recognizes what is to be purified, a natural process of release into freedom will occur, like how a snake uncoils itself. Many individuals are able to explain the genuine, concealed meaning of the clear-light vajra essence, like a parrot chanting prayers; but few know how to internalize it. We, on the other hand, are so very fortunate!

Nevertheless, you must remain vigilant and think deeply, as many points still remain to be known. The mortal enemy that has bound you to saṃsāra from beginningless time until now is the twofold culprit of clinging and fixating. Yet at this time, through the kindness of the master, the self-abiding dharmakāya is recognized. This recognition incinerates duality like a feather in fire, gone without a trace. How satisfying is that? If the profound instructions that are received

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<sup>a</sup> *khregs chod*

<sup>b</sup> *dga' rab rdo rje*

on the swift path are left without being practiced, then that is as pointless as stuffing a wish-fulfilling jewel in the mouth of a corpse. What a waste that would be! Without allowing your heart to rot, internalize this!

For those who are beginners, the darkness of proliferating thoughts will initiate distractions. Once discovering that you have been swept away by the undercurrent of identification and then losing that [awareness], eventually wakefulness will return. You will think, “I was distracted!” and feel a sense of remorse. At such times, simply sustain the natural state of vivid wakefulness itself without doing anything, like feeling regret or trying to stop previous thoughts. That alone will suffice.

Although the well-known saying counsels, “Thoughts are said to be the dharmakāya, so do not abandon them”—as long as the potential of true seeing [i.e., vipashyanā<sup>a</sup>] has not been perfected, you could be in a state that pretends to be the dharmakāya. If resting in a blank state of tranquil stillness [i.e., shamatha<sup>b</sup>], there is the danger of falling into the neutrality of no recognition at all. Hence, in the beginning, watch directly whatever thoughts arise without trying to investigate or analyze them at all. Rest upon the recognizer of the thoughts; like an elderly gentleman watching children at play, be carefree without any reactions.

By resting in this way, suddenly the aspect of naturally abiding in nonconceptuality will collapse and instantly mind-transcending wisdom will nakedly emerge. While on the path, it is hard to avoid experiencing the three adventitious experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-thought. However, if able to be without a hair’s worth of holding to those experiences as superior or having attachment, hope, or disappointment, that will sever the deviations.

During all times and situations, it is important to continuously cast out distractions and single-pointedly meditate with mindfulness and true interest. If you get lost in sporadic practice patterns or intellectualizing, then pride about a mere experience of tranquil stillness may ensue. Failing to determine through experience and just cleverly mouthing words is not going to be useful. The teachings on the great perfection tell us:

Understanding is like a patch that will one day fall off. Experience is like mist that will vanish of its own accord.

Thus, it is like that. Even minor objective circumstances that are positive or negative can deceive a great meditator. There are many who lose their footing due to circumstances. Even if meditation has penetrated the mind stream: if you do not continuously meditate, then the profound oral instructions will be left in the pages of the text. With a jaded mind, dharma, and experience, there will be no time to cultivate authentic meditation. You must be extremely careful since there is the danger here that even a senior meditator with grey, moldy hair will die on the level of a new practitioner. When you familiarize with this over time—at some point through the circumstance of devotion and so forth—experience will transform into realization;

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<sup>a</sup> *lhag tong (lhag mthong)*

<sup>b</sup> *zhiney (zhi gnas)*

and you will witness awareness directly, like removing a hat from your head. Everything will become spacious and vast. That “not seeing” is the supreme seeing. Thereafter, thoughts will arise as meditation; and stillness and movement will be evenly liberated.

Initially, concepts will be liberated through recognition, like meeting an old acquaintance. In the interim, thoughts will self-liberate, like a snake uncoiling; and finally, thoughts will be released without benefit or harm, like a thief entering an empty house. These will gradually occur. Then, a strong decisive conviction will dawn that all phenomena are solely the magical manifestation of self-awareness. This will stir up waves of emptiness and compassion. There will be no way to choose between saṃsāra and enlightenment, and you will understand there is no good or bad when it comes to buddhas versus sentient beings. Whatever you do will be comfortable; and aside from being the state of the dharmatā, there will be no notion of wavering elsewhere. This will become an even flow that continues throughout the day and night. The teachings on the great perfection tell us:

Realization is like the sky; it is unchanging.

Thus, even though such practitioners appear in ordinary human forms, their minds abide in the wisdom intent of the dharmakāya; and they traverse all grounds and paths without activity. Finally, they reach the exhaustion of the mind and phenomena, and their bodies dissolve into particles like space emerging from a broken vase. The mind dissolves into the dharmatā. This is what is called dissolving into the inner radiance of the youthful vase kāya, the original ground of basic space. Yes, that is how it is! This is what is called actualizing the unattainable resultant state through perfecting the view, meditation, and conduct. This is the boundary between realization and experience that dawns gradually, without stages, or simultaneously based upon the faculties of individuals. At the time of fruition, however, there exist no such distinctions.

### *Post-Meditation*

The third general topic involves the daily life experience that is subsequent to meditation. This pertains to upholding vows and samaya and carrying forth this life’s activities in harmony with dharma. Even if you strive in the practice of upholding view, meditation, and conduct: if there is no skill in the activities of post-meditative daily life, then vows and samaya will degenerate. If so, that will lead to temporary obstacles while on the grounds and paths; and ultimately, it will certainly land you in the Avīchī hell.<sup>a</sup> Hence, it is important to never separate from mindfulness and to know well what is to be accepted and rejected without error. It is as the great master Padmasambhava said:

Although my view is higher than the sky, I observe the workings of karmic cause and result more carefully than the finest flour.

So, he taught. In this way, by abandoning a careless, nihilistic attitude, engage carefully with the law of karmic cause and result. Take care to guard your vows and samaya without allowing even

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<sup>a</sup> *narmed (mnar med)*; Hell of Ultimate Torment

any subtle corruptions to occur and to remain untainted by faults or degenerations. Although myriad categories of Secret Mantra samaya exist, they are all subsumed within the samaya that pertains to the root master's enlightened body, speech, and mind. It is taught that even giving rise to the notion of the master as an ordinary person will delay siddhis for months and years. Why is that so? It is because the key point involves how sacred the object [i.e., the master] really is.

Addressing, "Why is that so?" Vajradhara taught:

Siddhi depends upon the vajra master.

And, so it is. No matter your status, until embracing a master, there is personal freedom; but once relying upon the master and receiving empowerment and oral instruction, thereafter, there is no choice but to guard samaya carefully. At the conclusion of the conferral of the four empowerments, you bow before the master, who is the principal one of the maṇḍala, and repeat:

From today onward, I offer myself to you as your servant. Accept me as your disciple and use even the smallest part of me.

Thus making this promise, then no matter how mighty or important you are, haven't you already given yourself [i.e., literally, your head] over to the master? Likewise, you repeat:

Whatever the principal one requires and instructs, that is what I shall do.

Thus promising, after that, do you really think you can take license to ignore what is being asked? If you are incapable of upholding and accomplishing your word of honor: then even though it may be unpleasant to hear, there is no choice but to be called a samaya corrupter.

Furthermore, it has never been said that you should be extra careful to guard samaya with high masters who have large retinues and are wealthy, powerful, and successful at what they do. Nor has it been said that you need not guard samaya with lower, more modest masters, who take humble positions like mendicants. In either case, you must understand the key point of what is beneficial and harmful, for it will not suffice to just sit around like an old, tired-out horse. Think to yourself, "Is the need to guard samaya for the benefit of the master or for me?" Take stock of your own mind by thinking clearly in this way as though you were grinding medicine into powder.<sup>a</sup> If determined that all of this is for the master's benefit, then it is fine to drop everything from this day onward; but if that's not the case, then it is senseless to throw ashes on your own head.

Generally, the samaya regarding dharma friends is to regard everyone who has entered the door of the Buddha's teachings with a positive attitude, to train in pure view, and to abandon criticism or bias toward their individual tenets. Particularly, since all those who are disciples of the same master within a single maṇḍala are vajra siblings, you must forsake mistreatment, competition, jealousy, or deceit toward them. You must care for all of them in a heartfelt way. Think that, if you do not protect them from the torment of saṃsāra's relentless suffering, then who will? Train the mind that feels how unbearable this is through meditating with compassion.

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<sup>a</sup> This is reference to Tibetan medicine that is finely ground into pills.

Only engage in that which is beneficial through the three doors as much as possible, while dedicating all virtue to the welfare of others.

In regard to this, there are only three things to consider: the dharma, the master, and sentient beings. Do not allow your intentions and actions to contradict one another. Do not attempt to imitate those who hold the external sign of ordination or the yogis who hold the title of being realized ones. Bite your lip, and work on taming your own mind! Given that this is extremely crucial, do not pretend to be foolish!

In truth, if you think only of what will be of benefit in the future life, then saying “practice dharma” really means that you must do this yourself. Otherwise, once you die, if all hopes are placed on someone else to perform good deeds on your behalf, it might be difficult for that to really benefit you. Hence, for the preparatory stage, turn your mind inward and cultivate heartfelt renunciation. Develop the intention to practice for the duration of life itself, with strong diligence as the basis. For the main practice, sustain the profound experience of the view and meditation. For the post-meditation or conclusion, be without contradiction when it comes to the samaya of knowing what to accept and reject, the precepts, and the vows. Through the impact of this kind of conduct, qualities will dawn as a matter of course.

Mahāsandhi’s path of potent methods is so prevailing that even great sinners can still achieve fully enlightened buddhahood. Given the profundity, obstacles are just as prevalent, like how with great progress comes great defeat. For these reasons and through the strength of the oral instructions, all previously accumulated negative karmas are induced as upheavals, such as the magical apparitions or obstacles brought on by the māras. The gods-māras may reveal their faces at your practice environment, and they may even call out your name. They may disguise themselves as the master and give predictions, or they may appear as frightening apparitions during meditation experiences or dreams. You may have to face indeterminate situations, such as actually being beaten up, robbed, or falling ill. Mentally, you might go through intense anguish for no apparent reason, such as sadness, wanting to cry, and giving rise to strong surges of passion. Devotion, bodhichitta, and compassion may wane, while thoughts surface as the adversary to practically drive you insane. Beneficial advice can be completely misunderstood, and you may wish to abandon retreat and break the commitment to practice. Even wrong view toward the master may occur. Doubts regarding the dharma, being falsely accused of things, gaining a bad reputation, loved ones turning into enemies, and the like may all occur. It is possible that any of these varieties of unwanted outer and inner calamities will befall you.

Oh, well! Since all of these are upheavals, recognize them. Doing so will mark the boundary between safety and danger. If these key points are sustained, then even these obstacles will turn into siddhis. On the other hand, if you are overwhelmed by them, they will turn into obstructing forces. At this point, with pure samaya and heartfelt devotion, just give your mind and heart over to the master. Fervently supplicate by praying, “Whatever occurs, you know best!”

Diligently strive to practice, taking negative circumstances as your preference; and eventually the notion of their solidity will naturally fall apart. This will enhance practice while phenomena become insubstantial. Trust in the master will escalate, including confidence in the oral instructions, like never before. From that time onward, even if upheavals are encountered, there will be confidence and you will ponder, “Oh, this is nothing!” Yes! Since this indicates the extent of the completion [of the upheavals] and since upheavals have become the contributing circumstances on the path, the conclusion of upheavals is assured! *Ah la la!*

This is precisely what we old folks wish for. Don’t imitate a fox who sneaks up to a corpse with the hope to consume it and just stands there shaking at the knees. Be confident! Those whose meritorious accumulations are meager, whose samaya and vows are lacking, whose wrong view is rampant, and who have an abundance of doubt and lofty promises but are incapable of following through have hearts that stink of farts. The master’s oral instructions are invited to sit on their bookshelves, while they clutch negative situations with a death-like grip. Pursuing the māras, they deliver themselves into the claws of demonic doom that lead to the lower realms. How pitiful! Pray to the master that this doesn’t happen to you!

Actually, it is fairly easy to take adverse circumstances on to the path; but when it comes to the positive, it is extremely challenging. Even those who think they have high realization will voluntarily distract themselves by trying to achieve some form of greatness for this life alone. They will enslave themselves under the power of the māra of luring known as godliness. You must be especially vigilant in order to avoid this pitfall. Know this to be the boundary for going either up or down and the point where great meditators are put to the test.

Until the strength of inner qualities and realization are perfected, it is inappropriate to recount your meditative experiences to whoever may be listening. Keep your mouth shut! Furthermore, don’t complain about all the hardships you have endured during your months and years in retreat. Just exert yourself in practice for as long as you live. Never ignore virtuous deeds based on relative cause and result, and do not deceive yourself with mere rhetoric about an intellectual understanding of emptiness. Do not remain in villages to just perform rituals, pacify māras, and the like in order to feed yourself. Reduce meaningless talk and engagements, including detrimental thoughts. Do not fool others out of pretense, deception, or actions that contradict the dharma. Do not engage in wrong livelihood based upon hinting to acquire something, flattery, and so forth due to fixation with sensual pleasures. Do not associate with negative companions or those whose view and conduct are not in accord with your own. Expose your own shortcomings and do not talk about the faults of others. Since all forms of substance abuse are said to be the lure of oath-breaking māras, wholeheartedly give them up. Even though alcohol is a required substance of samaya, do not drink it carelessly so as to become intoxicated. Relate to all connections you encounter, whether excellent or negative, as the path of practice. Toward those with no faith, who criticize and treat you badly, and those with faith, who respect and adore you—whether good or bad, take all connections as the path and hold them with pure aspirations.

During all occasions, never lose confidence and inwardly uplift yourself, while outwardly taking a humble low position. Wear simple, tattered clothing and hold everyone above yourself whether they are good, bad, or neutral. Sustain yourself on simple provisions and fully commit yourself to stay in mountain retreat, directing yourself toward the life of a mendicant. Take the biographies of the past masters as an example; and without using your past karma as an excuse, make sure your commitment is firm until achieving flawless fruition. Do not use momentary circumstances as an excuse; but rather whatever comes your way, just remain steadfast with that as the practice.

In brief, take your mind as witness to the dharma as the focus of your life. That way, once death arrives, you are sure to have no regrets or thoughts of shame. When death approaches, give away all of your possessions and wealth without as much as a needle's worth of attachment to any of it. Concerning that, in the best scenario at the moment of death, you will be filled with joy; in the middling case, without apprehension; and at least, be without any regrets even though death has arrived. If the clear light of realization dawns both day and night, then there will be no bardo; and death will amount to the collapse of the corporeal body. Not only that, if there is confidence, liberation will occur in the bardo; and then, whatever happens will be just fine. If that is not the case, then when death arrives, apply the phowa practice you have previously trained to accomplish and direct the transference [of consciousness] to the pure land of your aspiration. By transferring there, you will go on to traverse all remaining grounds and paths to become fully enlightened.

Hence, this precious lineage of ours is not merely based upon old stories from the past. Even these days, those who perfect the paths of trekchö and tögal will dissolve their corporeal bodies into a mass of rainbow light and vanish from sight.

Having found such profound instructions that are like the dākinīs' heart blood,  
do not toss these precious gems away by searching for mere trinkets!  
Therefore, uplift yourself, become inspired, and then meditate!  
Disciples, hold this advice as your heart's treasure,  
and there may well be great benefit!

### *Colophon*

Thus, the root cause for this was based on the retreatants at Ogmin Pema Öd Ling and their mountain-retreat practice. The contributing circumstance was the request made by the diligent practitioner Rigdzin Dorje, who holds a wealth of unshakeable faith and devotion. I, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, spoke this heartfelt pith advice with the prayer that it directly brings about wisdom realization in the mind streams of the fortunate ones.