

Commentary on the Exceptional Instruction of the Learned Shri Gyalpo

~ Paltrul Rinpoche ~

Homage to the lord of matchless compassion, the supremely kind root guru!

Here is a brief explanation of the way to practice the crucial points of the view, meditation, and conduct.

First of all, since the guru is the embodiment of the Triple Gem, to prostrate to the guru alone is to pay homage to all objects of refuge. So, **“Homage to the guru.”** Then, to explain the subject: by practicing with the awareness that the root and lineage gurus are inseparable from one’s mind, understanding of the view, meditation, and conduct is subsumed there. Hence, view, meditation, and conduct are explained combining the meaning of the names of the root and lineage gurus.

First, within the great expanse of the dharmata buddha nature that is basic space free from elaborations, to know that all appearances of samsara and enlightenment—including myriad phenomena—are complete as the evenness of the dharmata is the view. So, **“The view is Longchen Rabjam (All-Encompassing Great Expanse).”**

Through the aspect of true seeing [i.e., vipashyana] with omniscient prajna, the intrinsic nature of this view is determined as emptiness, never departing from the method of tranquil stillness [i.e., shamatha], the great loving kindness and compassion where one rests single-pointedly in evenness. This emptiness combined with compassion is the meditation. So, **“The meditation is Khyentse Odzer (Light Rays of Compassionate Omniscience).”**

Within this view and meditation, to practice the six paramitas for the benefit of others in harmony with the sprouts of the victorious ones, who are all bodhisattvas, is the conduct. So, **“Conduct is Gyalwey Nyugu (Sprout of the Victorious Ones).”**

In order to show that the person who practices this view, meditation, and conduct is a fortunate one, the root says, **“To practice in this way . . .”** To expand, if one is able to practice single-pointedly in mountain hermitages or secluded places and give up worldly affairs of this life, there will be liberation within this lifetime in the ground of original purity. So, **“One will surely awaken in a single lifetime.”** Even if not, having directed the mind towards this view, meditation, and conduct, one will know how to take the difficulties of this life as the path. Without feeling hope and fear concerning the activities of this life, one will traverse from one state of well-being to another in the future. So, **“Even if not, there will be no regret—the mind at ease. Ah la la.”**

For the gradual explanation of the view, meditation, and conduct that possess these benefits, I will initially explain in detail how to internalize the view. So, **“The view, Longchen Rabjam (All-Encompassing View of the Great Expanse), is as follows.”**

The meaning of the three statements that strike the crucial point of practice cuts through the life essence of confusion. So, **“To strike the crucial point of the meaning with the three statements . . .”** This begins with the means of encountering the view that has not been recognized. In general, there are many systems, such as establishing the view through scriptural statements and reasoning according to philosophical vehicles, or pointing out the “genuine wisdom” of the fourth empowerment based on the “illustrative wisdom” of the third empowerment as prescribed in all common systems of Secret Mantra.

Here, according to the practical instructions of the sublime lineage masters, the ground where mind vanishes is being pointed out.

That is to say, when the waves of confused concepts of the mind are turbulent, mind's own nature is obscured by coarse thoughts pursuing objects. Therefore, there is no recognition even when it is pointed out. For this reason, in order to allow coarse thoughts to subside, **“First, place one's mind in a relaxed manner.”** However, resting one's mind without fabrication is itself wisdom's clear light nature. The fundamental nature is not realized through the “path of fabrications;” so in order to indicate one's unfabricated connate wisdom, **“Without arising or collecting, have no thoughts at all.”**

At the time of being a beginner, even when sustaining the continuity of the innate nature of mind, it is impossible to transcend clinging to the experiences of stillness such as bliss, clarity and no thought. So, **“Fully abiding within that relaxed state . . .”** In order to directly reveal naked awareness—the totally open, unimpeded state devoid of the cocoon of clinging to experiences—**“. . . suddenly shout PHET to shatter the mind . . .”** Since it is of great importance to cut through the flow of thoughts and to destroy mind-made meditation, the sound of PHET should be forceful, abrupt, and sharp. So, **“. . . forceful, abrupt and sharp—*eh ma ho!*”**

At that moment, mind is free from all notions of reference points, such as “that's it,” and liberation is rendered evident. So, **“Nothing whatsoever—shocked!”** Within this state of dharmakaya devoid of reference points, wisdom abides as it is—beyond mind—as the unimpeded aspect of naked awareness. So, **“Shocked, but unimpeded.”** This unimpeded nature also transcends extremes such as arising and ceasing or existence and nonexistence. It is the crucial point of inexpressible, self-arising wisdom that transcends the reach of verbal efforts and mental concepts. So, **“This unimpeded occurrence is inexpressible.”**

The significance of this crucial point is that awareness of dharmakaya abiding as the ground is the genuine view of the path of practice as unfabricated original purity. As long as this nature is not recognized: no matter how much one meditates and practices, intellectually contrived meditation will not be transcended. Because of this, the path of the natural Great Perfection will be farther away than the sky from the earth, and one will lack the crucial point of the clear-light continuity of nonmeditation. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to initially recognize this. So, **“Recognize awareness of the dharmakaya.”**

This is the meaning of the first of the three statements that strike the crucial point. If the view is not recognized, there will be nothing to sustain through meditation, so it is essential to first recognize the view. That is to say, one encounters indwelling wisdom that is not discovered elsewhere. This does not arise within the mind stream as that which was nonexistent prior to this. So, **“To encounter what already is is the first crucial point.”**

Next follows a detailed explanation of how to practice meditation. When—during all times and circumstances—one is resting within this nature like a flowing river, free from refuting or encouraging [and] abiding or movement, that abiding is the natural face of dharmakaya; and thought-occurrence sustains the natural strength of this wisdom. So, **“Whether thoughts are arising or abiding . . .”** No matter what takes place as the strength of the mind's conceptualization—passions of anger and desire belonging to the truth of the origin or feelings of joy and sorrow belonging to the truth of suffering—if one recognizes the nature of these thoughts as the dharmata, they become the movement of dharmakaya. So, **“. . . whether upset, attached, happy or sad . . .”**

In general, although encountering the view, without sustaining that continuity through meditation, one will slip into the ordinary, confused state of dissipation and remain bound to samsara through

materializing thoughts. With dharma and one's mind going in separate ways, one will be no different from an ordinary person. Thus, it is necessary to never separate from the great, natural resting of nonmeditation, free from distraction. So, **“... at all times and during all situations, ...”** In this way, whether there is abiding or movement, each different passion or thought is not to be subdued by a specific remedy. Rather, the remedy for any passion or thought that may occur is included within the single sufficient remedy that frees everything—recognizing the view pointed out previously. So, **“... sustain familiarity with having recognized the dharmakaya.”**

No matter what thoughts or passions emerge, they are not something other than the wisdom of dharmakaya. Rather, the intrinsic nature of these thoughts is the actual ground clear light of dharmakaya. When recognized as this, it is called “mother clear light abiding as the ground.” The recognition of one's nature, the view of self-aware clear light pointed out by the master, is called “the clear light of the path of practice.” Thus, to rest in the nature in which the two clear lights of ground and path are indivisible is called “the reuniting of mother and child clear lights.” So, **“Reunite the previously known mother and child clear lights.”** To be mindful of this view—the clear-light wakefulness of one's nature—and to remain within that, the key point is to completely refrain from refuting or encouraging, accepting or rejecting the dynamic strength of thoughts and passions. So, **“Abide in the aspect of inexpressible awareness.”**

As a beginner, while sustaining this continuity for a long time, the experiences of bliss, clarity and no thought will obscure the natural state. Yet when released from the sheath of experiences, the nature of awareness is directly encountered as wisdom, clear from within. It is said, “The best practitioner's meditation is constantly self-liberating; the best cascading waterfall is constantly pounding.” So, **“Continuously liberate abiding, bliss, clarity, and no thought.”** How does one self-liberate? When the experiences of abiding, bliss, and clarity are occurring or when one feels joyfulness and delight, completely disperse the sheath of attachment to experiences with the fierce sound of PHET, like the striking of a thunderbolt. PHET is the combination of the syllable *phe* that is the method for gathering, and the letter “t” is severing prajna. So, **“Let the syllable of prajna and upaya suddenly descend!”**

By sustaining at all times and situations the unimpeded inexpressible awareness that is not separate from this key point of experience, there will come to be no difference between the practice of evenness and after-evenness. So, **“Evenness and after are undifferentiated.”** For this reason, the practice of the nature in formal session and practice at the time of engaging in activities during breaks are not separate. So, **“With no distinction between the sessions and breaks, ...”** Like that, in the great meditation of nonmeditation, the wisdom that is self-abiding and open, practiced like the continuous flow of a river, has not the slightest need to be cultivated; yet there is not even an instant of distraction. As is said, “To never have meditated and to never have separated is inseparable from the meaning of nonmeditation.” So, **“... always abide in indivisibility.”**

Being a suitable vessel for the path of the natural Great Perfection, just as the name implies, one is capable of instantly liberating upon hearing. Appearances of the mind are the great ground of liberation. Whatever occurs is the movement of dharmakaya with no object to meditate upon or a meditation. Otherwise, individuals of lesser fortune, the gradual ones who are governed by confused thinking, must practice until attaining stability. So, **“Nevertheless, until stability is achieved ...”** Even though the causes for concentration in that meditation are complete: in order to gain experience if one continues to practice in the midst of business and distraction, experience will never be gained. So, **“... it is important to meditate by abandoning distractions.”**

Moreover, when meditating there is no difference between meditation and after-meditation. Nevertheless, one will be unable to mingle the wisdom of experience with the after-meditation break if stability in evenness has not been seized. Although exerting oneself in taking conduct as the path, deviation of basic straying and thus losing innate awareness will take place. So, **“Maintain regular sessions of evenness.”** When dividing the practice into sessions—though having confidence in the practice of sustaining the nature during the meditation—if one fails to know how to mingle this with activities during after-evenness and constantly sustain this, it will not be a sufficient remedy when faced with difficulties. If influenced by the contributing circumstance of thinking, one will be lost in ordinariness. Therefore, it is essential to continuously sustain subsequent awareness. So, **“At all times and during all situations . . .”** At this time, it is not necessary to search for something else upon which to meditate. While not departing from the dharmakaya view of evenness, one should continuously sustain this and relinquish activities and concepts without refuting or encouraging—sustaining instantaneously. So, **“. . . sustain the all-pervasive oneness of dharmakaya.”**

To sustain this practice—the unity of tranquil stillness and true seeing, the innate yoga of simplicity, uncontrived coemergence, the natural face of dharmata—is the heart of all tantric classes of Secret Mantra Vajrayana. It is the genuine wisdom of the fourth empowerment, the exceptional feature of the wish-fulfilling practice lineage, and the unimpaired realization of all the accomplished lineage gurus of India and Tibet from both Early and Later Schools. So, **“Decisively resolve your mind.”**

If one does not stop the mouth from watering after other upadesha, one will fall into the trap of mind-made fabrications, searching for the footprints of the elephant in the forest while having left the elephant at home. There will be no opportunity for liberation. For this reason, it is necessary to resolve the practice. So, **“Make the definitive decision that there is nothing other than this.”** To sustain continuity after having determined that the naked wisdom of self-abiding dharmakaya is the awakened state that has never known confusion is the second secret crucial point. So, **“Deciding on that alone is the second crucial point.”**

Now, if there is no confidence in the way of liberating, one will not transcend merely resting the mind in repose, deviating to not depart from the upper realms of concentration. This will not suffice as a remedy against desire and anger. It will not cut the flow of karmic formations, and one will not gain decisive confidence; so knowing this is of utmost importance. Furthermore, no matter what happens—whether feeling intense passion toward a desirable object or strong aggression toward an undesirable object—whether delighted by the gain of such things as favorable conditions and enjoyment or pained by unfavorable conditions such as illness, the dynamic strength of awareness is emerging during those moments. It is essential to identify the wisdom that is the ground of liberation. So, **“At this time, attachment, aversion, joy, and sorrow . . .”** Moreover, if you lack the key point of practice that involves arising-liberating, then whatever arises from the underlying process of mental events will gather samsaric karma. Hence, it is crucial to sustain the coarse and subtle thoughts that emerge as liberated without a trace upon arising. So, **“. . . are all passing thoughts without exception.”**

This being so, without allowing thoughts to become an undercurrent of confused dissipation fabricated by the mind, recognize the nature of whatever thought takes place in a state that does not separate from resting at ease in innate mindfulness. One must sustain this state of liberation upon arising in which no trace is left, like drawing on water. So, **“Leave no trace within this recognition.”**

If thoughts are not purified as self-liberated, mere recognition of thoughts will not sever the flow of deluded karma. By simultaneously seeing one’s nature directly and recognizing this, the most important point is that thoughts will be purified without trace through knowing and sustaining the previously

acquainted wisdom and resting in its continuity. So, **“By recognizing dharmakaya as the aspect of liberation, . . .”** For example, a pattern drawn on water disappears the same moment it is drawn. Drawing and vanishing occur simultaneously. Likewise, the occurrence and liberation of a thought are simultaneous, and thus self-arising and self-liberation are uninterrupted. So, **“. . . like the analogy of drawing on water, . . .”** For this reason, allow what occurs to arise without suppressing its occurrence. Regard this method of purifying whatever arises in the innate state as the key point of practice. So, **“. . . the continuity of self-arising self-liberation is unceasing.”**

By training in the way of knowing that thoughts are the dynamic strength of dharmakaya, whatever thoughts occur dawn as training in the strength of awareness. No matter how crude the thoughts involving the five poisons may be: to that same extent, awareness of their liberation is both lucid and vibrant. So, **“Whatever arises is the sustenance of empty naked awareness.”** When all thoughts—whatever occurs—dawn as dynamic strength from within as the unimpeded nature of awareness, sustaining this without acceptance and rejection will free them at the moment they occur; and one will never stray from the continuity of dharmakaya. So, **“All thoughts are the manifestation of the king of dharmakaya, . . .”** Since mental concepts and deluded forms of ignorance are purified in awareness wisdom, the expanse of dharmakaya as whatever movement of thought occurs within the expanse of unceasing clear light is empty by nature. So, **“. . . naturally pure and traceless—*ah la la*.”**

Having grown accustomed to this practice taken as the path, concepts will dawn as meditation; and abiding and movement will intermingle. Thus, movement will not be harmful to abiding. So, **“Although the way thoughts arise is the same as before, . . .”** At this time, the way in which the strength of thoughts arise as joy and sorrow, hope and fear is the same as for ordinary people. But, for an ordinary person these occur as solid rejection and encouragement, after which they accumulate karmic formations and become governed by desire and anger. For a yogin, thoughts arise and are liberated the moment they occur. At first, thoughts are liberated through recognition, just like meeting an old acquaintance. Next, thoughts are liberated by themselves like a snake uncoiling. Finally, thoughts are liberated without benefit or harm, like a thief entering an empty house. Equipped with the key points on achieving liberation, **“. . . the difference in the way they are liberated is the crucial point.”**

It is said, “Knowing how to meditate but not how to be liberated—isn’t that just like the gods of concentration?” Those who place their trust in meditation as merely concentration in mental stillness, which lacks the key point of the way of liberating, will deviate into the concentration of the upper realms. Those who consider the recognition of abiding and movement as sufficient are no different from an ordinary person with deluded thoughts. Those who make generalizations, such as “this is emptiness” or “this is dharmakaya,” will be unable when encountering difficult circumstances to remain stable as their inner faults are exposed. So, **“Without this, meditation is but the path of confusion.”**

No matter how labeled, such as arising-liberating, self-liberation, or directly liberated, the way of freeing in which thoughts are self-liberated and purified without a trace involves the same key point of directly demonstrating spontaneous self-liberation. This is the extraordinary special feature of the natural Great Perfection. If this crucial point is seized, any passion or thought that may occur will manifest as dharmakaya. Deluded concepts will be purified in wisdom awareness. Negative conditions will dawn as aids and disturbing passions are taken as the path. Without abandoning samsara, it is spontaneously purified; and one is freed from the bondage of existence and quiescence. This is determined within the continuity of non-action, devoid of effort and cultivation. So, **“To possess this is to rest in the dharmakaya without meditation.”**

Lacking confidence in the way of liberating, no matter how high the view or deep the meditation: if one may pretend to possess this within the stream-of-mind, it will not benefit the mind nor be effective as a remedy against the passions. Hence, it is not the correct path. But, if the crucial point of self-arising self-liberation is possessed while lacking even a particle's worth of fixation on a high view or a reference point of deep meditation, it will be impossible for the stream-of-mind to not be liberated from the bondage of dualistic fixation.

When arriving upon an isle of gold, one will not find any ordinary earth or stones even if they are sought. Likewise, whatever abiding or movement takes place, it will dawn as meditation; and one will not encounter any concrete delusion even if sought. This alone is the guideline for distinguishing whether or not practice is striking the crucial point. **“Having confidence in liberation is the third crucial point.”**

These three crucial points are unmistakable key points for decisively practicing the view, meditation, conduct, and fruition of the natural Great Perfection within the unimpeded continuity of awareness. These are also the upadesha for meditation and conduct. Nevertheless, we do not regard the view to be measured and established through scriptural statements, logic, and reasoning according to the general dharma terminology of the textual traditions. Whenever this wisdom is rendered directly evident, that is the view of wisdom awareness. Given that numerous views and meditations are one taste, there is no contradiction in explaining the three crucial points as being the practice of the view. So, **“This view possessing the three crucial points . . .”**

This practice is the unmistakable key point of the path of the originally pure, natural Great Perfection—the pinnacle of the nine stages of the vehicles. Just as it is impossible for a king to be without his retinue when he travels, the paths of all vehicles will support and assist the path of these key points. Not only that, when encountering the self-nature of the luminosity of self-occurring prajna—originally pure awareness—its dynamic strength will blaze forth as the prajna resulting from meditation; and the expanse of omniscience will swell like a summer river. Innate emptiness will manifest as compassion, after which one will engage impartially in loving compassion. So, **“. . . and the meditation that unites omniscience and compassion . . .”** When realizing the key points of this united path of emptiness and compassion, the oceanlike conduct of the sons of the victorious ones, which is the path consisting of the six paramitas, will manifest as one's dynamic strength like light rays from the sun. Since such conduct is linked to the accumulation of merit, whatever one does will be of benefit for others and an unerring aid to peace, well-being, and the correct view. So, **“. . . are accompanied by the conduct of the bodhisattvas in general.”**

This kind of view, meditation, and conduct is the heart of the realization of all the victorious ones who have appeared, are present, or are to appear. So, **“Even if this were compared to the speech of the victorious ones of the three times, . . .”** Nothing is superior to this pinnacle of fruition involving the key points of the path of the victorious summit of all vehicles, the Vajra Essence of the Heart Bindu. So, **“. . . there would be no pith instructions surpassing this.”**

The meaning expressed in this sacred instruction is definitely the quintessence of the upadesha of the lineage masters, and even the composition of the brief words that express it are themselves manifest from the dynamic strength of awareness. So, **“The dharmakaya treasure revealer, manifestation of awareness, . . .”** Although I lack the experience of the meaning of all this through the prajna of meditation based on experience, I composed this after carefully cutting the cord of doubt through the prajna of listening to the unmistakable oral teachings of my sublime master and determined this with the prajna of reflection. So, **“. . . brought forth this treasure from the expanse of prajna.”** Since it is

unlike ordinary mundane treasures that merely alleviate temporary poverty, **“It is unlike extracts of earth and stone.”**

These three key points on the view known as the “Three Statements that Strike the Crucial Point” were given to the great master Manjushrimitra by the nirmanakaya Garab Dorje from within a mass of light in the sky as Garab Dorje was passing into parinirvana. They are the upadesha through which the realization [of the two masters] became indivisible. So, **“This is the testament of Garab Dorje.”**

Through applying the key points of meaning in this oral instruction, the Omniscient King of Dharma (Longchenpa) rendered evident the wisdom intent of the originally pure exhaustion of phenomena within his lifetime and attained manifest buddhahood. He revealed himself in the wisdom kaya to Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa and blessed him in the manner of the symbolic transmission of the vidyadharas. Jigmed Lingpa transmitted this orally to our gracious root guru and gave him the pointing-out instruction, after which he directly realized dharmata. This is the aural-transmission instruction, which I heard from this master, the glorious protector of beings. So, **“It is the essence of the enlightened mind of the three lineages, . . .”** I would regret teaching this upadesha, which is like purified gold or the essence of my heart, to those who do not practice. I would also regret not teaching to those who will treasure the upadesha like their own life and who, practicing the vital meaning, would accomplish buddhahood within one lifetime. So, **“. . . sealed and entrusted to my heart disciples.”**

This profound meaning is sacred instruction from the heart.

These sacred instructions from the heart are the crucial meaning.

Do not lose the crucial meaning.

Do not allow these pith instructions to be discarded.

For now this completes a brief commentary on the *Exceptional Instruction of the Learned Shri Gyalpo*.

May it be virtuous! May it be virtuous! May it be virtuous!