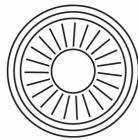


# Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Modern World

Proceedings of the Second International Conference on  
Vajrayāna Buddhism, 28-30 March 2018, Thimphu,  
Bhutan



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Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH

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## Preface

The Second International Conference on Vajrayāna Buddhism was held from 28-30 March 2018 at Thimphu, Bhutan. The conference was organized jointly by the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH (CBS) and the Central Monastic Body. More than 200 participants from about 30 countries took part in the conference besides the local participants.

Vajrayāna Conference is a part of the several national events organised to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of peaceful diplomatic relation between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India. India and Bhutan share many common values and a rich history. Buddhism is one of the most exemplary aspects of this shared heritage. India gave rise to one of the greatest civilizations of humankind, and Buddhism is certainly one of India's greatest gifts to the world.

The papers included in this publication cover a wide range of themes, including Vajrayāna Buddhism's role in the modern world, the application of Vajrayāna Buddhism in health and education, its interface with modern science, women in Vajrayāna, and Vajrayāna's evolution and development in various countries.

The organisers would like to thank the authors for their invaluable contributions.





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## **Keynote address by His Excellency, Lyongchen Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan<sup>1</sup>**

Your Eminences, Venerable Lams, Rinpoches, Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to welcome all of you to the opening of the International Conference on Vajrayāna Buddhism organized by the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH and the Central Monastic Body. On behalf of the government, I feel very heartened by the presence of so many dignitaries this evening to welcome the distinguished participants from abroad. Over the last few days, more than 250 participants from 33 countries have arrived in our country for the conference. The Vajrayāna conference was announced in September 2017. Within five months, these many participants from thirty-three countries were confirmed for this conference.

You have converged on Thimphu, coming here all the way from Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nepal, Norway, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Slovenia, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, USA and Vietnam. I would like to express my deep appreciation for the time and effort you have made to be with us in Bhutan for this important celebratory, academic and spiritual gathering.

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<sup>1</sup> The address was delivered at the Dinner Reception of the Vajrayāna Conference held at Royal University of Bhutan, Thimphu, Bhutan on 28 March 2018

In many ways, the series of conference on Vajrayāna is very special, if not unique, in the world, bringing academics and practioners together to share their experiences and findings. Discussions and debates in the conference and publications of the proceedings thereafter have contributed to an outstanding formation of a bridge between individuals in the academia and spirituality. I am particularly pleased to note that the esteemed Central Monastic Body and the Centre of Bhutan Studies and GNH have been cooperating very closely in this endeavour. They have worked together this time as well as in the last conference. This year too, the commitment of the Central Monastic Body is amply demonstrated in their positive roles in every aspect of the organization of this conference. Blessed by His Holiness the Je Khenpo, the supreme abbot of Bhutan, their eminences the masters of the Central Monastic Body have played a vital role in guiding the structure of the conference.

The broader aim behind this series of conference is to explore social, economic, spiritual and cultural configurations of societies that favour the realization of the Vajrayāna view of human potentials. The fact that Vajrayāna ideas prevailed in Bhutan since the eight century in an uninterrupted way means that certain type of ideas became more dominant than others in Bhutan over the millenium. There are now many other competing views of ideals of human existence and potentials which drive the activities of the people and states. But the Vajrayāna view of human potentials and the methods to realize them was what Guru Rinpoche brought to us in the Himalayas and Tibet from India in the eight century. Part of view and method of wisdom he brought was an approach to structuring the mind towards non-duality and the cultivation of a different kind of consciousness.

The Vajrayāna teachings on the ideals of human existence and potentials were further consolidated by the

revered founder of Bhutan, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. Our country was forged out of smaller valley kingdoms by uniting them into a nation by the revered Zhabdrung Rinpoche in 1626. As a Vajrayāna monk statesmen himself, the ultimate and ideal purpose of founding a Buddhist nation state out of smaller kingdoms was to not only promote mindfulness but non-dual mindfullness among the citizens as a part of realization of human potentials.

Vajrayāna, with its root in esoteric Indian Buddhist traditions, was introduced in Bhutan by the great Indian saint Guru Padmasambhava. Guru came at a moment in history of Bhutan, the 8th century, when tantric practices dominated Buddhism in India. The word, Vajrayāna, itself had appeared in the tantric texts only in the late seventh century, although tantric texts appeared first in the 3rd century. Guru Rinpoche's coming to Bhutan repeatedly, and to Tibet was tremendous socio-economic and political consequences, beyond his introduction of the sutra and mantra.

Because of the spread of Buddhism by Guru Rinpoche and his disciples and their disciples during both the first and second transmissions, a particular world view took hold that influenced polity and culture. The stress on cultivation of peace within people led broadly to peace in communities. Guru Rinpoche's coming to the Himalayas also led to the spread of enlightenment education through translations of Indian texts into classical Tibetan which are read increasing widely today among scholars. Guru himself was a colossal engine of translation and transmission of works from Indian civilization to the Himalayas. Among the sutras, some of the classic authors studied today like Vasubandhu, Nagarjuna, Santarakshita, Kamalasila, Asvagosha, Chandrakirti, Dīnaga, Asanga, Shantideva, Dharmakirti, and Arya Deva were translated at that time in Samye, under Guru Rinpoche with the patronage of the then Tibetan Emperer. Through the

transmission of learning based on these classic texts, the same ideas about cosmology and causation, that prevailed in Indian civilization, framed the views of most Bhutanese, until Western schooling started in the 1960s. Guru Padma-sambhava thus changed the spiritual landscape of Bhutan and the Himalayas, for which he is known as the second Buddha in this part of the world.

Guru Rinpoche and his disciples started a profound spiritual reorientation of the Himalayas over the last thousand years. Of a shorter time scale but of great significance has also been the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bhutan and India. It was an event that spark profound changes in the social and economic spheres in Bhutan. In 1968, Bhutan ended its many centuries of self imposed isolation and established diplomatic relations with India to pave the way for development, in all spheres of modernization. The initiative was launched by the His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the visionary Third King of Bhutan. Our Successive Kings have nurtured this important strategic relationship.

Our country and people have been fortunate to have great kings without whom we would be at much loss. A much-respected 13th Prime Minister of India, Shri I. K. Gujral compared His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck to a man who has attributes of Plato's philosopher King. The long and cherished reign of the 4<sup>th</sup> King, infused with charismatic leadership, set the bar very high for any leader. Yet His Majesty the present King, who came to the Throne in 2006 also began a new era in an equally visionary way. He introduced parliamentary democracy in 2008 and became the first constitutional monarch of our country. And the people and the government, having always benefited from his wisdom, look up to His Majesty the King for his overall leadership and guidance on nation-building.

Among the priorities for His Majesty the King as the manifestation of the hope and unity of the people, deepening Indo-Bhutan friendship is a central one. Because of the importance of the good relationship with India, His Majesty the King, as Crown Prince, studied at National Defence College, India's highest international strategic institute for military and security affairs. Over the past 50 years, the bilateral relations have matured and sustained with regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries.

His Majesty the King has therefore desired that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the diplomatic relationship between India and Bhutan be commemorated through a series of celebratory events in 2018. This Vajrayāna Buddhism conference is a part of many events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the exemplary, Indo-Bhutan relationship. In this context, we are honoured to have with us His Excellency Ambassador Jaideep Sarker, Ambassador of India to Bhutan, whose term in Bhutan has witnessed continued excellent relationship between Bhutan and India. We are honoured to have him address this august gathering this evening.

As I have already mentioned, Buddhism is a major element in the shared heritage between India and Bhutan, as well as Bhutan and other countries. Buddhism remains a uniting factor stretching back thousands of years. Conferences of this nature will only contribute to strengthening a broader base in the relationship between and among the people of all nations.

Present among us in the hall today, more than 18 percent of the conference participants are Indian citizens of various backgrounds: academics, lamas, art conservators, medical doctors, nurses, business managers, researchers and so forth. I am pleased to acknowledge the presence of Kyabgon Drikung Chetsang Rinpoche, author, educationist,

lama and founder of Drikung Kagyu Institute. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge the presence of Lama Lobzang, who is the President of International Buddhist Confederation and the President of Asoka Mission in New Delhi. The conference is enriched by the presence of many other spiritual masters and abbots from Cambodia, China, India, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. I apologize for not being able to acknowledge your distinguished presence individually due to constraints of time.

As I went over the detailed program of the conference, I find that it builds significantly on the past conference. The presentations that are scheduled will provide rich insight into Vajrayāna Buddhism's history, practice, and contemporary relevance. I am confident that, over the next three days, the exchanges among you about Vajrayāna's historical evolution, experiences and ideas will prove to helpful in many applications in the diverse aspects of modern life. Panel topics are relevant to certain important roles of Vajrayāna in modern society. Topics you will discuss include Health and Healing, Yoga, Neuroscience of Visualization, Enlightened Femininity, Ethics of Vajrayāna, Mantras, and Rituals. There is also a very refreshing panel on contemporary practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Malaysia, Finland, Burma, India, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia. These will give us a perspective on its adaptations to other cultures and societies. I feel these panels contains potentials that compel applications to a rapidly transforming world.

To conclude, *distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen*, the opening panel tomorrow morning by ceremonies and dances, leading to a panel of Integrative View of Vajrayāna, will frame the subject matter of the conference. The closing panel will round up on the various kinds of knowledges and intelligences, from a Vajrayāna viewpoint, that we must strengthen to be optimal being with



optimal balance. Your program shows that the extraordinary line up of academic panels over the course of the next three days will be followed by a full day's excursion on March 31 to Punakha, the winter seat of Bhutan's Central Monastic Body. There, His Eminence the Dorji Lopen or Vajra Archarya will receive you in audience. We are also grateful to His Eminence the Leytshog Lopen for introducing you all to the nine meditational methods for bringing the mind to a state of lucid calm in the Punakha dzong itself.

They came, they saw, they left. But leaving is not good enough. So I want to make a humble proposition that during the conference you consider establishing international Vajrayāna Centre. As a last surviving Vajrayāna kingdom, I would humbly offer to host such a centre in Bhutan. But you must bless it, and you must work together with us to develop the centre for ourselves and for the future generation for the world.

I hope you will enjoy this conference. I hope you will enjoy your stay in our country. I thank you for your kind attention, and wish you tashi delek!

## **Address by His Excellency Shri Jaideep Sarkar, Ambassador of India to Bhutan**

Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan,  
Dasho Karma Ura,  
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen,

I thank the organizers for inviting me to this important conference. But I am not very sure why I have been invited to address this august gathering.

Maybe it is because the Conference commemorates the Golden Jubilee of India-Bhutan friendship. May be it is because Buddhism originated many centuries ago in the ancient Indian kingdom of Magadh. May be it is because there is a revival of Buddhism in India and according to our last census almost 90% of the growing number of believers have converted to Buddhism.

But I like to think that maybe it is because India's long history of co-existence among all faiths holds lessons for gatherings such as this one: that while the context of a faith is local, it flourishes in conjunction with others.

I grew up in India learning and believing that all religions are equal. The great teacher Swami Vivekananda said in his famous speech in 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago:

We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.

Swami Vivekananda quoted an ancient Sanskrit prayer to explain the religious ethos in India:

As different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea

O Lord, the different paths which people take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.

Many of these streams have originated in India. India has given birth to four of the world's great religions. It is a land that has given shelter to all faiths and to all sects including others who face persecution elsewhere. The Jews, the Zoroastrians and the Ahmediyas have lived and flourished in India on equal terms with people from other faiths.

The co-existence has not always been peaceful, but it has been continuing. India's social and religious fabric has been woven over thousands of years and is strong.

The different streams have followed different paths. But they have often mingled and shared common waters.

Hinduism and early Buddhism evolved in the same soil so it is natural that the two religions would have common concepts such as karma, the cycle of birth and death, renunciation and meditation. Vajrayāna Buddhism itself has drawn from the Hindu Tantrik tradition. Buddhism grew out of its womb and spread extensively. Ancient India was enriched by the consequent cultural and civilizational links to South East and East Asia.

Buddhist art and architecture has a very important place in Indian history and not only because of its artistic excellence. In their attempt to prove the superiority of western culture, British colonists tried to belittle India's ancient past. But fortunately, it was the same British archaeologists who in the 19<sup>th</sup> century excavated the treasures of the Buddhist period in Indian history. It was only 200 years ago that we saw the mighty Stupas at Sarnath and Sanchi and the ancient universities of Takshshila and Nalanda. Buddhist records played an important role in reconstructing Indian history in the pre-Islamic period and testifying to the tremendous efflorescence of Indian art, architecture and culture that the British had tried to belittle.

In the realm of statecraft, Buddhist teachings and principles have a long history. All Indian children learn of

the great Buddhist king Ashoka's own moment of enlightenment after the war of Kalinga. He was deeply affected by the devastation he had caused and gave up the idea of conquest by war.

Regarding the purpose of the 13th rock edict Ashoka writes that

...and this record relating to the dhamma has been written on stone for the following purpose, viz. that my sons and great grand-sons should not think of a fresh conquest by arms as worth achieving, that they should adopt the policy of forbearance and light punishment towards the vanquished even if they conquer a people by arms, and that they should regard conquest through the dhamma as the true conquest. Such a conquest brings happiness to all concerned both in this world and in the next.

Many people reading this will immediately make the connection with the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I on terms that were highly unfavourable to the vanquished.

But returning to India, we can see echoes of these wise ideas in our own freedom struggle. I dare say that many of the ideas that inspired our freedom struggle and leaders, Mahatma Gandhi in particular, such as truth, renunciation, non-violence find their origins in the teachings of the Buddha and the Noble Eight Fold Path. The Indian freedom struggle challenged the notion of liberation movements led by militant and heroic revolutionaries using war as the instrument of victory and unity.

Modern India has also been influenced by Buddhist teachings. The most visible manifestation is in our State symbols. The magnificent State Emblem of the Republic of India is based on the Lion Capital at Sarnath and India's flag has the Ashoka Chakra. But modern Indian statecraft has also been influenced by the Shakyamuni's teaching empha-

sizing the Middle Way that rejects extremes and reconciles opposing viewpoints.

We have always described our economy as a mixed economy with due roles for both the state and private enterprises. India is one of the few countries in the world which has good relations with both Russia and the United States, with North Korea and South Korea and with Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The religious sentiments of the people of India and Bhutan are closely intertwined. Our people share faith in common religions but also people in both countries are deeply religious. In this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the formal establishment of diplomatic relations, we should honour and celebrate not only the success of collaboration between our economies, governments and institutions but also the spiritual bond we share and hold dear. So I hope that we will use this occasion to research and document the history that joins us. And explore together how we can enrich the attachment of Mind and Spirit that is the basis of our strong and unique relationship.

With these words, I wish the Conference all success.

Tashi Delek

# **Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Western World: A Brief History**

*Ian Baker*

Vajrayāna, the ‘adamantine’ form of Buddhism based on tantric texts and teachings that emerged in India between the sixth and thirteenth centuries, was established in Bhutan in 747 A.D. by the great tantric adept Padmasambhava, who came to the region at the request of king Sindhu Raja, who reigned from an ‘iron castle’ in what is now the Bumthang district of Central Bhutan. Only afterwards did Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, the ‘precious teacher’, bring the teachings of Tantric Buddhism to Tibet. Upon his return from Tibet, Padmasambhava oversaw the construction of Buddhist temples in the fertile valleys of Paro and Bumthang, thus establishing material foundations for Bhutan’s emergence as a modern-day Himalayan Buddhist Kingdom dedicated to the integral welfare and prosperity of humanity and nature.

Bhutan’s Royal Family and its governmental institutions including the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH and the Central Monastic Body who are hosting this Vajrayāna Summit- have remained dedicated to implementing Buddhist principles of wisdom and compassion within all aspects of Bhutanese society. Through these concerted efforts, the Kingdom of Bhutan has become a world leader in placing the welfare of its people and environment-its gross national happiness (GNH)- over its gross national product (GNP). The clear lack of such guiding principles within governments and corporations devoted to maximizing short-term economic revenue makes Bhutan’s example increasingly

essential for ensuring the sustainable health and future of the earth and its inhabitants.

Vajrayāna Buddhism's tradition of 'skillful means' has been instrumental for adapting ancient philosophical and religious principles into effective government policies and institutions in Bhutan. Likewise, the Royal Government of Bhutan's decision to establish a Vajrayāna Research Institute that encompasses developments in contemplative neuroscience is further evidence of Vajrayāna's importance within the four pillars and nine domains of GNH, with their collective goal of empowering an altruistic, globally responsive society that honors the past while forging a visionary future.

It's in the spirit of Vajrayāna Buddhism's proven relevance to current global circumstances that this paper briefly outlines the largely untold story of Vajrayāna Buddhism's historical reception within Western society and religion. Unlike the conditions that prevailed in Bhutan and other parts of Asia, Vajrayāna came to the West in absence of royal patronage and often with profound misunderstanding of its iconography, texts, and doctrines. Nonetheless, as I hope this paper demonstrates, the essence of Vajrayāna Buddhism, as espoused by Padmasambhava and other tantric adepts, resonates profoundly with ancient and modernist philosophical currents within Western civilization. Vajrayāna can be seen from this perspective as a deeply adaptable, globally significant religious tradition that can be advanced not only by greater understanding of its core principles and historical expressions across diverse Asian civilizations, but also through the integral insights of contemporary neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and the anthropology and philosophy of mind.

## Vajrayāna's Syncretic Origins

The Vajrayāna form of Buddhism promoted by the tantric mahāsiddhas emerged in India as an alternative to the excessively clerical forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism that had come to dominate Buddhist practice (See Davidson, 2002). As attested in the writings and life stories of the male and female tantric mahāsiddhas, Vajrayāna expanded the range and relevance of Buddhist teachings beyond monastic environments and promoted the expression of insight, wisdom, and compassion within all fields of human activity. In establishing Vajrayāna throughout the Himalayan region, Padmasambhava—perhaps the most influential and wide ranging of all of the mahāsiddhas—is credited with eight distinct manifestations through which he demonstrated Vajrayāna's supremacy over less nuanced Buddhist views and practices. These eight progressive emanations culminated in Dorje Drolo, in which Padmasambhava wields a *purba*, or magical dagger, and figuratively rides an unruly tigress, symbolizing his mastery of even the most dangerous and enthralling of existential circumstances. Such spirited representations of the transcendence of ill-conceived dichotomies between *Samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*, or 'worldly and spiritual' life, recall early Greek depictions of the sky-clad, leopard-riding deity Dionysus who, like Dorje Drolo, signifies humankind's inborn capacity for self-transcendence and the ecstatic embodiment of counter-intuitive forms of wisdom and compassion.

Padmasambhava is said to have originated in the mountainous kingdom of Uḍḍiyana in the Swat valley of ancient Gandhāra where diverse yogic and religious traditions had interacted for millennia. The Macedonian king and self-avowed emanation of Dionysus, Alexander the Great, sojourned in Swat in 327 B.C., a thousand years before the legendary birth of Padmasambhava, and discovered evidence of Dionysian rites in the vine-rich



principality of Nysa. Nysa was subsequently viewed as the mythological birthplace of Dionysus who, according to Hellenic accounts, had come to Greece from the east.<sup>2</sup> As recent scholarship has shown, Gandhāra was a major site for the dissemination of the Mahāyāna teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) while Uḍḍiyāna, in the high valleys of Swāt, is traditionally held to be the primary source of the Buddhist Tantras and the teachings of Vajrayāna.

As the legendary birthplace of Padmasambhava, as well as of the Greek god Dionysus<sup>3</sup>, the verdant and wine-rich valleys of Uḍḍiyāna fostered richly syncretic forms of esoteric Buddhism long before Padmasambhava disseminated the Vajrayāna teachings in the Himalayan regions of Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. Yet it is Padmasambhava's enduring imprint on the Himalayan landscape and human psyche

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<sup>2</sup> Theories regarding the birthplace of Dionysus proliferated even before the time of Homer (c.700 – 800 B.C.), who wrote in the *Iliad* of Dionysius's legendary origins in the 'sacred mountains of Nysa'. Ancient accounts placed Nysa anywhere from Thrace to Ethiopia to the Caucasus Mountains. Following Alexander the Great's campaign in Swat in the fourth century B.C., and his encounters with followers of Dionysus at the hill town of Nysa, the Swat valley was thereafter believed by many, including Pliny the Elder (23–79 A.D.), as Dionysus's native land. Although as the Greek historian Arrian of Nicomedia (87–145 A.D.) cautioned; 'One should not inquire too closely where ancient legends about the gods are concerned; many things which reason rejects acquire some color of probability once you bring a god into the story' (*Anabasis* 5.1.2).

<sup>3</sup> Dionysus (literally 'god of Nysa') was a symbol of the transformation and perfectibility of human nature in the mystery schools of ancient Greece, and only later associated more directly with sexual power, ecstasy, and divine intoxication. He was also attributed, like Padmasambhava, with multiple manifestations (Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* III.23).

that is the impelling force behind the annual Vajrayāna Summits in Bhutan and the increasing international interest in exploring the legacy and contemporary relevance of the enigmatic and alluring world of tantric Buddhism.

Vajrayāna Buddhism's commitment to the transformation of everyday life, rather than its abnegation, aligns Vajrayāna with the priorities and orientations of the modern world and pre-Christian Western religion. It is also direct evidence of Vajrayāna's adaptability within different cultural and historical contexts, and ensures Vajrayāna's resilience against reductive definitions. As Shashibhushan Dasgupta observed in his book *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, 'In fact, Vajrayāna cannot be defined; for it incorporated so many heterogeneous elements that any attempt at strict definition would be futile' (Dasgupta, 1950).

### **Missionaries and Orientalists**

One of the clear hallmarks of Vajrayāna's history in Asia is its patronage by royal dynasties. Vajrayāna flourished in Uḍḍīyana through the initiatives of King Indrabhuti, in Bengal through successive rulers of India's Pala Dynasty, and in Nepal through the patronage of the Malla Mahārājas. Vajrayāna further prospered in China during the Tang Dynasty, and was established in Tibet by Padmasambhava at the invitation of the Yarlung Dynasty monarch Trisongdetsen. Vajrayāna Buddhism travelled through South East Asia with the support of ancient Khmer and Srivijaya kings, and Vajrayāna remains deeply supported in Bhutan by the current Wangchuck Dynasty that has made this conference on Vajrayāna Buddhism possible.

The socio-cultural context under which Vajrayāna was introduced in Europe and North America over the past three centuries thus differs entirely from the ways in which Vajrayāna Buddhism historically prospered in Asia. This paper thus presents an overview of Vajrayāna's initially

fraught reception as well as its ultimate emergence as a practice lineage in Europe and the United States under transformed social and political circumstances. Beginning with accounts of eighteenth century Catholic missionaries in Tibet, the paper charts Vajrayāna's transformation over a three hundred year period from hostile characterizations as 'lust, mummery and black magic' (Hodgson, 1874), to late colonial-era idealizations, to a fully assimilated practice that continues to productively challenge and extend the range of Western aesthetics, psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and religion. Rather than a tradition advanced by rulers and kings, Vajrayāna's introduction in the West is thus more a tale involving missionaries, misguided academics, museum curators, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), and a return to the roots of pre-Christian, Western spirituality.

Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries who travelled to Lhasa in the early 1700s were the first to bring knowledge of Vajrayāna Buddhism to Europe. But with their failure to convert either the Tibetan people or the country's rulers to the Catholic faith, their accounts were for the most part unsympathetic. Nevertheless, an 820-page work written in Latin in 1762 by Antonio Agostino Giorgio as a guide for future missionaries attempted to interpret Tibetan culture, language and religion from a Western perspective and influenced the subsequent course of European academic research. Although *Alphabetum Tibetanum* characterizes Tibet's Vajrayāna form of the Buddhism as a Manichaeian heresy—the belief that the 'holy spirit' can be released through ascetic practices—the massive tome was read by European philosophers including Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) who, while critical of Vajrayāna for its 'irrationality', nonetheless proposed that the Himalayan region was a repository of wisdom that the West had lost. Such reflections empowered favorable perceptions of Vajrayāna Buddhism

by the French sinologist Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat (1788 – 1832), who envisioned the ‘Ādi Buddha’ as a universal icon, but also less sympathetic views by pioneering scholars such as Brian Houghton Hodgson (1801-1894), a British civil servant in Nepal, whose assessment of the Buddhist Tantras was that they were ‘in general disgraced by obscenity and all sorts of magic and demonology’ (Hodgson, 1874). In his 1874 *Essays on the Languages, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Hodgson noted, however, that the texts of Vajrayāna were ‘also frequently redeemed by unusually explicit assertions of a supreme Godhead.’

Hodgson’s culturally biased analyses were furthered by the French Orientalist Eugène Burnouf (1801 – 1852) whose 1844 *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism* includes a chapter on tantric Buddhism. In Burnouf’s view, Vajrayāna consisted largely of ‘tedious systems of magic for utilitarian ends’ devoted to a cult of ‘bizarre and terrible gods and goddesses’ as well as ‘sets of instructions for the guidance of devotees in the construction of circles and other magical figures (*maṇḍala*)’ (Burnouf, 1844).

Apart from Abel-Rémusat, the first European scholar to write favorably about Vajrayāna was Sir John George Woodroffe (1865 – 1936), who served as chief justice in the Calcutta High Court and published under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon. A missionary author named Ernest Payne wrote sympathetically regarding Woodroffe’s publications on tantra, stating that previous scholars ‘have been content to follow one another in expressions of disgust rather than embark on the difficult task of explaining it’ (Payne, 1933). Woodroffe himself attributed the negative bias in tantric studies to ‘a sense of racial superiority allied to ignorance and prejudice’ (Taylor, 2001, p.119).

## Imperial Projections

The nineteenth century European encounter with Vajrayāna Buddhism occurred largely in absence of any direct contact with Bhutan, Nepal, or Tibet, where the practices and ritual traditions of Vajrayāna Buddhism had been preserved since the time of Padmasambhava. The Himalayan regions were largely inaccessible to Europeans during the nineteenth century, but thriving Tibetan Buddhist communities in the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts of northern India captured the attention and interest of several notable colonial-era British civil servants. It was largely through their investigations and subsequent publications that knowledge of Vajrayāna entered Western imagination as a form of Buddhism emphasizing the transformation of worldly existence rather than its renunciation.

In 1895, Lieutenant Colonel Laurence Austine Waddell (1854 - 1938), a British army surgeon stationed in Darjeeling, published a book with the cumbersome title *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism: with its mystic cults, symbolism and mythology, and in its relation to Indian Buddhism*. A review in *The Times* newspaper on February 22, 1895 stated that, 'This is a book which considerably extends the domain of human knowledge. Every page contains new materials; many of [Waddell's] chapters are entirely new, and the whole forms an enduring memorial of laborious original research. He is the first European who, equipped with the resources of modern scholarship, has penetrated the esoteric Buddhism of Tibet.'

Today, Amazon.com describes Waddell's book as 'one of the most complete works ever written on this topic, from metaphysics to practical magic. Full explanation of Tibetan pantheon, with hundreds of charms and mantras, detailed coverage of doctrine of incarnation and reincarnation. Also,

saints, divinity of Dalai Lama, monastic practices, sorcery and astrology, much more.'

At the time of its first publication, Waddell's richly illustrated book was a landmark publication on Tibet and Vajrayāna Buddhism, but despite its detailed descriptions of shrines, costumes, and ritual practices, Waddell's accounts were deeply colored by the pervading Judeo-Christian paradigm of his day. Bodhisattvas and mahāsiddhas are referred to as 'saints', oracles as 'sorcerers', the Dalai Lamas as 'god-kings', Chöd practitioners as 'necromancers', while many important tantric deities are referred to as 'devils' and 'demons'. Waddell's views of Vajrayāna were also deeply ethnocentric. As he wrote, 'The mythology, being largely of Buddhist authorship, is full of the awkward forms of Hindu fancy and lacks much of the point, force and picturesqueness of the myths of Europe' (Waddell, 1895).

Waddell's unapologetically colonial gaze is revealed in a critical essay published in 2000 in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* entitled 'An Emic Critique of Austine Waddell's *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet*: A Gross Misrepresentation of the Vajrayāna of Tibet'. As the Nepalese scholar-practitioner writes, '*Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet* by Austine Waddell cannot and should not be taken as an authoritative book of "Tibetan Buddhism" but which the author calls Vajrayāna of Tibet. There are literally thousands of mistakes, wrong information, misinterpretations and perhaps even deliberate distortions in this book' (Rana, 2000).

A contemporary of Lieutenant Colonel Waddell, Sir Charles Bell (1870-1945) was posted to Darjeeling in 1900 as the imperial political officer for Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, and he traveled to Lhasa in 1920 at the invitation of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The Tibetan people and their culture fascinated Bell, but his writings on Tibet and Bhutan primarily emphasized history and politics. Even his 1931 book *The Religions of Tibet* focuses less on the principles and

practices of Vajrayāna than on the hierarchical structure of Tibet's monastic culture and the customs and folk beliefs of the Tibetan populace.

Sir Charles Bell's black and white photographs, like the earlier images published by Waddell, nonetheless ignited popular interest in the exotic Buddhist practices current on the 'roof of the world'. Tibet's geo-political isolation combined with alluring documentary photography led to Vajrayāna Buddhism being conflated in popular Western imagination with 'Tibetan Buddhism', a limiting stereotype that largely continues to this day.

### **Museums**

Prior to the early photography and writings on Tibet by Lieutenant Colonel L.A. Waddell, the public in Britain learned of religious practices in the Himalayas through ethnographic displays at galleries and museums. In 1854, the first public exhibition of Tibetan artifacts, at London's Crystal Palace, led to increasing interest and awareness of Tibetan art and culture among imperial collectors, philologists, and scholars of Asian religions.

In 1904, numerous Tibetan artifacts entered the United Kingdom as spoils of the Francis Younghusband expedition to Tibet. Many of the dubiously acquired objects were featured in London's 1911 Festival of Empire exhibition and in showcases of Tibetan art at the British Museum. Tibet became increasingly known as a 'glamorously remote location', and curators and collectors intensified efforts to acquire Tibetan Buddhist art, including paintings, sculptures, and ritual objects used in Vajrayāna practice.

In the United States, the first museum exhibition dedicated entirely to Tibetan art took place in 1911 at the Newark Museum of Art. The exhibition contextualized 150 objects that had been collected by the medical missionaries Dr. and Mrs. Albert L. Shelton and which they had sold to

the museum for \$2,000. Today, the Newark Museum's collection of Tibetan decorative and religious art numbers over 5,500 objects. As the largest and most important repository for Tibetan art in the Americas, the museum has structured its displays around a central altar consecrated by the Dalai Lama and in monastically inspired galleries named 'Chapel of the Masters', 'Chapel of Fierce Protectors', and 'Pure Lands and Paradises'. A designated 'Tibet Information Zone' provides an interactive, educational resource for museum visitors interested in learning more about Tibetan life, culture, and religion.

Only in more recent years through exhibitions such as those at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City has attention been given to Vajrayāna Buddhism's larger history outside Tibet and greater efforts made to contextualize its fundamental principles and practices. Museums have also made increasing efforts to convey Vajrayāna's experiential dimensions through immersive, interactive installations. Notable examples include the 2015-2016 'Tibet's Secret Temple: Body, Mind, and Meditation in Tantric Buddhism' exhibition at London's Wellcome Collection and a forthcoming exhibition at London's Victoria and Albert Museum on science, art, and yoga in Tantric Buddhism.

## **Maṇḍalas**

Red-robed Tibetan monks creating intricate maṇḍalas from fine colored sand has become a standard feature of Tibetan art exhibitions since the time of the historic 'Wisdom and Compassion: The Sacred Art of Tibet' exhibition in San Francisco and New York City in 1991 and 1992. But decades earlier, through the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, maṇḍala art was already understood as a means of accessing the transpersonal depths of the human subconscious. Just as maṇḍalas serve an interactive, initiatory function within traditional Vajrayāna contexts, maṇḍala



symbolism became the primary means by which Westerners became aware of Vajrayāna Buddhism's transformational aesthetics. Jung described the deities depicted in maṇḍalas as potent symbols of a collective human consciousness. As he wrote in 1921, 'The gods and the demons have not disappeared at all: they have merely got new names' (Jung, 1977).

Jung used maṇḍalas in psychotherapeutic settings as a means of revealing the subconscious contents of his patients' psyches, and he used them in his own inner work, as seen in his alchemically-inspired *Red Book* that features maṇḍalas of his own creation (Jung, 2009). Jung's introduction to the first English-language translations of Tibetan works on Vajrayāna Buddhism—including the Bardo Thödel—led to increasing acceptance of Vajrayāna Buddhist concepts among educated Europeans and North Americans, and to the incorporation of words such as *Nirvāṇa*, Karma, and Tantra into Western languages. This normalization of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms is evidenced by George Sanders's award-winning 2017 American novel *Lincoln in the Bardo: A Story of Love After Death*, which the *New York Times* hailed as 'a luminous feat of generosity and humanism'.

## Mysticism

Carl Jung's writings on maṇḍala symbolism in connection to what he referred to as the 'individuation process' arose in tandem with accounts of Tibetan Buddhism by explorers and sympathetic observers such as Alexandra David-Neel, a French-Belgian adventuress who studied Tummo (Skt. *candali*) and other esoteric tantric practices with Vajrayāna masters in Sikkim and Tibet in the 1910s and 1920s and published more than thirty popular books, including *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* in 1929 and *Secret Oral Teachings in Tibetan Buddhist Sects* in 1951 (with a

foreword by Alan Watts). As she memorably wrote, she once asked her teacher 'Why are these teachings secret? Does it mean I cannot write and tell about them?' Her teacher reportedly replied, 'These teachings are not called "secret" because it is forbidden to talk about them. They are "secret" because so few who hear them understand' (David-Neél, 1951).

Following the success of Alexandra David-Neél's spiritual travel narratives, the American anthropologist Walter Evans-Wentz authored four seminal works on Vajrayāna Buddhism for Oxford University Press, including a 1927 translation of the Bardo Thödel entitled *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and a translation of Tibetan treatises on the Six Yogas of Nāropa in 1935 entitled *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*. These works furthered both popular and academic interest in Himalayan culture and Vajrayāna Buddhism on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The work of transmitting Tibet's innermost tantric teachings to the West was continued by the American Theos Bernard, who travelled to Tibet in 1936 where he introduced himself as a 'white lama'. Bernard's subsequent books describing his experiences in Tibet, as well as techniques of haṭha yoga, were highly influential, leading to his establishing in 1939 the American Institute of Yoga through which he hoped to propagate Tibetan Buddhist teachings in the West. Bernard's 1939 book *The Penthouse of the Gods: A Pilgrimage into the Heart of Tibet and the Sacred City of Lhasa* recounts his encounter with a hermit in Drak Yerpa in Tibet who reputedly presented him with an illustrated text describing Trulchor, or what is now often called Yantra Yoga, with its characteristic sequenced movements performed while retaining and controlling the breath. Bernard's writings and radio interviews in the United States established a firm link between the physical culture of Indian haṭha yoga and the spiritual mysticism associated in the minds of many with

the ritual practices of Tibetan Buddhism. (The historical links between haṭha yoga and Vajrayāna Buddhism have been more firmly established through recent research by Dr. James Mallinson on the Amṛtasiddhi Tantra. See Mallinson, 2017).

Following Theos Bernard's untimely death in 1947, the task of establishing Vajrayāna in the Western world was continued by the German-born Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898 – 1985). Govinda had been invited in 1930 to an international Buddhist conference in Darjeeling, where he began studying Tibetan language and Vajrayāna. Over subsequent decades, he became the foremost Western authority on Tibetan Buddhism and was described as the 'first Western lama'. Lama Govinda introduced Vajrayāna Buddhism to the world's foremost religion scholar Huston Smith, who had, through lack of knowledge, omitted Vajrayāna from his groundbreaking 1959 publication *The Religions of Man*. Govinda also advanced awareness of Vajrayāna Buddhism through his own extensive writings on tantric Buddhist art, iconography, and contemplative practices, thus establishing Vajrayāna as a living tradition in the modern world. Govinda's landmark publication in 1959 of *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* dispelled misunderstandings about Vajrayāna Buddhism and set a new standard for modern Buddhist scholar-practitioners who had formerly had to rely on less informed accounts and interpretations.

In 1967, Lama Govinda founded Arya Maitreya Mandala (AMM), which he claimed to be the first international Vajrayāna order. The emblem was a double vajra, symbolizing universality as well as realization of what Govinda called the 'fourth dimension', the indestructible Vajrakaya. Govinda described AMM as 'an organized unity of individuals grouped around and directed towards a common center represented by the ideal and active path of

the Vajrayāna, as the integration and culmination of all previous schools of Buddhism.'

Western interest and awareness of Buddhism and Asian religions had escalated over the preceding decade as a result of the 1959 Tibetan Diaspora that followed the Chinese invasion and occupation of 'the roof of the world'. These developments included highly influential publications by writers such as Jack Kerouac, Alan Watts, Ram Das, Gary Snyder, and Alan Ginsburg, as well as the 1964 book *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, coauthored by the former Harvard professors Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert. Further interest in Asian religion derived from lyrics in popular music following the British rock band the Beatles' journey to Rishikesh, India, in 1968 to learn meditation at the ashram of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Beyond its repercussions in popular Western culture, the 1959 Tibetan Diaspora also led to concerted efforts to preserve Tibetan culture. One of the most effective initiatives in this regard was undertaken by Freda Bedi, the first Western woman to be ordained as a Tibetan Buddhist nun. Better known as Sister Palmo, Freda Bedi received her vows in 1966 from the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. Six years earlier, she had helped establish the Young Lamas Home School in Dalhousie, India, where important figures in Tibetan Buddhism's transmission to the West, such as Tarthang Tulku and Chögyam Trungpa, learned English, thus empowering their subsequent activities in the West. These activities included highly influential books including Trungpa's 1973 *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism* and 1976 *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*. Trungpa's highly innovative re-contextualization of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the West during the 1970s and 1980s was both controversial and inspiring. The impact of his life and teachings continues at educational institutions that he

founded such as Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, which has offered academic and experience-based study programs in Vajrayāna Buddhism since 1974.

### Medicalization

Increased academic interest in Vajrayāna Buddhism led to medical and scientific interest in the effects of long-term meditation. One of the first initiatives in this regard was Dr. Herbert Benson's 1982 study of Tibetan practitioners of Tummo, or Inner Fire (Skt. *candali*), the foundational practice in Vajrayāna's Completion Phase (*sampannakrama*, Tib. *dzogrim*). As discussed at this conference, Dr. Maria Kozhevnikov has conducted more recent studies on Tummo among female practitioners at Gebchek Nunnery in eastern Tibet. Dr. Kozhevnikov characterizes Tummo's combination of visualization and breath control as an integrated activation of the sympathetic nervous system, potentially leading to enhanced mindbody synchronization and cognitive abilities (Kozhevnikov et al., 2013).

As additional scientific research has suggested, visualization techniques central to Vajrayāna practice can have profound effects on brain plasticity and cognition, and are thus leading to new models for enhancing human well being, resilience, and collective flourishing. Although some of this research involves investigations of Vajrayāna practices that have long been considered 'secret', the Dalai Lama, for one, has repeatedly stated that secrecy has no place in the scientific worldview, and that all aspects of Buddhist doctrine should be rigorously investigated to determine their actual benefits (H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, 2018).

Most scientific researchers recognize, however, that the neurobiological correlates of inner meditative and yogic experience do not necessarily provide keys to enhanced forms of practice, or 'bio-hacking' as it's known in contem-

porary projects such as Flow Genome that seek to actualize currently available research in fields as diverse as elite sport protocols, contemporary studies on psychedelics, cryotherapeutic cold exposure, and intensive respiratory training. As the neuroscientist and prolific author Oliver Sacks has pointed out, science's progress in regard to human enhancement is more faltering than a 'majestic unfolding' (Sacks, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Albert Einstein famously remarked in 1941 that, in regard to science, 'a perfection of means and confusion of goals seems to characterize our age' (Einstein, 1941). In Vajrayāna, the end goal of collective enlightenment and freedom from needless suffering has always been clearly defined. The methods for realizing that goal in Vajrayāna are, in essence, limitless providing that they are performed with efficacy and benevolent intention on behalf of all beings. I would thus like to end this overview of Vajrayāna's journey to the West with a few remarks on where Vajrayāna might be going, based on conversations with Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche in London in March 2018, following his series of talks at Vajrayāna Buddhist centers in Europe and the United Kingdom. Throughout his teachings, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche emphasized Vajrayāna's relevance in the modern world through its commitment to critically questioning the nature of experience and distinguishing between apparent phenomena and the groundless luminosity from which appearances arise. In this regard, even what science assumes to be empirical 'facts' should be recognized as provisional paradigms that, like all other mental phenomena, are subject to change.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche also sought on his 2018 teaching tour to disabuse Western Vajrayāna students of what he referred to as 'outmoded and archaic' aspects of

Tibetan culture that contemporary students in the West have sometimes mistaken for inherent principles of Vajrayāna. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between provisional and ultimate meaning in the Vajrayāna teachings, and of returning to root texts such as the Vajracheddika and Hevajra Tantra to determine whether or not one actually feels suited for the Vajrayāna path, as 'other forms of Buddhist practice may be less physically, emotionally, and intellectually demanding.'

In regard to Samaya (Tib. *damsig*), the existential vows connected with tantric Buddhist initiation, and with which Western disciples often struggle, Khyentse Rinpoche said that the Mahāsiddha Tilopa (988–1069 A.D.), from whom the entire Kagyu lineage of whispered precepts derives, stated it very clearly in his seminal 'Song of Mahāmudrā':

The real vow of Samaya is broken by thinking in terms of precepts, and it is maintained with the cessation of fixed ideas. Let thoughts rise and subside like ocean waves. If you neither dwell, perceive, nor stray from the Ultimate, the Tantric precepts are automatically upheld, like a lamp which illuminates darkness.

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche also clearly indicated that, whereas monastic forms of Vajrayāna will continue to flourish in the Himalayan region, the West is more existentially suited to the original teachings of the mahāsiddhas. As Khyentse Rinpoche pointed out, many of the mahāsiddhas initially trained and taught in monastic settings, but they ultimately espoused a path of boundless engagement whereby the flow of empty, lucid awareness could be integrated within all human experience. That state of Mahāmudrā, or existential coherence of *Samṣāra* and *Nirvāṇa*, is Vajrayāna's distinguishing characteristic and, as Khyentse Rinpoche made clear, it is not necessarily a path for everyone. In 1985, when Vajrayāna was taking firm root

in North America, Chögyam Trungpa offered the same advisory to his Western students:

This warning has been given hundreds of times: Don't get into Tantra just like that ... It's dangerous ... Every Tantric text ... begins with that warning: Be careful, think twice ... don't take this carelessly. But interestingly, the more you put students off, the more interested they become. (Trungpa, 2003)

As Vajrayāna continues to develop both in Asia and the West as a means of actualizing one's highest capacities for wise and compassionate action, students and teachers alike will be increasingly challenged to distinguish between Vajrayāna's essential teachings on enlightened embodiment and potentially extraneous cultural elements that have accrued to Vajrayāna during its thirteen hundred year long journey across Asia to the West. There is, of course, no better context to explore, and document, this dynamic polarity of tradition and innovation than at the annual Vajrayāna Summits in Bhutan.

As we collectively celebrate and re-imagine what Vajrayāna has been and what new forms it might assume in its evolving global context, it is worth reflecting on the fact that both Padmasamhava and Dionysus—a central deity in Western tradition—originate in the same geographical and cultural frontiers of the Hindu Kush mountains in ancient Swat. Both figures remind us that the infinite possibilities of human life arise through the dynamic union of productive polarities. As Hugh B. Urban wrote in his book *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*, 'The meaning of Tantra [or Vajrāyana Buddhism] is never fixed or singular, but it is the complex result of the encounter between indigenous traditions and the scholarly imagination – an encounter that has from the beginning been closely tied to specific historical, intellectual, and political interests' (Urban, 2003).



Urban's reflections are central to the core objectives of the annual Vajrayāna Summits in Bhutan which seek, above all odds, to determine an 'adamantine way' commensurate with the challenges and opportunities of the modern world. The shared origins, ethos, and iconography of Dorje Drolo and Dionysus—emblematic deities of East and West and dispellers of obstacles—establish an inspiring common ground for transforming our sense of what is possible.

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# **A Report on Some Physical Evidences and Oral Transmission about Tsangpa Gyare (1161-1211) Collected at the Ralung Monastery and the Druk Monastery in Tibet**

*Seiji Kumagai*

## **Introduction**

The Drukpa Kagyu (*'Brug pa bka' brgyud*) school, one of the eight sub-schools of the Kagyu (*bKa' brgyud*) school, has played an important role in Central Tibet and Bhutan. Especially in Bhutan, the school became the state religion after the establishment of the Buddhist country called Druk Yul (*'Brug yul*) by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (*Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal*, 1594-1651).

The school produced many eminent practitioners and monk scholars such as Drukpa Kunley (*'Brug pa Kun legs*, 1455-1529), Pema Karpo (*Kun mkhyan Padma dKar po*, 1527-1592) and Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Their activities and achievements have been well-known and described in detail in both Tibet and Bhutan. On the other hand, the very founder Tsangpa Gyare (*gTsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje*, 1161-1211) has not been well-known or fully studied because of lack of textual information. In fact, the collected works of Tsangpa Gyare were not accessible until recently, and so many aspects of his life and character have been unknown in detail.

It is thus necessary to conduct an extensive study of Tsangpa Gyare drawing directly from his biographies and his collected works. I have had the chance to study primary sources, such as multiple biographies of Tsangpa Gyare

composed by different masters, chronicles referring to him and also his collected works, thus examining his life and characteristics through philological methodology.<sup>4</sup>

However, such philological research has an inherent problem. The information described in biographies and annals are limited and insufficient to comprehensively grasp the reality. In order to further prove the validity of such written information, it is necessary to examine oral transmission and physical evidences collected in the field. That is to say, we need to integrate both written information (in biographies and collected works) and unwritten information (i.e. physical evidences and oral transmission collected during the fieldwork).

This paper thus aims to introduce and examine oral transmissions and physical evidences collected in my fieldwork in/near the Ralung Monastery and Druk Monastery (unwritten information) in comparison to the information written in his biographies and chronicles (written information).

### **Birth of Tsangpa Gyare**

Biographies insist that Tsangpa Gyare was born in 1161 into the Gya (rGya) clan in the village of Saral (Sa ral) in Khule region (Khu le) which is at the bottom of the Hawo Kangzang mountain (Ha 'o gangs bzang) in upper Nyang region (Myang stod) of the Eastern Tsang (gTsang) in central Tibet.<sup>5</sup> According to such written information, Saral is a

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<sup>4</sup> In another paper (Kumagai, 2018), I examined seven biographies of Tsangpa Gyare, three dharma annals and one doxography. Regarding their bibliography, see the bibliography of this paper. Regarding his collected works, see Kumagai et al. (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the information about Tsangpa Gyare's birth, see Kumagai (2018, p. 22).

village inside the Khule region. On the other hand, according to the present local tradition, Saral and Khule are regarded to be different villages: Saral is the place of his mother's family; Khule is the place of the current Ralung Monastery near Tsangpa Gyare's birthplace. Thus, the interpretation of these two toponyms seems to have changed over time.



Plate 1: Tsangpa Gyare'

### Tsangpa Gyare's mother<sup>6</sup>

According to local tradition, his mother Marza Tarki (*Mar za dar skyid*) was from Saral which is a village next to Khule, while his father Gyazurpo Tsape (*rGya zur po tshab pe*) came from another place (i.e., China).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the information about Tsangpa Gyare's mother, see Kumagai (2018, p. 23).

<sup>7</sup> There is no description about the relationship between his father's lineage and China in Tsangpa Gyare's biographies. Only the dharma annal *IHo 'brug chos 'byung* (98, p. 8-11) refers to the relationship corresponding to the information of the oral transmission: *gang las 'khrungs pa'i gdung ni jo bo Sha'kya mu ne gdan 'dren pa'i rgya nag po'i gyad stobs po che lha dga'i gdung rabs las/yab Zas gtsang lta bu'i rGya zur po tshab pe dang /*.

There are currently no inhabitants but only a ruin in Saral. According to the local tradition, past inhabitants of Saral seem to have moved to the current Chudu (*Chu 'dus*) village near Saral.

In the ruin of his mother's house, we can find a "square rock" (*rdo leb gru bzhi pa*) or a "rock like a dice" (*pha bong cho long 'dra ba*) on which Tsangpa Gyare is said to have sat and given a teaching to children from the village as referred to in several biographies.<sup>8</sup>

His mother seems to have been a very important figure to form his identity and character because many biographies introduce various episodes of his mother.<sup>9</sup>



*Plate 2: Ruin of Marza Tarki's house*

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<sup>8</sup> Biography composed by Pema Karpo (D11, p. 5-6): *skabs shig tu / rgyal grong zhes bya ba'i grong khyer dang nye ba'i rdo leb gru bzhi pa zhiig la rtsed mo byed pa'i tshe / de'i nye logs kyi rdo gcig la / zhab zung gi pad mo rnam par bkod de / lha dang mi rnam gyi mchod pa'i rten du bzhaig go/*.

<sup>9</sup> See Kumagai (2018, p. 23).



*Plate 3: Square rock on which Tsangpa Gyare sat and gave a teaching to neighborhood children*

### **Spiritual Education**

As I wrote in another paper, Tsangpa Gyare became a novice monk at around age 12 (1172) when his teacher Tathangpa (*rTa thang pa*) cut his hair and gave him the dharma name Sherab Dutsi Korlo (*Shes rab bdud rtsi 'khor lo*).<sup>10</sup>

After his renunciation, Tsangpa Gyare studied both sutras and tantras under the direction of many scholars and masters. He studied Vajrayāna Buddhism such as tantras, meditation practices and rituals while he studied Sūtrayāna Buddhism such as Pramāṇa, Madhyamaka and Pāramitā. Plenty of his work on Sūtrayāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism in his collected works also prove this fact.<sup>11</sup>

He seems to have started his studies under the direction of his root master Ling Repa at his age 21, 22 or 23 (1181,

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<sup>10</sup> Regarding his renunciation, see Kumagai (2018, p. 24).

<sup>11</sup> Regarding the contents of his collected works, see Kumagai et al. (2012, p. 50).



1182 or 1183). He seriously studied with Ling Repa until the age of 28 (1188) when his root master passed away.<sup>12</sup>

According to most of his biographies and annals, Tsangpa Gyare finally received full ordination at the age of 33 (1193) from masters such as Zhang (*Zhang g-Yu brag pa brTson 'gru brags pa*, 1122-1193) and Zepa (*bZad pa*).<sup>13</sup>

### Longdol Monastery

According to his biographies and annals, Tsangpa Gyare established the Longdol Monastery (*Klong rdol dgon pa*), following the master Zhang's prophecy at his age of 29, 33 or 34 (1189, 1193 or 1194).<sup>14</sup>

According to local information obtained at the Ralung Monastery, the Longdol Monastery is situated near the current Dolma Lhakang in Nyethang. There used to be a small temple, but only a meditation cave remains today.

### Ralung Monastery

The Ralung Monastery (*Ra lung dgon pa*), one of two head monasteries of the Drukpa Kagyu school, was established in upper Nyang region in 1196, fulfilling the prophecy of a deity (*yi dam*), according to biographies and annals.<sup>15</sup> A document of history of Ralung Monastery kept in the current Ralung Monastery gives the year 1193 (at the age of 33) for its establishment.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Regarding his study, see Kumagai (2018, p. 25-26).

<sup>13</sup> Regarding his full ordination, see Kumagai (2018, p. 27).

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the establishment of the Longdol Monastery, see Kumagai (2018, p. 27-28).

<sup>15</sup> Regarding the establishment of the Ralung Monastery, see Kumagai (2018, p. 28).

<sup>16</sup> The document of history of Ralung Monastery preserved at the Ralung Monastery says: *dgon de ni 'brug pa dkar brgyud pa'i bstan pa'i mnga' bdag chos rje 'gro ba'i mgon po gTsang pa rgya ras pas*



*Plate 4: Current Ralung Monastery*

Unlike the Druk Monastery, which is another head monastery near Lhasa, the Ralung Monastery is located near his home land in the Tsang region, where many of his family and relatives lived.

There seem to have been much larger monastery buildings, monk dormitories and also a larger stupa, but they were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Their ruins still remain next to the current Ralung Monastery. Recently, new monastery buildings are slowly being constructed.

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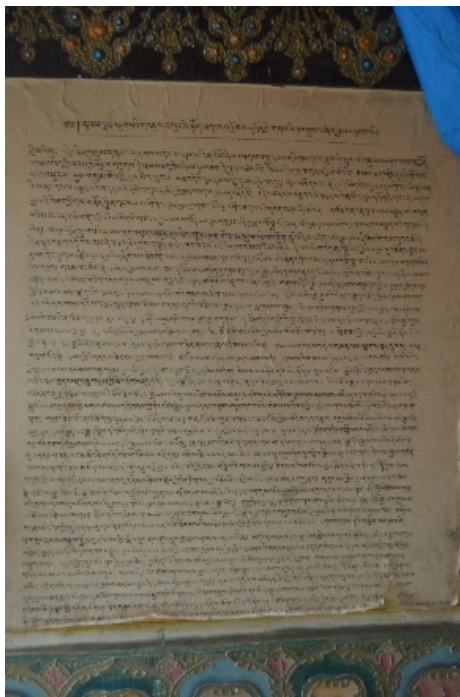
Bod rab byung gsum pa chu glang lo sphyi lo 1193 lor phyag btab  
pa'i brug pa dkar brgyud pa'i gdan sa de yin.



*Plate 5: Ruin of previous monastery and monk dormitories*



*Plate 6: Wall painting of previous Ralung Monastery and stupa*



*Plate7: Document of History of Ralung Monastery preserved at the Ralung Monastery*



*Plate 8: New building of Ralung Monastery*



*Plate 9: New stupa of Ralung Monastery*

Local tradition says that previously around five thousand monks used to live in the monastery while currently there are only less than twenty monks left. The 12<sup>th</sup> Drukchen Jikme Pema Wangchen ('Jigs med Padma dbang chen, 1963-), belonging to the spiritual lineage of Paksam Wangpo (dPag bsam dbang po, 1593-1641), is regarded to be the current abbot of the Ralung Monastery while he lives in Ladakh. Interestingly, they also put a photo of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the Paksam Wangpo's rival, in their main temple with great respect. Current Ralung monks think that Shabdrung did not go on exile to Bhutan because of his political defeat. They rather believe that he has voluntarily moved to avoid unnecessary conflict foreseen in a prophecy.

### **Druk Monastery**

The Druk Monastery ('Brug gi dgon pa or 'Brug Se ba byang chub chos gling), the source of the name of Drukpa Kagyu school, was established in the southwest of Lhasa, fulfilling Ling Repa's prophecy. Most biographies and



annals mention that the monastery was established in the year 1205 (age 45).<sup>17</sup>

The Druk monastery is the place where Tsangpa Gyare died in 1211, so there are many relics of Tsangpa Gyare such as his monk robe, shoes and so on.



*Plate 10: Current building of Druk Monastery*

The monastery was taken by Paksam Wangpo after Shabdrung moved to Bhutan. As mentioned earlier, the current abbot is the 12<sup>th</sup> Drukchen Jikme Pema Wangchen. The current building of the Druk Monastery was rebuilt after its destruction during the Cultural Revolution.

## **Conclusion**

This paper introduces and examines the oral sources and physical evidences collected in my recent fieldwork in/near the Ralung Monastery and Druk Monastery in

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<sup>17</sup> Regarding the establishment of the Druk Monastery, see Kumagai (2018, p. 29).

comparison to the information written in his biographies and chronicles (written information).

While we first need to refer to old biographies and annals to obtain precise information, we also need to focus on unwritten information obtained in local places. As seen in this paper, many of oral transmissions and physical evidences, collected in my recent fieldwork at the Ralung Monastery and the Druk Monastery, prove the validity of the information of Tsangpa Gyare's biographies and annals related to him. It is necessary to further advance both philological and field research to re-examine his life and character multidirectionally.

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# Remaining Legacy of Green Tara in Myanmar (Burmese) Traditional Believes

*Khin Zaw*

## **Abstract**

The concept of Tara (Jetsun Dölma) as a female Bodhisattva, a female Buddha, or a meditational deity is deeply instilled throughout the Himalayan region and spread among other Buddhist communities. Adoration of Tara was well established by the onset of the Pala Empire in Eastern India during the 8th century and spread southwards to Sri Lanka and east to Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, Java, and the Philippines. In Myanmar, Tara was widely worshipped among the Pyu people until the 9th century. There is also a continuous record of Buddhism flourishing in the Arakan and Mon kingdoms which both had strong traditions of Theravada that co-existed with Mahayana and Vajrayāna Buddhism as well as Hinduism. Even after the rise of the Bagan Era (9th to 13th Century), the Tara tradition continued, most likely as a result of Ari the Tantric monks, as evidenced by stone statues, terracotta votive tablets, and mural paintings. However, 1056 C.E was a turning point, when Great Emperor King Anawratha, who reigned from 1044 until 1077, implemented a series of religious reforms in an attempt to diminish the influence of the Ari monks and to promote the Southern Mon tradition of Theravada Buddhism. Yet Southern Pali Buddhism took many centuries to gain momentum, and the Aris maintained their lineages as forest dwelling monks and retain their power into the Ava period in the 16th century. Even today Burmese Buddhism contains many animist, Vajrayāna,

Mahayana and Hindu elements. Apart from the mainstream religious body of Myanmar monks, is a parallel tradition of Waizza (Vidaya) followed by some monks and many of laymen. Their practices include contemplative meditation for inner awakening, alchemy, astronomy, mandalas and yantras, mantras, and imaginative identification with esoteric deities, including Tara. Mother goddesses such as Mya Nan Nwe (Descent of the Emerald Palace), Mya Sein Shin (Lord of the Green Emerald), Ma Mya Sein (Green Emerald Lady), etc. can be found throughout Myanmar, especially in the vicinity Theravada Buddhist stupas and monasteries, but sometimes at separate abodes. Occult devotees deeply subscribe to the tradition and perform rituals accordingly. The female Buddhist deity Tara, especially in her green manifestation, inspired the Myanmar people through her association with the natural world, protection, and loving-kindness, as well and with conservation of the ecological environment.

## **Introduction**

Concept of Tara (Jetsun Dölma) as a female Bodhisattva, a female Buddha or a deity, instilled deeply throughout the Himalayan range including Tibet, Mongolia, and spread among the other Buddhist communities. Tara inspired feminism in Buddhism prove a very rare example among those who attained Buddhahood as women. Her adoration being well established by the onset of the Pala empire in eastern India (8th century CE), spread south to Sri Lanka and east to Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, Java, and Philippines.

## **Early embrace**

Mother goddess concept was evidently present since prehistoric time in Myanmar. So-called Bu-Lu-Goan Mae-Taw stone figurine found in Bu-Lu-Goan village, central

Myanmar, possibly was the earliest Neolithic mother goddess of Myanmar. Pre-Buddhist bronze culture of Samon and Chindwin valleys show the presence of headless symbolic bronze mother goddess figures, in single, double and triple patterns. As Buddhism reached Myanmar, according to the myths and old chronicles at the time of Lord Gautama Buddha or more accurately as reinforced by missionaries of the great emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C, worshipping mother figure probably continued for a long time. Sinhalese chronicle, the Mahavamsa, attributes the mission of Sona and Uttara who came to Thaton (Suvannabhumi), in the 3rd century B.C. Buddhism has been flourishing during the time of Pyu Millennium (from 2nd century B.C. to 9th century C. E.). As the Buddhism of Pyu civilization was syncretistic, an admixture of Theravada, Mahayana, Tantrayana, Hindu Vaishnavism, and a vast range of animist beliefs and rituals emerged and the worship of mother goddess seemed to have thrived all along. Around the second century BC the first-known city-states emerged mainly in central dry zone of Myanmar by the Tibeto-Burman-speaking Pyu who were the first civilized people of Myanmar. The devotion to Tara among them had been very strong.

### **Pyu and Tara**

Evidences of Pyu people worshipping Tara are clear from the stone curving, terracotta votives, metal pendants, etc. found at Sriksetra, the largest ancient Pyu city.

An extraordinary sample is a stone relief carving of Tara, sized 2.05 x 1.06 x 0.35 m, found near Shwedaga (Golden Gate) of ancient Sri Ksetra, which is now displayed proudly at Sri Ksetra museum. The central figure is kneeling on haunches, with knees facing PL, and torso facing forward. A tiered crown is worn, with flared extensions to headdress, earrings, and jewellery – necklace, bracelets on

PL arm, and PR wrist. PR's hand rests on a lotus seated on a pedestal covered with patterned cloth. The face is round and, has a downward gaze, pursed, and lips turned up in smile, eyes arching upwards at corners, with arched defined eyebrows. She has full rounded breasts, slim waist, with outline of belt low across the abdomen. Below each single figure is a pair of crowned attendants kneeling, holding bowls, and facing forward. Each attendant is also seated on a patterned cloth over a pedestal. In the predella below there are six figures arranged symmetrically with a central urn/vase possibly with lotus flowers emerging. The figures are kneeling, and facing forward. The inner figure on each side holds a short sword close to the chest, pointing downwards, the outer figures on each side hold up clubs in their outer hands (swords or lotus buds), with the outermost figure having a ring-shaped object on the top of the sword/club (7-9 century C. E). Other samples include votive tablets of Tara Devi contrapuntal pose, standing on lotus, and some fragment of votive tablet with multiple images of the Buddha in bhumisparsa mudra. On PR near knee of central Buddha is an image of a deva, likely Tara - identified by lotus flower, has hair high on head or crowned headdress, has PL hand to chest, 8th century Pyu period.

### **Influences**

Besides Tara statue, the archaeological findings also indicate a widespread presence of Tantric Buddhism, such as Avalokitesvara (Lokanatha called Lawkanat in Burmese; Manjusri, Hayagriva, etc. who were all very much part of Pyu (and later the Bagan) iconography scene. Possibly, the most valued and respected has been the female goddess evidenced by the greater prominence of nuns and female students in that eras. It may point to the notion of certain female freedom in the background of Pyu socio-cultural life. Records of Pyu civilizations show that Buddhism has

flourished uninterruptedly in the nearby Arakan and Mon kingdoms, where both had strong Theravada co-existing with Vajrayāna Buddhism, Mahayana and Hinduism. That equilibrium was dismayed when the Pyu came under repeated assaults from Nanzhao, and the final take over in 832 C. E.

### **The Rise of Bagan**

Bagan was founded in 849-850 AD. It was one of several competing city-states until the late 10th century when it grew in authority and grandeur. Even after the rising power of Bagan Era (9th to 13th Century C.E), Tara tradition continued, probably through Ari the Tantric monks, manifested by stone statues, terracotta votive tablets and mural paintings. However, 1056 C.E was a turning point, when Great Emperor King Anawratha (reign 1044 - 1077) had tried to implement a series of religious reforms by breaking the influence of the Ari monks, and encouraged Southern tradition of Theravada Buddhism. The fundamental incident in the history of Bagan is not so much the founding of the empire, but Bagan's acceptance of Theravada Buddhism at the time of King Anawratha. Yet his restructuring could not get its' grip instantly and the expanse of Southern Pali Buddhism took many centuries to get its' momentum. Nor the Aris disappeared straightway. Their lineages, recognized as forest dwelling monks, persisted as a powerful force for long time down to the Ava period in the 16th century.

### **Kyanzitta's tolerance**

Kyanzitta (1084-1113), who had been Anawratha's commander-in-chief and had succeeded Anawratha's son to the throne, consolidated Theravada Buddhism's predominance in Pagan. However, Mahayana, Vajrayāna and other practices were tolerated in his reign. His chief queen

Abeyadana was a tantric Buddhist, donating a famous temple with Buddhist frescos, featuring Tantric and some Brahmanic elements, including various forms of Tara. Another example was Kyanzitta's son Rajakumara's Myinkaba Gubyaukgyi temple, which also show some influences of Vajrayāna concepts.

### **Parallel existence of Vidhaya sect**

Present time mainstream Theravada Buddhism of Myanmar is admixed with some animism, Vajrayāna, Mahayana and Hindu elements. Apart from conventional religion body of Myanmar monks, there are the parallel existence of Waizza (Vidhaya) ways followed by some monks and many of the layman. This path is an esoteric system of occult exerts such as recitation of spells, contemplative meditation for inner awakening (samatha), using astronomy, mandalas and yantra, mantra procedure, alchemy, reflective identification with deities, etc. believed to lead to a life of a semi-immortal and supernatural being who awaits the appearance of the future Buddha Maitreya. Evidently millions of Myanmar followers rely on them for their daily living.

### **Heritage of Green Tara**

According to the Myanmar Waizza (Vidhaya) belief, there are a long and complicated list of supernatural beings, named as Theik Nan Shin, who are protecting precious treasures to paying homage to the future Buddha Maitreya. There are some mother goddesses, and indications of Tara can be found among them, especially for green Tara. So-called Mya Nan Nwe (descent of the Emerald palace), Mya Sein Shin (Lord of the Green Emerald), Ma Mya Sein (Green Emerald Lady), etc. can be found throughout Myanmar, usually in the campus of the Theravada Buddhist stupas and monasteries, but sometimes have separate abode. One of the



famous examples include Shan Princess Saw-Mon-Hla, believed as emanation of Tara, former queen of Emperor Anawratha, who had been expelled from Bagan Palace for her tantric practices and power. On her way back home, Saw-Mon-Hla built the Shwe-Sar-Yan Pagoda, near Mandalay, and started a festival which is being conducted every year since then. Other examples are seven green sisters headed by Mya Sein Shin, and Ma Mya Sein waiting for the time of future Buddha Matrieya, from Shwe-Bone-Thar monastery on the bank of river Ayarwaddy at the other side of Prome, and Mya Nan Nwe at Bo-ta-htaung pagoda of Yangon. Some also believe that Mon Queen Shin Saw Pu as the embodiment of the great green mother lineage. Although their background myths and legends differ with regional variances, occult devotees deeply believe in that tradition and conduct rituals accordingly.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Vajrayāna institution in Myanmar which was obliterated but not totally extinct, since the Bagan era, still going on as Waizza (Vidhaya) ways among many believers. Tara, especially the green, somehow seems to be inspired Myanmar people through the perception of Mother Nature with the hope of protection, devotion, along the current needs of tolerance, compassionate love and also the drive to conserve the ecological environment. By some means it'd loss the mainstream connection but waiting for the revival.

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## Plates



*Plate 1. Stone relief carving of Tara, size 2.05 x 1.06 x 0.35 m, found near Shwedaaga (Golden Gate) of ancient Sri Ksetra*



*Plate 2. Votive tablets of Tara Devi contrapuntal pose, standing on lotus. 8th century C. E.*



Plate 3. Fragment of votive tablet with multiple images of the Buddha including Tara. 8<sup>th</sup> century C. E.



Plate 4. Bagan murals of Myingaba Gupyaugyi



Fig 5. Bagan Murals of Tara



*Plate 6. Shan Princess Saw-Mon-Hla, believed as emanation of Tara, former queen of Emperor Anawratta, who'd been expelled from Bagan Palace for her tantric practices and power.*



*Plate 7. Seven green sisters headed by Mya Sine Shin at Taunggyi Mya Sein Taung Monastery*





*Plate 8. Ma Mya Sein, waiting for the time of future Buddha Matrieya, from Shwe-Bone-Thar monastery on the bank of river Ayarwaddy at the other side of Prome.*



*Plate 9. Mon Queen Shin Saw Pu as Tara embodiment*



*Plate 10. Mya Nan Nwe as a Buddhist Nun at Botahtaung Pagoda.*

# **Unveiling Feminine Presence and Expression in Vajrayāna Buddhist Symbolism: Empowerment and Inspiration to Bhutanese Nuns**

*Sonam Wangmo & Karma Tashi Choedron*

## **Abstract**

Symbols have always been an integral part of Vajrayāna Buddhism and serve as powerful catalysts to train the mind towards enlightenment. As such, feminine symbolism, either in the form of *ḍākinīs*, female meditational deities, legendary, historical or living female masters have and continue to serve as potent objects of inspiration to Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners, Bhutanese nuns included. This paper discusses the relevance of feminine symbolism in the context of two nunneries in Bhutan. This study employed ethnography as the main research methodology in two nunneries Jachung Karmo in Punakha District, Western Bhutan and Jashar Lhundrup Choling in Pema Gatshel District, Eastern Bhutan-investigates tantric Buddhist symbolism and its corresponding psychological impact on the Bhutanese nuns. This entailed an analysis of the traditions, practices, scriptures, and symbolism of Vajrayāna Buddhism that support women's empowerment in religious practice in Bhutan, e.g. female meditational deities, either in the form of *ḍākinīs* such as Vajrayoginī or as buddhas such as Ārya Tāra. This study unveils how divine female personalities which are personifications of wisdom, the secret *ḍākinī* or Mother Prajñāpāramitā and historical personalities such as Yeshe Tsogyal, Machig Lhabdron and Gelongma Palmo provide inspiration and

hope to the nuns of their innate potential for achieving full enlightenment. One of the most significant findings of this study is the positive impact of contemporary female masters on their living disciples, i.e. Anim Lopenma Paldon, the late abbess of Jachung Karmo Nunnery and the contemporary Anim Trulku Chözang Lhamo, reincarnation of Anim Woesel Chöden, the founder of Jashar Goenpa. It demonstrates that Bhutanese women have achieved high realizations by following the tantric path, and in both cases, far surpassing that of male practitioners.

## Introduction

Vajrayāna Buddhism has a vast pantheon of buddhas, bodhisattvas,<sup>18</sup> tutelary deities (Tib: *yidam*), heroes and heroines (Tib: *pawo* and *pamo*), *dākas* and *dākinīs* (Tib: *khandro* and *khandroma*), dharma protectors, *nāgas*<sup>19</sup> and many other supramundane beings. The concept of deity in Vajrayāna Buddhism is different from other systems of belief as the deities are the personification of one's own primordial mind, i.e. Buddha nature. There are several deities depicted in female<sup>20</sup> aspect in the Vajrayāna Buddhist pantheon but

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<sup>18</sup> buddhahood aspirants

<sup>19</sup> *nāgā*, m. (prob. neither fr. *na-ga*, nor fr. *nagna*,) a snake, (esp.) • a Nāga or serpent-demon (the race of Kadru or Su-rasā inhabiting the waters or the city Bhoga-vatī under the earth • they are supposed to have a human face with serpent-like lower extremities • their kings are Śeṣha, Vāsuki, and Takshaka • mf(ā, or ī, )n. formed of snakes, relating to serpents or serpents-demons, snaky, serpentine, serpent-like.

<sup>20</sup> Examples include *kriya* tantra deities such as Usnisavijaya, Usnisa Sitatapatra, White Tara, Sarasvati, Marici and Vasudhara; *carya* tantra deities such as Tara, Bhṛkūṭi, Yasovati, Dorje Tsemo, Blue Achala and Achala; *yoga* tantra deities such as Prajnaparamita, the mother of wisdom realizing emptiness; and *anuttara* (highest) *yoga* tantra (HYT) deities such



deities in the male aspect are more common (Crins, 2008). The same is true for female masters whereby very few rose to prominence as they were overshadowed by male masters. Nonetheless, it is extremely fascinating that women are portrayed at all in Vajrayāna Buddhist symbolism.

A *ḍākinī*, in Vajrayāna Buddhism is commonly understood as a female manifestation of an enlightened being and is a powerful and profound symbol of the true nature of mind. The *ḍākinī* is a creative and powerful metaphor of transformation of the tantric practitioner's gross conceptual mind into wisdom realizing emptiness (Simmer-Brown, 2002). Defining the *ḍākinī* has always been a challenge for scholars due to its numerous connotations. Generally, there are two types of *ḍākinī*—the worldly and wisdom *ḍākinīs*.

The wisdom *ḍākinī* is the essence of Vajrayāna Buddhist practice and synonymous with the feminine principle, symbolising innate wisdom; i.e. the primordial wisdom mind. The wisdom *ḍākinī* may be a *yidam*, a meditational deity or she may be a protector; with special power and responsibility to protect the integrity of oral transmissions.

In the biographies of Vajrayāna Buddhist masters, she has played various roles, including that of external instructor of the secret Vajrayāna teachings, one who empowers the practitioner in meditation and protector of the tantric lineages to ensure that only those with the purest motivation are able to penetrate their essence. On a deeper level, she is none other than a personification of the tantric practitioners' own body and innate wisdom mind. Therefore, the *ḍākinī* carries the connotation of both external objectified deity (inner and outer-outer) as well as the inner

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as Vajrayogini and Mahamaya. Another famous female deity in Bhutan is Machik Labdron of which the Chod practicing lineage originates from.

experience of the tantric practitioner's body (outer) and mind (secret) (Simmer-Brown, 2002).

Gross (1996) argues that female deities or real life personalities are important as they serve to empower women, either consciously or subconsciously. Claiming that worship of male deities entrench "women in a state of psychological dependence on men and male authority while at the same time creating the impression that female power is not legitimate" (Gross, 1996, p. 225), female imagery brings hope to women that religion is not only about males and that females can progress just as well in their religion.

This paper is an exploration of feminine symbolism-female deities and real life historical and contemporary female personalities as practiced and supplicated in Bhutan and their corresponding impact on the lives and practice of the Bhutanese nuns in the two study areas featured in this research.

### **Methodology and Research Setting**

This study utilised ethnography to understand the impact of feminine symbolism on the nuns in two nunneries<sup>21</sup>; in Eastern and Western Bhutan respectively. The duration<sup>22</sup> of each nunnery studied was two months, totalling four months of continuous field research.

The nunnery in the west, Jachung Karmo Nunnery, a government-run nunnery is situated in Punakha district while the nunnery in the east is called Jashar Lhundrup Choling Nunnery or in short, Jashar Goenpa, located in

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<sup>21</sup> According to Wangmo (2013), there are twenty-one nunneries in Bhutan, with an estimated population of slightly over one thousand nuns.

<sup>22</sup> The fieldwork in Jachung Karmo Nunnery was from mid-August to mid October 2012 and Jashar Goenpa from late October to late December 2012.

Pema Gatshel district. It is a private-run nunnery by Gyaltsen Trulku. The rationale for site selection is that these two regions have the largest concentration of monastic institutions, including nunneries. Moreover, the western and eastern parts of Bhutan are distinctly different, with diverse languages and ethnic groups and religious tradition, thereby, providing a strong basis for comparison between the nunneries.

The main methodology employed in this ethnographic research is participant observation. The research employed an array of additional data collection methodologies such as interviews and focus group discussions of the nuns in the two nunneries to facilitate understanding of the worldview of the various actors of this study, namely, nuns, monks, laymen and laywomen.

### **Feminine Symbolism-Personifications of Wisdom**

The secret *dākinī*, or the ‘mother principle’ is referred to as the Great Mother (Tib: *yum chenmo*) or the *Dharmakāya* Great Mother (Skt: *prajñāpāramitā*; Tib: *choku yum chenmo*). These different names for the secret *dākinī* refer to the emptiness of self and phenomena and the wisdom that sees things as they really are. The Perfection of Wisdom (Skt: *prajñāpāramitā*; Tib: *she rab kyi pha rol tu chin pa*) sutras revolve around the Great Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*, a symbol of emptiness and the wisdom that realizes emptiness.

Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* is the mother of all buddhas and bodhisattvas for two reasons, firstly, because she is the ground of all realization, i.e. emptiness itself. Secondly, she is the wisdom<sup>23</sup> that realizes emptiness (Skt: *prajñā*, Tib: *sherab*) of self and phenomena. She is synonymous with the buddha nature (Skt: *tathāgatagarbha*), i.e. the womb of all

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<sup>23</sup> Also referred to as ‘penetrating insight’ by Simmer-Brown (2002)

buddhas precisely because it is the ground from which all buddhas arise. For the tantric practitioner, Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*, the secret *ḍākinī* is both the true nature of one's mind, i.e. the buddha nature itself and also the practitioners' own realization of the non-dual and essentially empty nature of one's primordial mind. Since phenomena are not created, therefore, Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* should not be taken literally as a being who gives birth to a progeny. Rather, she is the symbolic 'mother', i.e. without whom; there would be no buddhas and bodhisattvas because without wisdom realizing emptiness, it is not possible to achieve buddhahood. It is Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* who nurtures her offspring in developing penetrating insight into the true nature of self and phenomena and without this insight, buddhahood is not attained. Therefore, the origin of buddhas and bodhisattvas is the Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*. Due to its maternal connotation, in later perfection of wisdom sutras, the Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* is depicted as a female deity and venerated in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the Nyingma school, the source of all enlightenment is Samantabhadri (Tib: *kuntuzangmo*), the consort and counterpart of the primordial buddha of the Nyingma tradition, i.e. Samantabhadra (Tib: *kuntuzangpo*). Samantabhadri represents the "formless space of wisdom, the *dharmakāya* dimension of buddhahood in whom delusion and conceptual thought have never arisen" and is the primary symbol of the awareness-wisdom aspect of mind (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002, p. 97). Both Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* and Samantabhadri are none other than the most subtle aspect of the *ḍākinī*, i.e. secret *ḍākinī*. Thus, all practices in Vajrayāna Buddhism, including the various *ḍākinī* manifestations have only one aim, to uncover the secret *ḍākinī* which is one's ultimate nature of mind.

Thus, whether it is Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* or Samantabhadri, the reference to the limitless space, emptiness, natural state of mind, i.e. the ultimate truth in the feminine aspect is extremely liberating for women as at the relative level, women need role models to encourage them that enlightenment is possible for women. Contrary to the traditional norms which view *ḍākinī*s only as reincarnations of female masters or as human consorts to male gurus, which is also the case in Bhutan, the *ḍākinī* is not a gendered symbol and is not confined to the feminine. Though the *ḍākinī* expresses the feminine gender at the relative level, at the ultimate level, the *ḍākinī* is a symbol of egolessness, i.e. beyond gender. Simmer-Brown (2002, p. 105) quotes Nāgārjuna thus:

Because the expanse of reality is not "I,"  
 It is not a "woman," not a "man."  
 It is completely freed from all grasping.  
 How could it be designated as an "I"?  
 In all phenomena without attachment  
 Neither woman, nor man [are] conceived.  
 To tame those who are blinded by desire  
 A "woman" and a "man" are taught.

To view a feminine deity "as an external saviour figure is to misinterpret her and to diminish her significance for the Vajrayāna practitioner." (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 177). Once the practitioner fully penetrates the true nature of mind, one understands that the enlightened mind transcends gender and this is what makes it possible for all practitioners, male and female to attain enlightenment. Because of the non-dual nature of Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*, the secret *ḍākinī*, many women who followed the Vajrayāna path have realized their true nature of mind and attained enlightenment.

## Tāra

Tāra (Tib: *drolma*) is a popular patron female Buddha widely supplicated by men and women in the Himalayan region. The Praises to the Twenty-One Tāras (Tib: *dolchoe*) is the core congregational prayers that nuns in both Jachung Karmo and Jashar Goenpa practice. Several of the nuns interviewed in this study were also doing the Tāra *sādhana* as their personal practice.

Though practiced by both male and female practitioners, Tāra is especially invoked by female practitioners. Tāra is in essence, *Prajñāpāramitā*, the origin or "Mother" of all the buddhas. Tāra is also the activity of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas (Bokar Rinpoche, 1999, p. 95).

Legend<sup>24</sup> has it that Tāra was a very devout princess named Yeshe Dawa (Wisdom Moon) who lived during the dispensation of Drum Sound Buddha<sup>25</sup>, in a world called "Multicolored Light" some world cycles ago. She had immense faith in this Buddha and used to make extensive offerings to this Buddha and his entourage of monks. One day, she wanted to take the *bodhisattva* vow from this Buddha in order to become enlightened for the benefit of sentient beings. The monks rejoiced in her aspiration which would generate great merit for her and advised her to dedicate these merits to be reborn in a male body in the next life in order to be fully enlightened. Princess Yeshe Dawa, disturbed by their narrow-mindedness gave a fitting reply to the monks, in accordance with ultimate reality (Bokar Rinpoche, 1999, p. 20):

Here, no man, no woman, no I, no individual, no categories.

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<sup>24</sup> Retold to us by Tāranatha, a 16th century Tibetan *lama* and historian

<sup>25</sup> Some sources say that it was Buddha Amogasiddhi

"Man" or "woman" are only denominations created by confusion of perverse minds in this world.

She reasoned that since many attained enlightenment in a male body and few in the female form, she vowed to attain enlightenment in a female body (Bokar Rinpoche, 1999, p. 20):

"As for myself," she said, "as long as *saṃsāra* is not emptied, I will benefit beings appearing in a female body."

When Yeshe Dawa attained enlightenment some world cycles later, she became known as Tāra. Ārya Tāra symbolises enlightenment in the female form and is thus, especially supplicated by female Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners. The more popular forms of Tāra are Green, White Tāra or twenty-one Tāras<sup>26</sup>. Although forms vary, the essence of all feminine deities is the same; they are all *Prajñāpāramitā*, the Perfection of Wisdom (Bokar Rinpoche, 1999).

Tāra practice is one of the most common daily prayers recited in almost every monastery and nunnery in the Tibetan cultural area and a source of constant inspiration for Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners. Many hagiographies and biographies of great masters, both male and female in Bhutan and elsewhere in the Himalayas contain references to Tāra as a source of inspiration. The most notable example of how Tāra had an impact on female practitioners would be Machig Lhabdron. Ārya Tāra was very much involved in the life of Machig Lhabdron. Ārya Tāra personally came and

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<sup>26</sup> Other manifestations of Tāra are Bhrikuti (Tib: Thronyerchen), Kurukulla (Tib: Kurukulle), Sitatapattra (Tib: Dukkar), Ushnisha-vijaya (Tib: Namgyal-ma), Vishvamata (Tib: Natsok Yum, Kala-chakra's consort), Naraitma (Tib: Damema), etc.

bestowed the hundred empowerments<sup>27</sup> to Machig Lhabdron. Ārya Tāra made the following prophecy about Machig (Harding, 2003, p. 70):

“You will accomplish the welfare of beings in 108 haunted places and lakes. Your doctrine will shine like the sun, and you will reach the level of a nonreturner.” Then she faded away like a rainbow and vanished.

There are conflicting versions in the life story of Machig Lhabdron. She is portrayed both as an emanation of Tāra, Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* and the great *ḍākinī* Yeshe Tsogyal and also an ordinary woman. She is both “The girl from Lap country who excelled at her studies and became Lapdron, literally “the Light of Lap” (Tib: *lab kyi sgron ma*), and the female embodiment of the ultimate feminine principle, Machig, the “One Mother” (Tib: *ma gcig*)” (Harding, 2003, p. 22). When she was forty-one years old, Ārya Tāra, surrounded by her retinue of *ḍākinīs* appeared to her and showered her empowerments. Machig asked Ārya Tāra whether an ordinary woman like herself could be of benefit to sentient beings in any meaningful way. Ārya Tāra replied (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 101):

*Yoginī*, do not feel discouraged! In the course of previous lives you have studied and mastered the meaning of the scriptures of sutra and tantra ...You are a mind emanation of the Great Mother Yum Chenmo: we are inseparable. You are the wisdom *ḍākinī*, the sovereign of the great expanse [*vajradhatu*] and the source of liberation of all phenomena. Don't lose heart. Keep your determination.

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<sup>27</sup> From the Tantra of the Heart's Essence That Clears Away the Darkness of Ignorance



Machig protested, wondering how she could be an emanation of Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 101):

How could I possibly be an emanation of the Great Mother, inseparable from you? And in what way am I the source of the liberation of all phenomena? And where is the residence of the Great Mother?

Tāra explained and cleared her doubts (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 107):

*Yoginī*, although in your innermost heart there is a clear knowledge about the past, listen carefully and I'll explain it to you. The one known as the primordial Mother Yum Chenmo is the ultimate nature of all phenomena, emptiness, the essence of reality [*dharmata*] free from the two veils. She is the pure expanse of emptiness, the knowledge of the non-self. She is the matrix which gives birth to all the buddhas of the three times. However, so as to enable all sentient beings to accumulate merit, the Great Mother appears as an object of veneration through my aspirations and prayers for the sake of all beings.

Transcending literal interpretations of Ārya Tāra's message, it is clear that Ārya Tāra, when referring to Machig Lhabdron as Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* was using skillful means to facilitate Machig's understanding that her (Machig's) essential nature is that of emptiness, which corresponds to Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*. In the same way, all sentient beings are essentially Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* in nature but due to ignorance, are unable to penetrate into their own true nature of mind. However, some biographies of Machig Lhabdron assert that she was already enlightened, i.e. she was Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* herself who took birth to manifest enlightenment. Some scholars and practitioners find this assertion problematic and construe it as a grossly deliberate attempt to downplay the achieve-

ments of human women as androcentric biographers often have a problem in accepting that women can be enlightened masters in a female body. This type of interpretation that highly realized females must be a manifestation of *ḍākinī* of sorts disempowers women, implying that enlightenment is beyond the reach of ordinary women. Even the first enlightened Tibetan woman, Yeshe Tsogyal is portrayed in the same light.

Scholars like Herrmann-Pfandt (1990) and Campbell (1996) argue that the *ḍākinī* concept exploited women because *ḍākinīs* were almost always associated with living women who are consorts of male practitioners. They further argued that tantric texts do not depict women as “autonomous beings who could use the *ḍākinī* imagery in service of their own liberation” (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 18). These scholars opine that the *ḍākinī* is a patriarchal symbol that guards male privilege and that the human *ḍākinī*’s role is merely to facilitate the male journey to enlightenment. They assert that women are reduced to playing a marginal role in tantric practice as the *ḍākinī* symbol was completely appropriated by the patriarchal system of Vajrayāna Buddhism to suit the needs of male practitioners. Campbell (1996) contends that the *ḍākinī* symbol and practices are particularly damaging for women because it not only erodes women’s subjectivity, but diminishes women’s ability to be practitioners or teachers in their own right and is therefore counter-productive for women.

However we choose to interpret Ārya Tāra’s message to Machig Lhabdron, the most important is to understand that Ārya Tāra made Machig Lhabdron realize her inner potential which subsequently gave rise to her self-confidence in pursuing enlightenment in a female body, which Machig Lhabdron achieved.

Ārya Tāra also had a profound impact on Gelongma Palmo, the founder of the *Nyungne* practice that the Jachung

Karmo nuns are so adept at. After having a vision of Ārya Tāra when she was twenty-seven years old, Gelongma attained the first bodhisattva *bhumi*. Ārya Tāra also prophesied that Gelongma Palmo would perform activities of the buddhas of the three times, which gave Gelongma the confidence to continue her practice of Thousand-Armed Chenrezig until she attained enlightenment. Because of their great devotion to Ārya Tāra, both Machig Lhabdron and Gelongma Palmo could see Ārya Tāra and receive teachings, empowerments and prophecies directly from her which greatly encouraged them to persevere on the path to enlightenment and benefit countless sentient beings. These stories are available to the nuns largely through oral stories because at the time of this study, there is no library at Jachung Karmo and the library at Jashar Goenpa was more like a storeroom for prayer material.

### **Historical Female Masters-Symbols of Courage and Determination**

Religious masters in Vajrayāna Buddhism are often depicted as manifestations of the enlightened principle which are aimed at inspiring people. However, this has little value for ordinary practitioners who need to identify with real-life role models who were ordinary people who transcended ordinariness and became enlightened. According to Harding (2003, p. 22), “The desire to hear the human side of the story is perhaps even more pertinent for the modern reader, who is often doubtful and even scornful of the miraculous depictions typically found in Buddhist hagiography”. Whichever way these masters are interpreted, either as divine manifestations or ordinary women who later became extraordinary by pursuing the Vajrayāna path, what is important is that these great historical masters left an indelible impact on the lives of generations of practitioners, both male and female.

## Yeshe Tsogyal

Yeshe Tsogyal, the great Tibetan *yoginī* holds a special place for women in Vajrayāna Buddhism, especially those from the Nyingma tradition. Hence, the nuns at Jashar Goenpa are more familiar with her since Yeshe Tsogyal is a national icon because she was the enlightened ‘consort’ of Guru Padmasambhava, the patron saint of Bhutan. Yeshe Tsogyal is not only remembered as a human female master, but also as a tantric Buddhist meditational deity. Yeshe Tsogyal has numerous manifestations as a meditational deity, such as Sarasvati<sup>28</sup> (Tib: *Yangchenma*), White Tāra (Tib: *Drolma Karmo*), Vajrayoginī or Vajravārāhī, who are two aspects of the most important *ḍākinī* in the Tibetan tantric system (Simmer-Brown, 2002). Yeshe Tsogyal is deeply revered and supplicated in tantric rituals. An example of supplication in her ritual from the *Longchen Nyingthik* tradition (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 89):

In the center of that palace,  
Upon the pistil of a blooming lotus  
On a sun-seat is the chief of the *ḍākinīs*,  
[Who is] Samantabhadri in the vast expanse of  
*dharmakāya*,  
Vajravārāhī in the field of *sambhogakāya* and  
Yeshe Tsogyal in the form of *nirmāṇakāya*

Yeshe Tsogyal’s life story is a poignant example of a young woman struggling desperately against the social pressures of her time. Her father, who knew very well of his daughter’s spiritual inclinations and maturity insisted on her marriage. In her bid to escape marriage, she was

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<sup>28</sup> the great female bodhisattva of learning, culture, and music, the peaceful consort of Mañjuśrī. It is said that Yeshe Tsogyal was Sarasvati in her previous life.

subjected to severe brutality. She was brutally raped by her first suitor and fought off the second. When she fled from the latter, she was taken and placed in King Trisong Deutsen's harem who later offered her as a consort to Guru Padmasambhava. The verse below is Yeshe Tsogyal's account to Guru Padmasambhava of the trials and tribulations she had to face as a female who deeply aspired to pursue the spiritual path (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002):

I am a timid woman and of scant ability; of lowly condition, the butt of everyone. If I go for alms, I am set upon by dogs; if food and riches come my way, I am the prey of thieves; since I am beautiful, I am the quarry of every lecherous knave; if I am busy with much to do, the country folk accuse me; if I don't do what they think I should, the people criticize; if I put a foot wrong, everyone detests me. I have to worry about everything I do. That is what it is like to be a woman! How can a woman possibly gain accomplishment in Dharma? Just managing to survive is already hard enough.

Many women, even today, can deeply identify with the suffering that Yeshe Tsogyal endured. However, Yeshe Tsogyal's story is not one of resignation and despair. On the contrary, she proved that women in dire situations can turn their lives around and not only transcend their unfortunate circumstances but attain high spiritual realizations on the spiritual path. In a contrasting song of victory by Yeshe Tsogyal after attaining enlightenment, she replaced her bitter recriminations about the taunts she faced in the past with mild humour (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002):

Your "Lady," wild and fit for any deed,  
To whom so many things befell, is now no more!  
The wench who could not even keep her man  
Is now the queen of *Dharmakāya* Kuntuzangpo!  
That sluttish creature, brazen with conceit,  
Pretension takes her now away to the southwest!

That whining vixen, fit for any intrigue,  
 Has tricked her way to dissolution in the Dharmadhatu!  
 That dejected widow no Tibetan wanted  
 Inherits now the endless sovereignty of Buddhahood!

Due to her amazing attainments, she became guru to scores of disciples in the Himalayan region, both men and women, lay and monastic. Among her notable female disciples were Trashī Chidren, Kalasiddhi, Shelkar Dorje Tso, Lodro Kyi and the innumerable nuns of the monasteries that Tsogyal founded and supported (Simmer-Brown, 2002).

An example of the impact Yeshe Tsogyal had on her female disciples is from a verse by Trashī Chidren, from Mon<sup>29</sup>, who pleaded with Yeshe Tsogyal not to pass into *parinirvāna* (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002, p. 170):

Mother, Lady, full of grace and love,  
 Alone the mother of all beings in the triple world,  
 If you no longer guard your children,  
 Only those who know to feed themselves will manage  
 to survive.  
 How shall pink-mouthed, toothless babes not perish?  
 You, the great, the golden ornament of heaven,  
 If you no longer drive away the gloom of beings' minds,  
 Only those who have the wisdom eye will find their  
 way,  
 While those with normal sight will fall into the depths.

One thousand three hundred years later, the teachings of Yeshe Tsogyal continue to have positive impact on practitioners in Bhutan as her stories are retold to younger generations in the form of oral stories. However, the accuracy of the oral stories compared with the actual biography is severely compromised and tainted with more androcentric biasness. Moreover, many of these oral stories

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<sup>29</sup> The region now known as Bhutan

are no longer being transmitted to the younger generation, as is clearly the case from the nuns interviewed in this study who only know bits and pieces of Yeshe Tsogyal's life story.

### **Machig Lhabdron**

Machig Lhabron, the great female adept who founded the Chöd practice is also popular among women practitioners in the two study areas and throughout Bhutan. Machig Lhabdron is best remembered for founding the lineage of Chöd practice in Tibet.<sup>30</sup> Chöd is a powerful practice which involves "cutting through the ego." This practice remains popular throughout Tibet, Mongolia and the Indian Himalayas up to the present day (Karma Drubgyu Thargay Ling, 2012).

Machig Lhabdron was inspired primarily by the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the Great Mother Perfection of Wisdom, the secret *ḍākinī*. She was different than other great female adepts of Tibet because "she was not a lama's consort, a nun, or a hermit, but a mother who nurtured the spiritual life of her children, and a self-styled beggar woman" (Harding, 2003, p. 22). She was also a master of *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*. She is the only Tibetan to have directly founded a transmission lineage which would be transmitted back to India, a cause for great national pride in Tibet (Harding, 2003).

Like Yeshe Tsogyal, apart from her human dimension, Machig Lhabdron is revered as tantric Buddhist meditational deity and is synonymous with Mother *Prajñāpāramitā*. According to Harding (2003, p. 33), "In the various rites of Chöd in every tradition into which it was assimilated, Machig is envisioned, or revisioned, surrounded by the

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<sup>30</sup> One of the eight transmission lineages of Tibet.

Great Mother, Vajrayoginī, and a retinue of *ḍākinīs* and buddhas:

Her body is white as a conch shell,  
 With one face and two hands,  
 Her right hand plays a golden drum in the sky.  
 The left supports a silver bell at her hip.  
 Her three eyes gaze into space.  
 Her hair is bound atop her head,  
 The rest flowing free down her back,  
 Her naked body adorned with bones and jewels,  
 With right leg flexed and the left straight-she dances."

Machig Lhabdron, like Yeshe Tsogyal was indeed a woman who rose above social norms that constrict women's spiritual progress and relegate them to a lower status in society. Machig transcended all these man-made social limitations and manifested her realization of Mother *Prajñāpāramitā* in a manner which not only challenged women's traditional norms, but also established women in new roles as teachers and lineage founders of their own right.

Machig's birth story parallels that of Ārya Tāra who purposely took birth in a female form in order to be enlightened. Indeed, Machig, in her former life was an Indian master named Arthasiddha (Tib: *Dondrup Zangpo*) who took birth in a female body considered inferior by both Indians and Tibetans. Moreover, taking birth in Tibet, known as the land of red-faced demons was an added challenge.

Like many female masters, Machig Lhabdron is thought to be a divine manifestation, a *ḍākinī* who 'manifested' enlightenment in order to tame sentient beings. As discussed earlier, if a woman were to display remarkable intellect and great realizations, she was almost always portrayed as a *ḍākinī*, as it would seem beyond the reach of



an ordinary woman, one of 'low-birth'<sup>31</sup> to be spiritually accomplished. An example is cited as follows (Harding, 2003, p. 78):

Machik departed early in the morning and by midday had arrived at Sheldrong. A teacher there named Sherab Bum, a great scholar of the canon, was in the process of explicating the pāramitās to about three hundred monastics when Machik arrived. The geshees all said, "Jomo, aren't you the famous Lapdron, Dawa Gyaltsen's daughter with three eyes? Are you the one?" "I am," she replied. "Well, then, you are well known for being a *ḍākinī* and a master of the pāramitās. Let's have a dharma debate!" "Very well," said Machik, and debated with the seven most famous geshees. But the geshees found no opportunity to defeat her, and all of the monks said that it must indeed be true that she was an actual wisdom *ḍākinī*, an emanation of the Great Mother.

These types of hagiographies are usually written posthumously by male masters with the aim of elevating her status to that of a goddess but is counter-productive to the ordinary woman who yearns to identify with an ordinary human. Women who revere Machig Lhabdron appreciate both her human and divine attributes and draw inspiration from her and have tremendously benefited from her Chöd practice.

In her biography, when Machig was fifty-six years old, she called for a large gathering for a *gaṇacakra* feast. This feast was attended by "113 women and nuns, including the four daughters named Gyaltsen Ne, Sonam Gyaltsen, Palden Gyen, and Bumtso Rinchen Gyen. In addition, there were 150 monks, principally Shamar, and 150 laymen." (Harding, 2003, p. 103). This demonstrates that one third of

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<sup>31</sup> Referring to the Tibetan term '*kye men*' which means 'woman'.

her disciples were women and that even monks and laymen took teachings from her.

In another section of her biography, it is mentioned that she had a large number of disciples from various walks of life and from various part in Tibet and Bhutan and her fame spread even to India. Among these disciples were women, including nuns, thus affirming that Machig did indeed have impact on women practitioners (Harding, 2003,, p. 92):

Machig had a vast number of disciples. They came from Amdo, Central Tibet, and Kham: everyone from important lamas with parasols, to geshe and monks, to the popular kings, ministers, chiefs, queens, and even Mongols, to nuns and lay men and women, even down to lepers and beggars. [Her place] became the meeting ground of all manner of fortune and the resting place of all kinds of disaster. Machig was always surrounded by about five thousand people of good or ill fortune. Many people even came from Nepal to meet her. The reputation of her merit and teachings became known even in India.

The more contemporary A-yu Khandro was inspired by the teachings of Machig Lhabdron and lived the life of a Chödpa for many years (Simmer-Brown, 2002). A-yu Khandro passed away in 1953 at a ripe-old age of one hundred and fourteen years in her hermitage in East Tibet and attained the Rainbow Body. After her death, it is said she remained in meditation for two weeks and by the end of the two weeks her body had shrunk to a fraction of its original size, a sign of her accomplishment of Dzogchen practice. Therefore, the life stories of great female masters continue to inspire generations of female practitioners well into the twentieth-century, bringing out the best in them and in the case of A-yu Khandro, attainment of realizations as promised by Machig Lhabdron for all those who practice the path shown by her. However, as is the case with the nuns in

both nunneries studied, they have no access to Machig Lhabdron's biography due to the absence of a decent library and their poor literacy in Tibetan, Dzongkha and English hinders their ability to access these materials. Whatever little that the nuns know is from oral stories, often told by *lamas* in a fragmentary manner.

### **Bhikṣuṇī Lakṣmī (Gelongma Palmo)**

Bhikṣuṇī Lakṣmī (Tib. *Gelongma Palmo*) is by far one of the most important and highly esteemed female masters in the Tibetan cultural area. The *Nyungne* practice originated from Bhikṣuṇī Lakṣmī, a princess from Uddiyana<sup>32</sup>, who is believed to have lived during the tenth or eleventh century. She was very beautiful but refused to marry and instead became a *bhikṣuṇī*, i.e. a fully-ordained Buddhist nun. Due to bad residual karma she was afflicted with leprosy caused by *nāga* spirits. Her body's condition was so foul with blood and pus all over that she was expelled from the kingdom; forced to live alone in a wooden hut in the forest. Her hands also fell off and she was reduced to eating like an animal. Plagued with enormous suffering, she practiced *Nyungne*-fasting while supplicating Avalokiteśvara. Practicing with fervent faith and devotion day and night, her leprosy was completely cured. She merged with Avalokiteśvara, attaining the tenth level bodhisattva realization (Wangchen, 2009).

Gelongma Palmo is an icon of liberation from suffering for women and is especially revered by nuns. Gelongma Palmo is the sole woman depicted in hagiographies

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<sup>32</sup> Present day-Swat Valley, Pakistan, the same region as the founding father of Buddhism in Tibet and Bhutan, Guru Padmasambhava. Some sources such as Wanghen (2009) say that she was an Afghani princess during the great Buddhist Afghanistan.

dedicated to the transmission lineages of the *Nyungne* fasting practices. Gutschow (2004, p. 64) asserts that “in terms of the textual tradition, at least, it was men who claimed authority of transmission.”

The *Nyungne* fasting practice associated with the Thousand-Armed Chenrezig were important women’s practices in seventeenth century Tibet. Gutschow (2004, p. 65) cites a survey of Gandenpa monasteries compiled at the end of the seventeenth century by Sangye Gyatso mentions that *Nyungne* was regularly practiced in several nunneries. Gutshow (2004, p. 107) cites further examples of *Nyungne* practice in various other places:

This fasting ritual appears to have been as important in late-seventeenth century Dolpo [referring to the nun Orgyan Chokyi] as it is today throughout the Himalaya. From the Everest region of Nepal, where Sherpas routinely engage in fasting rites, to the high mountains of Ladakh and Zaskar in northern India, where fasting is an important feature of nuns’ ritual practice, the tradition of fasting tracing back to Gelongma Palmo is ubiquitous.

Despite the great popularity of Gelongma Palmo’s *Nyungne* ritual, there is almost no biographical information on its founder, Gelongma Palmo in religious texts (Gutschow, 2004). Nevertheless, the story of Gelongma Palmo has been “retold throughout the Tibetan regions of the Nepal Himalayas by such women manipas, or storytellers, as Jetsün Lochen Rinpoche” (Schaeffer, 2004, p. 62). Gelongma Palmo’s story of being cured of leprosy through the *Nyungne* practice continues to be a selling point in attracting new practitioners. Gelongma Palmo’s legacy, the great purification power of the *Nyungne* fasting practice continues to be a favourite practice amongst Himalayan Buddhist nuns.

Unlike other great female masters who attained enlightenment through the consort practice, Gelongma attained buddhahood on her own, while keeping her monastic vows intact. This is an immense inspiration to Buddhist nuns on the path to enlightenment who practice vows of celibacy and need role models who have actualized enlightenment through without transgressing their precepts. Sahle Aui of Nyanang, Tibet, Milarepa's student also demonstrated that she could become enlightened without needing a consort (Stevens, 1990). Moreover, Gelongma Palmo was a fully-ordained nun, a privilege which Himalayan Buddhist nuns do not have as full-ordination is still not available to Vajrayānan Buddhist nuns.

Gelongma Palmo also demonstrated the hardships that women face on the spiritual path. Like Princess Mandarava, she refused to be forced into marriage. She renounced her royal position and left her family to be ordained as a Buddhist nun. Once, Gelongma, whose knowledge in Buddhism and skill in debate was unparalleled, defeated three Buddhist experts, "a scholar (Tib: *dge bshes*), a Tantricist (Tib: *sngags pa*), and a meditator (Tib: *sgom pa*)."  
(Gutschow, 2004, p. 96). Traditional narratives cited by Gutschow (2004, p. 97) describe:

Most of the monks who were present there were astonished and prostrated in recognition of Gelongma Palmo's accomplishments, those that did not, went straight to hell: Chattering fools ... who disparage women out of hostility, Will by that evil action remain constantly tortured. For three eons in the fathomless Raudra hell, Wailing as their bodies burn in many fires.

Gelongma Palmo's story above is a traditional reminder to tantric practitioners to not disparage women. The monks judged Gelongma's worth not by her intellect, but based on her female body deemed "impure and vulnerable".

Gelongma eventually silenced all critics at a Buddhist festival who doubted her enlightened status just because she was female. This story is an inspiration to generations of Himalayan Buddhist women that the female body is no barrier to enlightenment (Gutschow, 2004, p. 97).

In the context of the Bhutanese nuns, it was observed during our fieldwork that powerful female imagery like Gelongma Palmo and Tāra have had a profound psychological impact on these nuns as these feminine figures inspire nuns to practice dharma sincerely against tremendous hardships. From humble beginnings and lacking self-confidence, the nuns at Jachung Karmo have become well-known as authentic practitioners of *Nyungne* in Western Bhutan. These nuns have become relevant to the lives of the people whom they are closely connected with. The *Nyungne* practice based on an inspiring female personality has empowered these nuns and given them a distinct identity and importance in Punakha.

### **Jachung Karmo Nunnery: The White Mythical Eagle**

Jachung Karmo also known as Thuje Drak<sup>33</sup> was founded by a monk called Sewla Choje Lama Ngawang Pekar. He was the brother of the first Jamgon Trulku Ngawang Gyaltsen<sup>34</sup> who founded the Dorjiden monastery of Sewla in Punakha. Both brothers were the main students of His Holiness the 2nd Je Khenpo<sup>35</sup> Sonam Yozer (1623-1698). The nunnery has been in existence for almost 300 years. Lama Ngawang Pekar appointed his sister Rinchen Zangmo, a nun, as the first Lopenma or the abbess of the nunnery. During her time, the nunnery flourished and is believed to

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<sup>33</sup> The cliff of 1000 Armed Avalokiteśvara

<sup>34</sup> Grandnephew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Desi Tenzin Drukgyal (Phuntsho, 2013)

<sup>35</sup> Supreme Head of Religion in Bhutan

have had over a hundred nuns. Their main practice was the *Nyungne* fasting practice. Amazingly, these medieval nuns had the opportunity to engage in very advanced spiritual practices such as *Mahāmudrā*, the *Six Yogas of Naropa* (Tib: *Naro Choedrug*), *Choepa ro-nyom*, *Drebu Tendrel Rabdun*, etc. which is unfortunately not available to present-day nuns at the nunnery. Nun Rinchen Zangmo was a highly realized practitioner and is said to have achieved a special *siddhi*<sup>36</sup> which enabled her to fly. During her last breath, she was believed to have used her spiritual powers and flew to Sha Phuntsho Pelri in Wangdi Phodrang district, never to be seen again, an indication of realization of the spiritual path. Such was the spiritual ability of past women practitioners at Jachung Karmo.

In 1951, when Anim Lopen Paldon was 25 years old, she was appointed as Lopenma of the nunnery by Tsham Naku commonly known as *Nyungne* Lama and his friend Lopen Tshultrim Rinchen after consulting the 63rd Je Khenpo, Thinley Lhendrup of Norbu Gang Village in Punakha. Since then, Anim Lopen Paldon headed the nunnery and lived there till the late 1960s. In between, Lopenma Paldon went to Hongtso Tashigang in Thimphu to practice under Lama Sonam Zangpo and during that period she passed the responsibility of the nunnery to another nun<sup>37</sup> who is the sister of Ex-Drapai Lopen Dolo from Talo. Unfortunately, the nunnery did not survive long under her. After that, there was no one to take care of the nunnery for about sixteen years. Then, in 1986, His Majesty the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, re-established the nunnery and he sent

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<sup>36</sup> Skt: *siddhi*, refers to accomplishment, performance, fulfilment, complete attainment (of any object), success or attainment of supernatural powers

<sup>37</sup> This nun is still alive, living in Talo.

the official procession with *Sedra*<sup>38</sup> of Anim Lopen Paldon and 30 young nuns from Punakha to the nunnery.

### Jashar Goenpa-the Rising Rainbow

Jashar Lhundrup Choling Nunnery is situated in a village called Jashar Woong in Zobel *gewog*, Pema Gatshel district. This nunnery is associated with Anim Trulku, a female incarnate master who was a highly realized *yoginī* in her past life. This nunnery was founded by the previous incarnation of Anim Trulku-Anim Woesel Chöden in the late 1950s and taken over by Gyaltsen Trulku Rinpoche upon request by the local community and students of the former due to its dilapidated state (after the demise of its female founder).

The late Anim Woesel Chöden was from Goenpa Singma village, about three kilometres from the nunnery. She later moved above Yongla Goenpa on a hilltop to live in solitary retreat, away from people who would come and disturb her practice. However, at Yongla Goenpa, there were only monks and *gomchen*. Since she could not live with them as per the *Vinaya* rules, she lived above the monastery on her own in a small hut. The protector deity of Yongla Goenpa, Tseringma did not allow Anim Woesel Chöden to live peacefully and created many obstacles for her practice-disturbing her either in dreams or during meditation. So, she decided to move to a new place. One morning, as she was looking out of her window, she saw a rainbow at a particular spot below. This phenomenon recurred for a few consecutive days at the same spot each time she looked down. She then named the place Jashar Woong meaning the 'Ground of the Rising Rainbow'. Later, in 1958, Anim

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<sup>38</sup> Official procession accompanied with musical instruments usually done for kings and royal families only.



Woesel Chöden built a temple at this spot which she named Jashar Goenpa<sup>39</sup> or the 'Temple of the Rising Rainbow'. She lived in this temple with about thirty disciples, comprising nuns, monks, laymen and laywomen. She later renamed the temple as Jashar Lhundrub Choling.

Anim Woesel Chöden was a student of the famous master Togden Shakya Shri, an incarnation of Drubchen Saraha<sup>40</sup>. He had many disciples and out of them, nine were considered very learned. The most learned of these nine disciples was *Anim* Woesel Chöden, a woman. She dedicated her life to meditation and remained in retreat until her death in 1982. The nuns in this nunnery practice Nyingma tradition although they have recently introduced the Drukpa Kagyu tradition, a blend of both in what is termed as 'Ka-Nying'. The nuns here emphasize more on the intensive retreats of three, six and nine years.

### **Invisible Female Rinpoches: "Yes ... they truly exist"**

One of the pertinent observations from this study is that there is a profound lack of recognition of female masters in the Bhutanese religious landscape. In the Bhutanese context, hagiographies or even simple biographies of women are rare. Compared with the illustrious male personalities, not a single female master has been mentioned in the religious history of Bhutan (Phuntsho, 2013). Simmer-Brown, (2002, p. 222) put forth her thesis on why great female adepts have been omitted from history:

Generally it may be observed that Tibet has many highly accomplished *yoginīs* in its history, some of whom have had a few students. But few of them have achieved the

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<sup>39</sup> also known as Jashar Woong Drubdey

<sup>40</sup> One of the Mahasiddhas considered as one of the founders of Vajrayāna Buddhism, particularly the Mahamudra tradition.

rank of tantric gurus of renown. This accounts for the dearth of *yoginī* lineage stories in the Tibetan tradition, for it is the students of great teachers who compile their gurus' biographies. But when great *yoginīs* have been discouraged from taking students or giving empowerments, their stories become mere rumors. Scholars such as Hanna Havnevik have noted it is difficult to begin collecting the stories of great *yoginīs* because very few are remembered by Tibetan monastic or lay people, and few Western scholars have given this task priority.

To the best of our knowledge, there are hardly any biographies or hagiographies (Tib: *rnam-thar*) of highly realized Bhutanese female personalities, giving the skewed impression that Bhutanese women are devoid of any spiritual maturity and are incapable of attaining high realizations on the Vajrayāna Buddhist path. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Yet another facet of patriarchy in the Vajrayāna tradition, be it in Bhutan or Tibet is the *trulku* system. Simmer-Brown (2002, p. 141) asserts that the reason why the *trulku* tradition is patriarchal is because “women *trulkus* and lineage holders are rare”. She added that Vajrayāna is in actual fact less patriarchal than mainstream Mahāyāna which contains certain teachings that emphasise the necessity of a male body as the only valid vessel for attaining enlightenment. The Vajrayāna teachings acknowledge that “*trulkus* would sometimes choose the female body for rebirth and continue their compassionate activity as women” (Simmer-Brown, 2002, p. 141).

As such, female realized masters, including *trulkus*, do exist in Bhutan. During our fieldwork, we chanced upon at least two highly realized female masters<sup>41</sup>. One is Anim

Lopenma Paldon, the late abbess of the Jachung Karmo Nunnery and the other, Anim Trulku, the reincarnation of the founder of Jashar Goenpa. The life stories of Anim Lopenma Paldon and Anim Woesel Chöden are still not available in any religious literature in Bhutan<sup>42</sup>.

### Lopenma Paldon-Longest Serving Abbess

Jamyang Chöden (1926-1999)<sup>43</sup> was the longest serving abbess of the Jachung Karmo nunnery from 1951-1976 and then again from 1986-1999. The only daughter to an aristocratic family, her mother was the Ashi (Queen) Deki of Kurtoe in Lhuntse, Eastern Bhutan and her father, an attendant to His Majesty the King Jigme Wangchuk, the second monarch of Bhutan. He was from Paro, Western Bhutan. She did not attend formal schooling as girls of her era still had no access to secular or monastic education. Nonetheless, she was extremely fortunate to have received private tutorship at home to study all the fundamental scriptures and grammar in Tibetan-Dzongkha.

It is not known when and where Anim Paldon became a nun. The earliest known religious milestone in her life is at age thirteen when she did her preliminary practice retreat. By her mid-twenties, she had completed the three-year or *losum chusum* retreat not once, but twice, under the guidance of Lopen Tsam Metok Pelzang at Nalanda, near Talo, Punakha. According to Wangmo (2013), towards the end of her six-year retreat, the *torma* (ritual cake) offered at Anim

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<sup>41</sup> Note: There are several more female masters in Bhutan, e.g. Dorje Phagmo etc.

<sup>42</sup> With the exception of a brief publication by Anim Tsultrim Wangmo (2013) titled, *Nunneries of Bhutan (A Brief Guide)*.

<sup>43</sup> Better known as Anim Lopenma Paldon or simply, Anim Lopen.

Lopen's altar in her retreat house turned new. This is generally a sign of a practitioner's attainment of high realizations.

Upon completion of her six years retreat, she took instructions on the Six Yogas of Naropa (Tib: *naro choedrug*) under her master Lama Sonam Zangpo in Hongtso Tashigang, Thimphu district and also under her master Drupthob Tsam Kelzang. Lama Sonam Zangpo, commonly known as Meme Lama, was requested to confer the *naro choedrug* to a group of monks and nuns. There were eight nuns in the same batch as Anim Lopenma. According to Lopen Dawa Gyaltsen<sup>44</sup>, Anim Lopenma was by far, the most outstanding student in the practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa, far surpassing the rest of her peers, even the monks. He narrated a real incident which to him happened during their practice decades ago:

One day, one of the monks requested for further instructions from their master, Lama Sonam Zangpo. The *lama* told us monks to perfect our practice of Naro Choedrug first; even if we are incapable of perfecting the practice, to at least be at par with the person whose tooth relic *lama* held in his hand. When the monks asked whose tooth relic it was, the master said it is a tooth relic of Anim Lopenma Paldon as she was an accomplished master of the Six Yogas of Naropa. This proves that she had achieved high realizations way before she was reappointed Abbess of Jachung Karmo Nunnery in 1986.

Due to her extensive learning, she was appointed the abbess or Lopenma of Jachung Karmo Nunnery at the young age of twenty-five. There, she started the *Nyungne* fasting practice of Gelongma Palmo and she trained her

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<sup>44</sup> An ex-Lopen Tse of the Zhung Dratshang, who was in the same batch as Anim Lopenma

nuns to concentrate only on the *Nyungne*. Anim Lopenma completed 2000 sets of *Nyungne* in her entire lifetime.

One day, upon completion of one thousand sets of *Nyungne* practice, she was invited to the Nalanda Monastery<sup>45</sup> to lead a *Nyungne* prayer. When presiding over the prayers, many people witnessed the holy water vase on the shrine overflowing. The altar attendant monk emptied the vase to half and put it back on the shrine but the process continued several times. Wondering why this incidence occurred, the monks and laypeople approached the Head Lama of the monastery. The Lama responded that it signifies her remarkable achievement from the *Nyungne* practice, manifested in the form of a miracle for the benefit of the people.

Anim Lopenma was also skilled at writing poetry (Wangmo, 2013). She was so adept at it that she used to compose poems seeking answers to her lingering doubts about her spiritual practice from great masters of her time such as the previous Dilgo Khentse Rinpoche who would reciprocate through poems and idioms. Some of the learned government monks heard about her uniqueness in poetry and tested her with exchange of letters but had their doubts cast aside by her poetic prowess. This clearly indicates that Anim Lopenma was a highly realized woman. For example, throughout the history of Vajrayāna Buddhism, great masters are known to be adepts in poetry as their high spiritual realizations have given them the ability of spontaneous expression. This was seen in female enlightened masters such as Gelongma Palmo, Yeshe Tsogyal and Machig Lhabdron who composed their texts in poetic form (Changchub & Nyingpo, 2002; Harding, 2003; Wangchen, 2009).

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<sup>45</sup> On the way to Talo, Punakha, Bhutan.

Despite the fact that Anim Lopenma lived in the twentieth century, precious little is known of her life. No one took the initiative to pen down her life history when she was alive, although many other life stories of male religious personalities of her era and before are well-recorded. She was not an obscure personality. In fact, she was well-known in Western Bhutan to the general public, the monastic body and even the royal family. The only biographical information available of her is piecemeal, compiled by her main disciples, particularly Lopen Ugyen Dema. Most of her life history is lost due to androcentric tendencies in recording the history of religious personalities in Bhutan which have consistently neglected female masters over the centuries. A concise life story of Anim Lopen was published in 2013 by Bhikṣuṇī Tsultrim Wangmo whilst a more detailed one will be available in our upcoming publication.

### **Anim Woesel Chöden -Founder of Jashar Goenpa**

The biography of *Anim Woesel Chöden* is a first-hand account from her living disciples. It is a story of inspiration for thousands of Bhutanese women who have been culturally conditioned to view *trulkus* as male. Here, in the remote corner of Bhutan is her highly accomplished reincarnation, Anim Trulku Chözung Lhamo - awaiting recognition as a 'precious one' or Rinpoche. Her ability to recollect her past lives surpasses that of many modern-day male *trulkus*.

Anim Woesel Chöden (1921-1982) was born in Zobel Gewog, Pema Gatshel. Anim Woesel Chöden was of mixed parentage, her mother a Bhutanese and father, from Eastern Tibet-Khampa Drukpa. She was a highly realized dharma practitioner and founder of Jashar Goenpa. She founded the

temple in 1958 and named the temple Jashar Woong<sup>46</sup>. Anim Woesel Chöden lived almost her entire life in a *tse tsam* (lifelong retreat) with a retinue of disciples; comprising monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

She learnt several meditation techniques from many great masters of her time; the most significant of them was Togden Shakya Shri, the reincarnation of Drubchen Saraha, who is also Trulku Gyaltsen's previous incarnation. Togden Shakya Shri had many disciples and among his numerous students, nine were considered to be very learned. According to a Jashar nun Pema Yangden, when Anim Woesel Chöden initially practiced the Six Yogas of Naropa, she faced much hostility from her male batchmates saying that "*you are a woman and a Tibetan and you cannot do as we can*". Anim Woesel Chöden turned out to be among the nine best students of Togden Shakya Shri in all practices and she especially excelled in the Six Yogas of Naropa, silencing all her critics.

Anim Woesel Chöden was a renowned *tshampa*, i.e. a person who lived almost her whole life in retreat. After she established Jashar Anim Goenpa, she went into a lifelong retreat. For this reason she was known as Anim *tse tshampa*<sup>47</sup>. She was a much sought-after teacher that even when she was in lifelong retreat where face-to-face communication with people is prohibited, she still gave religious instructions to her disciples through a small opening of her retreat hut window. Her disciples could only hear her voice, but could never see her face.

Anim Woesel Chöden is said to have possessed supernormal powers. Many of her students claim that they have seen her in different forms like birds, fruits, etc. Once,

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<sup>46</sup> meaning the Ground of Rising Rainbow

<sup>47</sup> Nun of lifelong retreat

she went out in the form of a bird to observe her students going for alms round. Some of her disciples even claimed that light rays used to emit from her body while meditating in complete darkness.

When Anim Woesel Chöden passed away, a shower of snowflakes fell out of the sky-interpreted by the local people as a very auspicious sign. The people of the village and her followers cremated her body and did not wait for Gyaltshe Trulku Rinpoche to arrive. When Anim Woesel Chöden was passing away she told her followers that she was not coming back. Later Rinpoche and all her students requested her to come back for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is believed that she was reborn as a son to one of her disciples, an ex-nun, but was short-lived, passing away within a week of his birth.

The search for Anim Woesel Chöden's reincarnation was initiated by her nun attendant after hearing that a two-year old girl child from Samdrup Jongkhar was able to recollect her past birth as the realized female master. The child immediately recognized the nun, addressed her by her name, sat on the nun's lap, then told the nun that she too had a set of monastic robes at Jashar and a rosary, teasing the nun, saying, "Your robes are old, mine are new. Look, I have a *mala* too!" The little girl then asked the nun to sit on the floor and the child sat on a higher platform and began to wave a banana leaf in imitation of a *lama* bestowing long-life initiation (using the five-coloured *tsedar*). Later, the child insisted on following the nun, saying, "I want to go with you to Jashar (referring to her previous incarnation's nunnery)" and cried when the nun left the house. A year later, when she was slightly more than three-years old, she insisted that her mother take her to her previous incarnation's retreat hut and nunnery where she led the search party to her former hut and recognised many of her past ritual implements. This little girl child, born in 1983 is none other than Anim Trulku



Chözung Lhamo, recognized as the reincarnation of Anim Woese! Chöden at the age of five by Gyalts!hen Trulku Rinpoche. Her mother, Dorji Dema is from Ngang-ma-lam near Goenpa Singma while her father is from Samdrup Jongkhar.

As has been the tradition in Vajrayāna Buddhism for centuries, disciples of great masters go in search of their teachers' reincarnation. Yet, it is extremely rare that disciples of female masters would search for their incarnation and even rarer for a female to be recognised as a reincarnated master or *trulku*. We cite the case of the reincarnation of the Great Khandro of Tsurphu in Tibet and events leading to the recognition and subsequent enthronement of her reincarnation, Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche. Khandro Rinpoche is a famous contemporary female *trulku* but there was no will or initiative to enthrone her as a Rinpoche, because she is female. This prompted her predecessor's disciples to champion for her enthronement, as Simmer-Brown (2002, p. 185) recounts in her following narrative:

Mindroling Rinpoche was a close friend of the Karmapa and thought nothing of the special visit he paid to his newborn daughter, conferring on her the name Karma Ugyen Tsomo. But after consulting with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, the Karmapa confirmed with her father that the child was an enlightened emanation of the *yoginī* [Khandro Ugyen Tsomo of Tsurphu]. When the girl was ten months old, an official announcement of the *yoginī*'s rebirth was quietly made public, and several monks from Rumtek came to pay their respects. The Karmapa himself came yearly to give her empowerments and teachings. Eventually, as the baby grew into girlhood, the nuns who were Karma Ugyen Tsomo's former students went to His Holiness to ask about her. We have heard she has been found, they asserted. Yes, she had. Had she been recognized? Yes, and her recognition

had been confirmed by other great and realized teachers. So, insisted the nuns, enthrone her! This was an unusual request. A number of lineages of realized women in Tibet had emanated again and again in successive lifetimes of practice and teaching. But they were usually not officially recognized and empowered as *trulkus*, as male emanations were; instead, they were considered incarnate *ḍākinīs*. These women were called *Jetsünma*, an honorific title signifying great realization and exemplary teaching. They were raised in a "brocaded life" of honor, dedicated meditation, and training in Buddhist traditions, but they were not given a monastic education or expected to carry out official duties as their male counterparts were. The nuns' insistence that she be enthroned and empowered as a rinpoche was unexpected. But eventually His Holiness could not refuse them. The young girl was first enthroned as Khandro Rinpoche in 1976 in Kalimpong when she was nine years old.

In the case of Anim Lopenma Paldon of Jachung Karmo, no such effort has been made by her disciples to locate her reincarnation though she too was a highly realized practitioner. Two decades after her demise, there is still no news of any reincarnation of Anim Lopenma, which could put a permanent full-stop to Anim Lopenma's spiritual legacy.

### **Bhutanese Nuns, Cultural Conditioning and Feminine Symbolism**

Gross (1996) reveals that the impact of female deity/personality symbolism has almost never been elicited in any systematic study. In fact, female deities play an important role in Bhutan, not only for women, but also men (Crins, 2008).

This study found that the Bhutanese nuns from both nunneries opine that a female body is disadvantageous.

According to a teenaged nun, Namgay Wangmo<sup>48</sup>, “I do not feel good to be in a female body because we cannot do many things like monks and even if we try to do things, we face lots of problems.” In fact, all the nuns interviewed in both nunneries wished to be reborn as male in their next lives. Sangay Lhamo, 25, asserts thus, “I wish to be reborn as a male and that too as a monk because if we are born female, we will suffer a lot. In addition, women cannot stand on their own without the support of men.”

Cultural conditioning still heavily influences perceptions on women’s status in Bhutan. For example, Pema Drolkar and several other nuns still subscribe to the traditional Bhutanese idea that women are of lower status than men: “I don’t think nuns should hold equal position as monks because monks are nine times greater and higher than women. Plus women have to take 500 times rebirth to be born as a man”. Women still feel trapped in a female body and do not see its intrinsic worth.

Although most nuns expressed unhappiness to be in a female form, they deeply understand that Buddhahood transcends gender. The nuns interviewed in this study unanimously agreed that women can achieve enlightenment in their female form, drawing their inspiration from feminine symbolism. For example, Thinley Choden, 16, spontaneously remarked, “If there is no female Buddha then there will be a big difference because we will not know of women’s Buddhahood”. Kunzang Dekyi agrees, “If there were no female Buddha or images, I will think that only men can become enlightened and not women.” She further added that “Female images like Tāra encourage and show

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<sup>48</sup> A pseudonym, not her real name (the same with other respondents in this study).

by example that we females also can achieve Buddhahood [as men are able to]." A Lopenma at Jachung Karmo Nunnery explained, "If there is no female Buddha we might not practice dharma thinking that it is only for men to practice and gain enlightenment." Namgay Wangmo also shared the same sentiments, "If there is no female Buddha then it will be difficult for us to practice thinking that only men get realizations." These nuns also find female deities much easier to visualise as they identify more with these deities, as shared by Phurpa Zangmo, 16, "Female images are helpful because when we see and recite their names in the prayers it is easy to visualize."

The presence of real-life examples of accomplished female masters is another very important source of inspiration to the nuns. According to Namgay Wangmo "As long as we practice well and sincerely, women can get enlightened. For example, the sister of Lama Ngawang Pekar, founder of this nunnery called Rinchen Zangmo became realized and attained a rainbow body and disappeared." Another nun explained that Khandro Sonam Peldren<sup>49</sup> received teachings from Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo<sup>50</sup> and she attained high realisations and developed special *siddhis* like flying at the last stage of her life." Khandro Sonam Peldren was the wife of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo who was herself a highly accomplished female master who had contributed much to the religious history of Bhutan.

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<sup>49</sup> She was the consort of Phajo Drukgom Zhigpo

<sup>50</sup> In Bhutanese religious history, he is deeply revered as the pioneer and dynamic Drukpa leader. His life and deeds mentioned are intimately linked with the initial spread of Drukpa Kagyu lineage in Bhutan.

Jigme who is 17 further adds, “Females can become enlightened, e.g. Gelongma Palmo<sup>51</sup> is a female and she is enlightened.” According to Pema Drolkar, “There is no difference in being a Buddha in male or female form as dharma is the same for both genders.” Some young nuns like Pema Yangchen firmly state, “I prefer to be Buddha in female form as enlightenment does not depend on whether one is male or female”, deeply echoing Ārya Tāra’s resolve to attain enlightenment in a female form. Through their answers, it is evident that this deep understanding of the irrelevance of gender in achieving Buddhahood or high spiritual attainments stems mainly from the prevalence of highly realised real-life female masters.

### **Elevated Self-Confidence and Relevance to Local Communities**

Nuns at Jachung Karmo are largely known as good *Nyungne* fasting practitioners while nuns at the Jashar Goenpa are beginning to be known as accomplished meditators because of the opportunities to enter into solitary retreat for three, six, nine years, etc.

This study revealed that the nuns at Jachung Karmo have become well-known as authentic<sup>52</sup> practitioners of *Nyungne* in the Punakha District. The training and confidence instilled by their esteemed late abbess, Anim Lopen coupled with inspiration from Gelongma Palmo have

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<sup>51</sup> Referring to the founder of the *Nyungne* practice, Bhikṣuṇī Lakshmi.

<sup>52</sup> This was true during the time of the fieldwork. The nunnery has since undergone many changes after its merger with the Wolakha Nunnery (Sangchen Dorji Lhundrup) in 2012 whereby most of the senior nuns have left the nunnery.

moulded these nuns as compassionate agents of refuge to their local communities. The local people have immense faith in the *Nyungne* practice and rely heavily on the nuns to do the practice on their behalf. According to Lopen Ugyen Dema, chanting master of the nunnery, "People invite us to read and recite sutras and prayers like Tāra, *Nyungne*, etc." As a result, the self-confidence of the nuns is increasing as they believe that they are truly capable of practicing dharma, teaching and performing rituals. This fact is also attested by Lopen Dawa Gyaltsen, ex-lopen Tse of Dzong (monk), "Nuns are really capable and are doing enough to help the people as they perform *Nyungne* very well, can recite Tāra praise, longlife prayer and so on. Moreover, nuns are giving the Mahāyāna vows during the *Nyungne* retreat."

The local community also acknowledged the potential of the nuns at Jachung Karmo. The nuns have helped the society not only through prayers, but have induced positive changes in the lives of some members of the community. For example, Tashi Wangchuk, a layman from Phulusu said, "The older nuns perform *Nyungne* and the people are very proud. It helps local people also when the nuns advise them about dos and don'ts [in daily life]. I stopped smoking and eating tobacco and my wife also stopped after five of them [relatives] went to Jachung Karmo for the practice. No one takes tobacco in my house."

The community also has very high regard for the nuns. Tashi Wangchuk praised the Jachung Karmo nuns: "In the villages monks do not do like the nuns. Nuns are capable and giving so much help to the local people by reading the sutras, reciting prayers and performing rituals as it is very difficult to get monks from the Dzong. We have more faith and devotion to nuns than having a layperson to do these prayers for the deceased. When it comes to *Nyungne* the nuns are far better than the monks!" Dorji Gyaltsen, ex-monk of Dzong, 49, from Tsendegang in Guma Gewog,

Punakha said, “Nuns to me are those who stay in the mountains or above the villages to help sentient beings and we hope they will practice and help. They are our devotional and respectable field of merit that clear the obstacles of the people. From my side, I see nuns and all *sangha* as the real Buddha.”

The local communities have also expressed their desire to see nuns do even more for society, especially in teaching dharma to the laypeople and performing more rituals for the communities. For example, according to Dorji Gyalsthen, “I suggest that when the people come to the nunnery or when the nuns go out to peoples’ houses to perform rituals, nuns should teach the basic dos and don’ts in daily life and simple visualizations during the *Nyungne* retreats. Village people do not know anything, so it will help a lot.” He added, “Nuns should know how to perform *Nyungne*, read text and recite prayers during deaths. If possible they need to know how to perform *Kangsha*<sup>53</sup>, *Choku*<sup>54</sup>, *Dechen Shingdrup*<sup>55</sup> as most people are interested in it with explanation.” Being a layman and an ex-monk, it shows that attitudes towards women’s ability to perform ritual practices are changing in Bhutan. These changing attitudes are also linked to the dire situation of the local communities, especially the poor who are turning to the nuns because they are unable to get *sangha* for *pujas*. Dorji Gyalsthen lamented, “We cannot get dharma as we are simple and poor people because the *sanghas* nowadays expect very high offering and donations. So, the poor do not perform any prayers but go to temples on full

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<sup>53</sup> Complete prayers for the deceased (especially the 21st and 49th day)

<sup>54</sup> Annual family *pūja*, which is extremely important and followed very strictly in Bhutan

<sup>55</sup> It is also a prayer for the deceased to Buddha Amitabha.

moon and new moon days to at least keep their ties with dharma. Many convert to Christianity because of this reason.”

The nuns at Jashar Goenpa in Pema Gatshel are also valued for their compassionate service to their local communities. From participant observation, it is evident that the local communities hold the nuns at Jashar Goenpa in high esteem because of their intensive training in meditation. The tradition of female retreaters, initiated by their late highly realised mentor, *Anim* Woesel Chöden, the nunnery’s founder is a legacy both the nuns and local communities cherish. The local communities believe that nuns who have completed retreat have higher efficacy and seek their prayer services for all aspects of life, including annual pujas and death ceremonies. The nuns at Jashar Goenpa continue to be inspired by the reincarnation of their late master, *Anim* Trulku Chözung Lhamo who herself has completed nine years in retreat. At the age of twenty-one, *Anim* Trulku was appointed the Dorji Lopen, the Vajra Master of Jashar Gonpa, by Gyaltsen Trulku Rinpoche. This was the first time that such a title had been bestowed on a nun in Bhutan in this century, thereby continuing to inspire the Jashar nuns as well as women throughout the country<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> *Anim* Trulku is now out of retreat and supervising the day-to-day affairs of the nunnery and has begun to give public teachings. *Anim* Trulku has also appeared in interviews on national television in Bhutan in recent years.



## Conclusion

This research has attempted to demonstrate that feminine symbolism either in the aspect of female deities or real-life female masters have great significance in the lives of the Bhutanese nuns studied. Despite the prevalence of local traditions and beliefs which serve to disempower women, such as the notion that women are inferior to men; that women are innately impure; that women cannot attain Buddhahood in a female body, etc., the nuns in this study are able to transcend their cultural conditioning and develop confidence in their spiritual ability.

This study has shown that powerful female imagery like Gelongma Palmo and Tāra have profound psychological impact on the nuns in elevating their confidence levels in spiritual practice despite tremendous hardships. These nuns have become relevant to the lives of the people whom they are closely connected with. Feminine imagery, especially the prevalence of real-life realized female practitioners have inspired these nuns to become leaders and masters in their desired spiritual practice. The *Nyungne* practice based on an inspiring female personality, Gelongma Palmo and Anim Lopenma has empowered these nuns and given them a distinct identity and importance in the region in which they live whilst the *yoginī* nuns at Jashar Goenpa are deconstructing traditional notions of female limitation in spiritual practice and conducting prayers which have been the traditional domain of monks and *gomchen*.

We end our exposition on feminine symbolism with a reaffirmation of Rita Gross' assertion that "feminism is about cherishing a precious birth in a female body" as these nuns are making their precious human life extremely beneficial as per their *bodhicitta* aspiration. This study has shown that Bhutanese nuns *can* and *are* transcending gender barriers and centuries of cultural conditioning which does

not recognise their inherent potential to practice dharma, gain realisations and benefit sentient beings through the dharma. Once a recognition of the nuns potential is deeply rooted in the psyche of Bhutanese society, future generations of Bhutanese women do not need to aspire to be reborn as males to attain spiritual realisations in order to liberate sentient beings from *saṃsāra*.

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# One Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Observations on an Annual Ceremony by the Ngakpas of Rebkong

Georgios T. Halkias

## Introduction

Professional practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism are commonly divided into the ‘red sangha’ (*dge ’dun mar po*), celibate monks and nuns dressed in maroon robes, and the ‘white sangha’ (*dge ’dun dkar po*), male and female lay tantrists or *ngakpas* and *ngakmas* (m. *sngags pa/f. sngags ma*) who wear the white cloth and have uncut clotted hair (*gos dkar lchang lo can*).<sup>57</sup> Arguably, the Rebkong *ngakpas* in the north-eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau comprise the largest community of lay tantric householders skilled in the use of mantra (Skt. *mantrin*).<sup>58</sup> In this study, I will briefly recapitulate some important features of the Reb kong *sngangs mang*<sup>59</sup>, a community of predominantly male non-celibate

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<sup>57</sup> For a detailed discussion of a treatise for the defence of the ngakpa’s dreadlocks as an authentic Buddhist symbol based on iconography, scripture, and reasoning, see Bogin’s (2008) examination of Tendzin Norbu’s *Ral pa’i rnam bshad*.

<sup>58</sup> Bstan ’dzin Norbu explains the distinctive markers of the ngakpas: “these accoutrements—the dread-locks and the white undyed clothes—display a natural and uncontrived state. These are the accoutrements of the ‘accomplished ones’ (*grub thob, siddha*) and the ‘holders of the mantra[’s power]” (Bogin, 2008, p. 96).

<sup>59</sup> For a thorough introduction to the history of this community see Dhondup cited in this work. According to one estimate the Reb kong

tantrists affiliated with the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, and share some general observations from my participation in the *Shitro* ceremony that took place from June 21<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, at the village of Shakarlung (Zha dkar lung) in the district of Rebkong.<sup>60</sup>

## Background

The earliest Tibetan movement of lay tantric practitioners goes back to Padmasambhava, a semi-legendary tantric master from Oddiyāna. It is traditionally assumed that he contributed to the establishment of Tibet's first Buddhist monastery Samye (Bsam yas), subjugated forces hostile to the propagation of Buddhism, and concealed texts and relics, so-called 'treasures,' for later discovery. At the Red Rock Cave at Samye Chimpu he initiated the first order of *ngakpas* associated with the Dudul Ngakpa Ling ('Dudul sngags pa gling'), a Samye chapel dedicated to tantric divinities (Karmay, 1986, p. 14). His foremost female disciple and consort, the Princess Kharchen, better known as Yeshe Tsogyal (Ye shes mtsho rgyal), is the first Tibetan *ngakma* said to have attained enlightenment following his teachings. Tales of Padmasambhava's visits and enlightening activities abound across the culturally Tibetan world, i.e., from Ladakh to Mongolia and from Samye to Eastern Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan. It is recounted that he also visited Amdo where he bounded indigenous spirits under oath and

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sngags mang comprises anywhere between 4000 members (Stoddard 2013, p. 109) and 2000 (Sihlé, 2013, p. 168).

<sup>60</sup> Rebkong is both the capital of Malo prefecture (Rma lho) and the name of Tongren county in Qinghai province. Having been historically an area of contact between different ethnic groups and cultures, Amdo has a long history of racial diversity including Tibetans, Mongols, Monguors, Salar, Han and Hui (Samuel, 2013).

hid treasures in the area (Dhondup, 2011, p. 5). The trans-Himalayan popularity of the cult of Padmasambhava suggests that we are dealing with a legendary narrative where history becomes entangled with myth and mythological elements acquire historicity. In the case of Padmasambhava there is no pressing need to try to distinguish between history and myth, not only because we don't have any historical evidence for his activities dating to this period or across such a vast geographical area, but because what we understand as myth and history often function as a meaningful unity in Tibetan religious sentiments and cultural memory.

Another figure cited in connection with the earliest lay tantric movement is the Tibetan Emperor Tri Tsugdetsen (Khri tsug lde btsan, c. 802-836), better known as Ralpacen. He is remembered as the third 'Dharma King' (*chos rgyal*) of Tibet for sponsoring the construction of Buddhist temples, the translation of Buddhist texts including the compilation of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (Sanskrit-Tibetan lexicon), and the allocation of seven families to each monk living in religious communities. Early post-imperial sources mention the name Ralpacen, which literally means 'the one with long clotted hair' (*ral pa can*), and report that he invited Buddhist monks to sit on his long matted hair spread out to the floor, a clear indication of his *ngakpa* leanings (Wangdu & Diemberger, 2000, p. 24).

There is one more person associated with the early origins of Rebkong's lay tantric community and with the turbulent history of the Tibetan empire. By some accounts, the last royal supporter of Buddhism, Ralpacen, met a tragic end at the hands of his brother Langdarma (Glang dar ma, or 'U dum btsan, 838-842) who usurped the imperial throne and suppressed Buddhism during his reign. According to traditional Tibetan accounts, in order to protect the Buddhist dharma the hermit-monk Lhalung Pelgyi Dorje

(Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje) assassinated the tyrant-emperor Langdarma, or in tantric terms 'liberated him' (*sgrol ba*) from his evil existence.<sup>61</sup> Soon after, the assassin escaped to Khams and then Amdo where it said that he became a teacher to some of the eight founding members of the lay tantric community of Rebkong.<sup>62</sup>

Most important for the preservation of monastic Buddhism is the story of the contribution of three erudite Tibetan monks (*mkhas pa mi gsum*), Marben Shakya Senge, Yo Gechung, and Tsang Rabsel (Dmar ban shakya seng ge, G.yo dge chung, Gtsang rab gsal) who are credited for preserving the Eastern Vinaya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Distraught by Langdarma's actions against the monastic order, they fled Pel Chuwori meditation compound (Dpal chub bo ri sgom grwa) in Central Tibet and went to Ngari loaded with Vinaya and Abhidharma scriptures. Unable to remain in western Tibet, the three monks settled at Sogulung (Sro gu lung) in Amdo where they ordained a young Bönpo man by the name Lachen Gongpa Rabsel (Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal) with the assistance of two Chinese monks identified as Heshang Kawa and Heshang Genbak (Davidson, 2005, p. 8).

Lachen Gongpa took residence in the monastery of Dentik (Dan tig) where in turn he ordained young men from

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<sup>61</sup> Even though there is sparse evidence to prove or disprove the historicity of this event, some modern scholars have questioned the persecution of Buddhism during the reign of Langdarma and his assassination by a Buddhist monk; Yamaguchi (1996) has been the most vociferous proponent of this view. For a detailed discussion on the origins and development of ritual killing in tantric contexts, see Dalton (2011).

<sup>62</sup> For narratives related to the eight Nyingma hermitages (*grub thob gnas brgyad*) where the adepts (*grub bsnyes*) said to have practiced, see Stoddard (2013, p. 110-112) and Dhondup (2011, p. 5, n.7).

Central Tibet before spending the last two decades of his life at Martsang Drak (Plate I), a hermitage cave called after the name of his preceptors.<sup>63</sup> Nowadays, there are several families from Amdo that trace their ancestry to Central Tibet. Some of them claim to have been descendants of soldiers dispatched from U-tsang to fight early wars with China but were never ordered back, the *khamalog* (*bka' ma log*), meaning 'not to return without orders' (Shakabpa, 1984, p. 42-43).

### Notable Masters Among the Rebkong Tantrists

Lay Nyingma tantrists are documented in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in the village of 'Ja' that lies in the periphery of Rebkong, while the so-called formation of a hundred tantrists from Zho-ong (*zho 'ong sngags brgya*) goes back to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century when Rigzin Dorje (Rig 'dzin rdo rje) from Lhasa arrived to the village of Zho-ong and 100 *ngakpas* became his disciples. Even though these accounts point to the antiquity of lay tantric formations in the region (Dhondup, 2011, p. 7-9), the Reb kong *snangs mang* does not appear to have been organized and structured as a community prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This was largely due to the efforts of Rigzin Palden Tashi (Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis, 1688-1742) who has instigated communal rules and practices, such as the tenth-day ritual dedicated to Padma sambhava (*tshe bcu'i dus mchod*), and provided the Rebkong members of the tantric community with a distinct identity.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> For a short biography of Lhachen Gongpa Rabtsel by Samten Chospel, see *The Treasury of Lives* [<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Gongpa-Rabsal-P1523>; accessed on February 3rd, 2018].

<sup>64</sup> A slightly earlier figure is mentioned by the name Adron Khetsun Gyatso (A mgron mkhas btsun rgya mtsho, 1604-1679) who founded one of the very first tantric houses (*sngags tshang*) in Rebkong known





Plate I. Dmar tsang brag, the hermitage of Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal. Photo by Georgios T. Halkias.

Two studies on the life of Rigzin Palden Tashi have been published in English to date and there is no reason to repeat the information here (Dhondup, 2011; Stoddard, 2013). It suffices to say, that even though Palden Tashi was born into a Nyingma *ngakpa* family he received monastic ordination from the Gelug School and studied Buddhist philosophy and logic at several Gelugpa institutions including the monastery of Drepung near the city of Lhasa. He upheld non-partisan views (*ris med*) and embraced Buddhist teachers from the Gelug, Nyingma and Kagyu establishments. This non-sectarian orientation, shared by

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as Adron Nangchen. For the lives of notable Rebkong masters, see Nida Chenagtsang (2013) and *Research on the Community of Ngakpas* [Sngags mang zhib 'jug, Zi ling: zi ling mi rgis par 'debs bzo grwa, 2002, p. 64-74].

many of his tantric followers in Rebkong and surrounding regions, contributed to the “‘universalist,’ ‘impartial,’ ‘non-sectarian’ movement that developed in Khams ... in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Stoddard, 2013, p. 109).

Another important tantrist that stands out in the history of the Rebkong *sngags mang* is Chögyal Ngawang Dargye (Chos rgyal ngag dbang dar rgyas, 1736-1807). A Mongolian prince from Sogpo,<sup>65</sup> Ngawang Dargye was an accomplished Buddhist master versed in Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese and Sanskrit languages, but unlike his predecessors who supported the Gelug School, he embraced the Nyingma tradition (Dhondup, 2011, p. 23). He served as the root teacher of many *ngakpas*, including the celebrated yogi-cum-poet Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol (Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol, 1781-1851) from Zho-ong to whom he imparted the first and foremost spiritual empowerment of the mind-treasure of Kunsang Dechen Gyalpo (Kun bzang bde chen rgyal po).<sup>66</sup> The life of Shabkar has been documented (Ricard, 2001). Along with the first abbot of Rongwo (Rong bo) monastery, Kalden Gyatso (Skal ldan rgya mtsho, 1606-

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<sup>65</sup> Sog po is a Mongolian enclave surrounded by Tibetan communities in present-day Henan Monglian Autonomous County in Qinghai (Diemberger, 2007, p. 110).

<sup>66</sup> This is a Dzogchen practice focusing on the deities Hayagrīva and Vajravārahi titled *Wish-fulfilling Gem, Hayagrīva and Varahi (Rta phag yid bzhin nor bu)*. On the life of Chögyal Ngawang Dargye, see *The Great Perfection Dispelling the Darkness of Ignorance* [Rdzogs chen ma rig mun sel, Pecin: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002, p. 1-16], Ricard (2001, p. 565-567), and Lce Nag Tshang Hum Chen (2007, p. 239-255). For his instructional manual on the mind-terma (*dgongs gter*) by Kunzang Dechen Gyalpo, see *The Lamp of Wisdom that Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance: A Manual of Instructions of a New Dzogchen Terma* [Gter gсар rdzogs chen gyi khri yig ma rig mun sel ye shes sgron me, Paro: Ngodrup Lama and Sherab Demy, 1979].

1677), he inspired many generations of Buddhist practitioners with his instructive spiritual songs (*mgyur*) that are read till this day.<sup>67</sup>

Changlung Palchen Namkai Jigme (Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkhai'i 'jigs med, 1757-1821) initiated regulations for the performance of religious rituals, but unlike Shabkar and Rigzin Palden Tashi neither did he take vows of celibacy nor did he train in monastic institutions. As far as we know, Namkai Jigme did not author any works but instead meditated in remote caves. It is reported that he had visions of Buddhist deities, performed miracles, and revealed hidden sacred objects (Dhondup, 2013, p. 119). His name is associated with Rebkong's 'one thousand-nine-hundred ritual dagger holders' (*phur thogs stong dang dgu brgya*), a title still in use to refer to the *ngakpas* of Rebkong. The story goes back to 1810, during a series of Vajrayāna empowerments (*dbang*) and teachings on the rare treasures (*gter ma*) of Ngadag Nyangral Nyima Ozer (Mnga' bdag nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192), the *Eight Instructions: The Assembly of Buddhas* (*Bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*). At that time, Namkai Jigme, the head lama of Kyungon (Khyung mgon) monastery who presided over the rituals that lasted for 15 days, distributed 1900 wooden daggers (Skt. *kīla*; *phur ba*) to the participants present in the ceremony.

Over the centuries several charismatic figures created their own tantric houses (*sngags khang*) and contributed to the propagation of Nyingma teachings in the area of Rebkong. The following list is indicative but not exhaustive: Magsar Paṇḍita (Mag gsar kun bzang stobs ldan dbang po, 1781-1832), a Vajrakīlaya adept;<sup>68</sup> Dzogchen Longchen

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<sup>67</sup> For samples of their instructive poetry, see Sujata (2008, p. 549-569).

<sup>68</sup> According to Mayer and Cantwell (2010, p. 73) he is noted for taking the Tantra of the Perfections of Enlightened Activity ('Phrin las phun

Choying Tobden Dorje (Rdzogs chen klong chen chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje, 1785-1848), the founder of the Dzogchen Namgyal Ling tantric house and author of the *Treasury of Sūtra and Tantra* (*Mdo sngags mdzod*); the *terton* (*gter ston*) Khamla Tragthung Namka Gyatso (Khams bla khrag 'thung nam mkha' rgya mtsho, 1788-1851), the founder of the monastery of Gonlaka Orgyen Namdroling (Dgon la kha o rgyan rnam grol gling) in 1818 that later became the main center of practice for the *ngakpas* for the southern region of Rebkong (Dhondup, 2009, p. 24); the *terton* Jigme Natshog Rangdrol ('Jigs med sna tshogs rang grol, 1796-1874) from Derge, a devotee of Dodrubchen Rinpoche who settled in Sogpo, revealed numerous treasures and introduced a tradition of pilgrimage to the site of Lhamo Ngulkhang Dzong (Lha mo dngul khang rdzong) (Lce Nag tshang Hum Chen, 2007, p. 253); Nyang Nangdze Dorje (Nyang snang mdzad rdo rje, 1798-1874), a collector and propagator of Shabkar's works, who established a library for *ngakpa* texts and initiated a *drubchen* (*sgrub chen*) ceremony in many villages (Dhondup, 2009, p. 30-36); and last but not least, the contemporary master Nangchang Lama Tharchin (Sngags 'chang bla ma mthar chin, 1936-2013), 10<sup>th</sup> lineage holder of the Rebkong *ngakpas* and heir of the Dudjom Tersar tradition, who facilitated the spread the Vajrayāna teachings in the United States of America.

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sum tshogs pa' rgyud) system of seven perfections (phun sum tshogs pa bdun) as the basis of organizing his commentary, Oral Instructions of the Laughing Glorious Heruka: A Kīlaya Commentary (Phur pa'i rnam bshad he ru ka dpal bzhad pa'i zhal lung).

## Features of the Rebkong Tradition of Ngakpas

One can become a *ngakpa* either through heredity by being born into a household of tantric practitioners (*gdung brgyud*), or by having faith in the tantric teachings (*chos gyi rgyud pa*). Most of the *ngakpas* lead non-celibate lives and are occupied with farming and animal husbandry though they may pursue any kind of profession. Their participation in local rituals, sponsored by individuals or an entire village, could involve weather manipulation, healing, prognostications, exorcisms, and so forth. They also engage in collective ritual practices, like the Tshechu ritual on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the Tibetan lunar month, and in supra-local annual ceremonies (*chos thog*), like the *Shitro* I attended in June 2017. These are performed at various Nyingma monasteries, the village tantric halls (*sngags khang*), the ritualist's home, or at the residence of their sponsor (Dhondup, 2013, p. 125).

Members of the *sngags mang* are roughly affiliated with one of two branches demarcated by the River Dgu. There are three monasteries on the sunny side (*nyin gyi dgon pa gsum*) of the river which follow Jigme Lingpa's (1730-1798) *Longchen Nyinthig* (*Klong chen snying thig*), and three seats on the shaded side (*srib kyi gdan gsum*) that uphold the old mantric tradition (*sngags rnying*) of Mindroling (Smin grol ling) founded in 1676 by Rigdzin Terdag Ling (Rig 'dzin gter bdag gling, 1616-1714).<sup>69</sup> The relationship between the two

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<sup>69</sup> Dhondup (2011b, p. 47-48) lists the following three main monasteries belonging to the sunny side: "Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje's seat, Ko'u sde dgon rdzogs chen rnam rgyal gling; Khams bla khrag 'thung nam mkha' rgya mtsho's seat, Dgon la kha; and Mag gsar kun bzang stob ldan dbang po's Rig 'dzin pad ma rnam grol ling". Those on the shaded side are listed: Rig 'dzin dpal ldan bkra shis's seat, Rig 'dzin rab 'phel gling; Spyang lung dpal chen nam mkha' 'jigs med's monastery, Khyung mgon mi 'gyur rdo rje gling; and Zhabs dkar's monastic seat, G.ya' ma bkra shis 'khyil."

sides has not always been harmonious (Dhondup, 2013, p. 123) nor has their relation with other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. According to Sihlé (2013, p. 172), when Nyingma lamas and local chiefs attempted to institute a large-scale *Shitro* ritual to bring together Nyingma *ngakpas* from both the sunny and shaded sides in the 1940s, they faced strong opposition from the local Gelug establishment.

### **The *Shitro* Ceremony, June 21-24, 2017**

About one hour drive from the town of Rebkong lies the small rural village of Shakarlung (Zha dkar lung) with around 50 households occupied for the most part with farming and raising livestock. In late June of 2017 the village was buzzing with activity when approximately 400 adult *ngakpas* gathered to conduct a public ritual ceremony based on a 14<sup>th</sup> century revealed treasure, Karma Lingpa's "100 peaceful and wrathful deities." Karma Lingpa's text, the *Self Liberating Mind: The Profound Treasure of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* (*Zab gter zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol kyi 'don cha*),<sup>70</sup> or *Karling Shitro* (*Kar ling zhi khro*) in short, is a multipart collection of funerary texts grouped together with the *Bardo thodrol chenmo* (*Bar do thos grol chen mo*), the so-called *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. However, a clear distinction between the two should be made since their transmission

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<sup>70</sup> Karma Lingpa, the eldest son of the Buddhist master and famous tertön Nyida Sangye (Nyi zla sangs rgyas) from the southeastern region of Dakpo (Dwags po), is believed to have been an emanation of the eminent imperial translator Cokro Lui Gyaltsen (Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan), one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava. Karma Lingpa extracted the inner Tantra, the Profound Treasure of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, from Mount Gampodar (Sgam po gdar gyi ro bo) where it was hidden six centuries earlier by its author Padmasambhava, along with other esoteric texts (Dudjom Jigdrel, 1991, p. 801).

histories are rather unique (Cuevas, 2000, p. 23). Both collections deal with post-mortem practices and visions said to arise at different times during the *bardo* (*bar do*), the intermediate state after death.<sup>71</sup> According to Cuevas (ibid) the institutionalization of the liturgy of the *Karling Shitro* was the responsibility of the 4<sup>th</sup> lineage holder of the Karling transmission, Gyarawa Namkha Choki Gyatso (b. 1430, Rgya ra ba nam mkha' chos kyi rgya mtsho), a monk from southeastern Tibet. Main rituals associated with the *Karling Shitro* involve expiation and confession (*bskang shangs*), supplications to the lineage teachers (*brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*) and the religious protectors (*bstan srung*), bestowal of initiations (*dbang bskur*), cake offerings (*gtor 'bul*), *homa* rites (*sbyin sreg*), and generation-phase (*bskyed rim*) *sādhana* practices related to the composite *maṇḍala* of 42 peaceful deities (*zhi ba'i lha zhe gnyis*) visualized across the body, and 58 wrathful deities (*khro bo lha nga brgyad*) residing in the head.<sup>72</sup>

The *Shitro* ceremony (*zhi khro chos thog*) was organized by the *Tsodu* tantric house division (*tsho 'du sngags khang sde*) that was formerly established by farmers and nomads (*rong 'brog*) from 4 villages.<sup>73</sup> It took place at the tantric hall of the

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<sup>71</sup> For an informative study of the *Shitro maṇḍala* and its relation to Abhidharmic discourses on the intermediate state (*antarābhava*), see Blezer (1997).

<sup>72</sup> Even though references to the *Karling Shitro maṇḍala* of deities point to similar arrangements mentioned in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (*Rgyud gsang ba'i snying po*), and may in fact derive from them, they do not seem to be identical (Blezer, 1997, p. 128-129).

<sup>73</sup> Nowadays, the *Tsodu* tantric house includes more than 150 households and at least 1,200 people with each village featuring each own tantric house, a *ban*, a *sngags* and a *bon* of a particular religious school (*chos lugs kyi grub mtha'*). Each village takes turn organizing religious ceremonies impartially (*mnyam du*) and by rotation

village. On each day, just before dawn, the hall was occupied mostly by adult *ngakpas* (Plate II) from different villages and tantric houses (*sngags khang*). Among them there was a vajra-master (*rdo rje slob dpon*), a chant-master (*dbu mdzad*), and few disciplinarians (*dge bskos*) overseeing the operation of the performance. Next to the hall there was another temple in similar architectural style but without an enclosed courtyard that was used for the preparation of ritual cakes or *torma* (*gtor ma*) offered during the ceremony. It would appear that the hall's inner sanctuary was reserved for the vajra-master and other senior tantrists. The inner courtyard occupied by the *ngakpas* was adorned with five-colored Buddhist flags and several *thankas* depicting common figures from the Buddhist pantheon such as, the *Shitro* mandala featuring Samantabhadra in sexual union with his consort (*yab yum*) surrounded by deities, Padmasambhava, Śākyamuni, the four-armed Avalokiteśvara, Amitābha, and Amitāyus, among others. Two banners, one blue and the other red, were suspended between the *thankas*. Their contents are worth transcribing in full as they reflect the aspiring ethos and views of the tantric community.

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according to their religious affiliation; see Nyi zla he ru kah ye shes 'od zer sgrol ma, "Tsho 'du'i sde ba so so'i sngags khang." In *Reb kong sngags mang gi lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs*, Pec in: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004, p. 317-321.





Plate II: Zhi khro chos thog, Reb kong sngags mang. Photo by Georgios T. Halkias.

The contents of the blue banner attributed to Tromtrul Kelsang Phuntsog (Khrom sprul skal bzang phun tshogs) may read something like this:

ཨོཾ། སྒོམ་པ་གསུམ་ལྟན་གོས་དཀར་ལྷང་ལོའི་སྒྲེ།  
 འདུས་པའི་ཚོགས་ཀྱིས་གནས་འདིར་ཡོངས་བཀའ་ཞིང་།  
 ཐོས་བསམ་སྒྲོམ་པའི་ཡངས་བའི་ཐ་སྲུ་ཀུན།  
 དོ་རྩེ་ཐེག་པའི་བསྟན་པ་རྒྱས་སྤུང་ཅིག།

May the faction of the holders of the three vows, with white clothes and clotted hair, this assembly, be thoroughly established in this place, through extensive hearing, reflecting, and meditating, and may the Vajrayāna teachings spread.

And the contents of the red banner also attributed to Tromtrul Kelsang Phuntsog made reference to the ‘three uncontrived’ (*ma bcos gsum*) aspects upheld by the *ngakpas*.

༄༅། མགོ་ལ་རལ་བ་མ་བཅོས་ལྷག་པར་བཞག།  
 ལུས་ལ་གོས་དཀར་མ་བཅོས་ལྷབས་སེ་གསོལ།།  
 སེམས་ཉིད་མ་བཅོས་གཉུག་མའི་རང་ཞལ་བཟླ།།  
 མ་བཅོས་གསུམ་ལྷན་སྒྲགས་པ་དེ་ལ་ཟེར།།

Without making up the clotted hair on the head, without affectation letting the white clothes hang on the body, and without artifice beholding the true face of the natural state; in respect to these three uncontrived [aspects], one is called a *ngakpa*.

### Meeting the Vajra-master at Shakarlung village

In the morning of the last day of the ceremony I had a brief conversation with Tamdrin Gyal (Rta mgrin rgyal), the vajra-master presiding over the ceremony. I was told that there had been similar public gatherings prior to the 1950s but they were disrupted for a long time only to be resumed after the Cultural Revolution. The first *Shitro* ceremony took place in 1981 at the village of Chutsa (Chu ca), the birth place of Rigzin Palden Tashi, and was staged again in 2013 in the same village. State restrictions for holding public religious gatherings were lifted thanks to the interventions of the Panchen Lama, Losang Trinley Lundrup Tsokyi Gualtsen (Blo bzang phrin las lhun grub chos kyi rgual mtshan, 1938-1989). Since 1981, the *Karling Shitro* has been conducted every year based on a lottery rotation system. The exact dates of this public event are not fixed in advance. They are determined each year so as not to conflict with the harvest season or the collection of the caterpillar-fungus (*dbyar rtswa*

*dgun 'bu*) that is an important source of income for the community.<sup>74</sup>

According to Tamdrin Gyal there was a reduction of *ngakpas* participating in this year's ceremony, but he did not elaborate on the reasons. Commenting on the absence of female tantric practitioners (*ngakmo*), I was told that there are approximately 100 *ngakmos* residing in the Rebkong area but they don't usually join public rituals because many of them are illiterate and can't follow the recitation of ritual texts. *Ngakpas* affiliated either with the *Longchen Nyinthag* or the *Mindroling* lineages are expected to follow three sets of vows related to the outer (*phyi*), inner (*nang*), and secret (*gsang*) levels of refuge and practice.<sup>75</sup> The outer vows of practice concern avoiding the ten non virtuous actions such as, killing, stealing, lying, and so forth. The inner vows correspond to the bodhisattva training in the six perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*; *pha rol tu phyin pa*) especially the perfection of wisdom (*sher phyin*). The secret vows are tantric commitments. They can be summed up in not failing to recognize the buddha-nature in oneself and in all beings. In principle, each *ngakpa* ought to maintain all three and especially the 'secret vow' of abiding at all times in the uncontrived simplicity and expanse of *dharmakāya* (*chos sku*), the nature of the awakened mind. With these last words our conversation came to an end and I returned to the tantric hall for the concluding part of the ceremony.

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<sup>74</sup> For an informative study on the harvesting of *yartsa* in the Qinghai-Tibetan plateau, see Sulek (2009).

<sup>75</sup> Their vows vary according to the empowerments they have received and commonly entail the 'fourteen root downfalls' (*rtsa ltung bcu bzhi*) and possibly some of the branch vows; for a detailed explanation of tantric vows in general, see Jamgon Kongtrul (1998, p. 215-306).

## Post-liturgical Activities

At the end of the closing prayers, the residents of Shakarlung and devotees from neighboring areas lined up outside the hall in order to participate in a ritual of ‘ceremonial spitting’ (*kha phru ’debs pa*).<sup>76</sup> In the meantime, at the entrance to the tantric hall a few male and female participants intentionally laid horizontally on the ground so that the *ngakpas* pass over them on their way out of the hall. Presumably, this pious act of humility was done as an expression of devotion and for the purpose of receiving benediction. Navigating their exit from the hall cautiously so as not to step on the lying bodies, each *ngakpa* blew water on the devotees including young children and infants carried on by their mothers. Some male participants exposed different parts of their upper body to receive the sanctified spit on their skin, while many received it on their bowed heads as a general blessing for driving away evil (Plate II).

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<sup>76</sup> I wish to thank Dan Martin for providing me with the Tibetan term for this practise. It appears that as early as the second or third centuries BCE, ceremonial spitting was associated with breath magic in Daoist contexts that “concentrated the vapor as it was ejected from the mouth, thus serving as a means to access the spirit world and cure demonic ailments.” This practice is also mentioned in a Buddhist dhāraṇī described in Dunhuang manuscripts (Ng, 2007, p. 94-95). For the antiquity and prevalence of ritual spitting across cultures, see Godbey (1914). For parallels to the *kha phru ’debs pa*, see Dorje Lingpa’s (Rdo rje gling pa, 1346-1405) revealed treasure, the ‘vajra armour’ (rdo rje’i go khrab), where the officiant sprays water empowered by the mantra to heal illnesses; see the Wholesome Collection of Mantras, the Vajra Armour (Bzlas chog sngags ’bum dkar po rdo rje’i go khrab), Rin chen gter mdzod, vol. 42, text No. 49, ff.1a-3b.

After the conclusion of the spitting ceremony, we all headed towards a nearby hill for the performance of the *tshasur* (*tsha gsur*) ritual where ingredients of the three whites (*dkar gsum*), comprising roasting barley (*tsam pa*) and other substances, were offered to the pyre (Plate IV). The main purpose of the *sur* is to provide benefit for the dead, lingering spirits, and local deities, and nourishment for the *bardo* beings (*bar do ba*) that feed on the scent of burnt food (Panglung, 1985). The *ngakpas* formed different groups reciting prayers and pouring alcohol to the ground (*chang mchod*) for the duration of the ritual. The general mood was one of communal mirth culminating in the lighting of firecrackers and the tossing of paper prayer flags (*lung rta*) witnessed by a lone drone hovering above.



Plate III. The kha phru 'debs pa ceremony. Photo by Georgios T. Halkias.

## Parting Reflections

The annual performance of the *Karling Shitro* is an important occasion for community building and participation that strengthens the religious and social identity of Tibetan communities in the Rebkong region. The Tibetans who sponsored the ceremony and made cash offerings to the *ngakpas* attended the ceremonial blessings for the sake of accumulating merit for themselves, their families, and their deceased relatives, and for forging an auspicious connection with the Buddhist teachings (*chos 'brel*). Without overstating the fact that the *ngakpas* supplemented their income during the ceremony, there seems to be no compelling reason to elaborate on a tension between the 'mundane' and the 'sacred' and read it back to the socially complex and idiosyncratic world of the Rebkong *ngakpas*. In Vajrayāna Buddhism there is no sharp dichotomy between practical needs and soteriological aspirations for such a distinction is based on a dualistic framework that is counter soteriological, and one that problematizes a large number of popular tantric practices whose aim is to accomplish worldly aims such as, wealth, health, long-life, and so forth.

As a participant-observer in the ceremony I found myself pondering to which extent Vajrayāna Buddhism has kept its traditional modalities of delivery and how it may have evolved to accommodate the unexpected changes in the political and social landscape of the region. But there is another line of inquiry, which to the best of my knowledge remains unexplored. It was brought to my attention by James Mallinson whom I met in Thimphu during this conference. James informed me there are some noticeable parallels between lay tantric groups in Rajasthan, the householder Nāths (as opposed to the ascetic Nāths), and the Rebkong *ngakpas*, who similarly feature non-celibate householders and celibate ascetics in their respective areas. Although they are geographically apart from each other and

also genealogically distinct, these two communities of tantric householders lay similar claims of past descent from a great yogi and are reputed for their spiritual songs, magical powers, knowledge of tantric yogas (including secret sexual practices), and ability to perform esoteric rituals and mantras in their respective villages for protection, healing, and so forth (Gold, 2002). While these similarities may point to features shared by a number of local shaman healers, the reference to Kabir's corps of householder Sants dressed in white and carrying a white banner (an emblem of their non-renunciate status) in contrast to Gorakh's party of orange clad celibate renunciates carrying an orange banner (Gold, 2002, p. 147), resonates with a colour-based distinction between the white clad *ngakpas* versus the red clad celibate monastics. Further research on the origins and development of Hindu and Buddhist lay tantric movements may reveal some fruitful areas of comparative study, not least for their ambivalent relation to institutionalized forms of religious orthodoxy and for their role in preserving till this day old esoteric practices.





Plate IV. *Gsur mchod*. Photo by Georgios T. Halkias.

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# Yogic Perception: An Integrative Scientific Model Of Vajrayāna Meditational Practices

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## Introduction

In this paper I offer a brief presentation of how new discoveries in neuroscience, psychophysics, and physics (including cosmology and mathematics), when properly interpreted, may offer a bridge between the two systems of “knowledge of the ultimate nature of the universe” mentioned in the abstract to this paper, that of the Vajrayāna Buddhist, and that of the “Western” scientific (the term, “cosmopolitan” is a better description of contemporary science, but I will employ the conventional one herein). I have for several years been developing an heuristic model or framework in order to attempt to understand what I believe may be profound common ground between the two systems in this regard (Bushell 2009a,b; 2011a,b; 2016), a common ground that could also potentially offer a path ahead for further research, which could not only enhance both systems independently, but also potentially lead to an integration of both into one collaborative pathway as well.

In brief, at this stage this common ground consists of strong claims in Vajrayāna Buddhism for extraordinary sensory-perceptual capacities purported for advanced *adept* or *virtuoso* practitioners of certain forms of observational meditation, and evidence from the above cited fields of Western science, particularly sensory-perceptual neuroscience and psychophysics, which when marshalled appropriately, can provide support for such claims. The claims for such practitioners amount to the capacity to

perceive what can be considered, in terms of contemporary Western physics, significant aspects, features, or dimensions, of the actual “fabric” of the universe.

What follows is also significantly based on a very important methodological modality in psychophysics and neuroscience, “ideal observer analysis,” which as the name implies, utilizes a standard of ideal or optimal performance with which to compare actual performance by subjects in the experimental laboratory setting (e.g., Geisler, 2003).

### **“Yogic Direct Perception”**

In what follows, I rely on the highly regarded scholarship of leading scholars and historical and contemporary figures in Vajrayāna Buddhist studies, both scholars and practitioners, particularly Klein, Lodro, Napper, Rogers, Thurman, Gyatso (HH the Dalai Lama), Stcherbatsky, Daniel P Brown, Hatchell, Dzogchen Ponlop, and others (see Bibliography below, and also Bushell 2009a,b; 2011; 2016; Bushell & Thurman 2011). As Klein, Lodro, and others have shown, the ultimate goal of the Buddhist epistemological agenda is not only a deep and complete *understanding* of “the nature and limits of phenomena,” but the “direct perception” of this nature and limits (see also Hatchell, 2014). According to Vajrayāna texts under discussion, the “nature and limits of phenomena” consist, at one level, of the irreducible constituents of the universe, “minute particles,” or “partless particles of matter, energy, space, and time,” of which “the macroscopic ‘objects’ and processes of the phenomenal world are ‘composed,’ aggregated” (Lodro & Klein, cited in Bushell 2009a, p. 351). According to Klein’s scholarly exegesis of Vajrayāna epistemological positions, it is held that there is only one form of “direct perception” of such “partless particles” possible, and that is “*yogic* direct perception,”: “a meditator’s stabilized and penetrating consciousness,” [and] “only yogic direct perception is an

actual instrument of liberating knowledge [i.e., of this ultimate substance and truth of the universe],” (Klein, 1986).

### **“Yogic Direct Perception of Partless Particles of Matter, Energy, Space and Time”: The Case of Light**

Elsewhere I have discussed at length the Western scientific evidence that humans are potentially capable of directly perceiving a single “partless particle of light,” or photon (Bushell 2009a, 2011, 2016). This research, conducted by psychophysicists and neuroscientists, produced unexpected findings on how sensitive and precise the human visual system is. Although there are discrepancies in the research as to the fewest number of photons of light, incident on the eyeball, cornea, and retina, that can produce a conscious perception of light – ranging from a hundred to tens to 5-7, to a single photon – researchers have been in almost unanimous agreement that this phenomenon reveals an extraordinarily precise and sensitive visual sensory perceptual capacity in humans (reviewed in Bushell, 2009a, 2016; see also Manasseh et al., 2013; Pizzi et al., 2016; Tinsley et al., 2016). Up until just two years ago, it was agreed that the rod cells of the retina could respond with a neural impulse to a single incident photon, but through state-of-the-art methodological and technological improvements on previous studies, Tinsley et al. (2016) demonstrated conclusively that exactly one incident photon on a photoreceptor cell of the retina could *also* clearly produce conscious awareness of that light in a human subject in the experimental setting, work that was carried out at Rockefeller University and published in the leading scientific journal, *Nature*.

Based on the progressively more impressive experimental findings, the involved researchers, psychophysicists, neuroscientists, physicists, were unabashedly surprised and extraordinarily impressed by the unexpected

findings of precision and sensitivity of the capacity for single photon detection (SPD) in the human visual system, describing the findings in uncharacteristically dramatic terms for usually reserved scientists (here reviewed in Bushell, 2009): ‘physicists and biophysicists from Stanford, Princeton, Berkeley, Columbia, University of Washington, among others, [have incontrovertibly claimed that]...under certain conditions, the human visual system is capable of detecting light at or near “the limit imposed by quantum mechanics,” and actually at the level of individual photons. To summarize this extensive research conducted in numerous labs, Rieke and Baylor, writing recently in *Reviews in Modern Physics*, claim that the human visual system, beginning with the photoreceptor cells of the retina, are “nearly perfect photon counters ...[which] equal or exceed the performance of man-made detectors” including “solid state silicon detectors (photomultiplier tubes and charge-coupled devices).” Speaking further of these “nearly perfect biological photon counters, built of protein, lipid, carbohydrate, and water,” Princeton physicist/biophysicist William Bialek explains that under certain conditions human “visual sensitivity approaches the limits set by the division of light into discrete photons and the statistical fluctuation in photon absorption. [And these fluctuations] are unavoidable and impose a fundamental limit to visual fidelity that no imaging device can exceed.”

More recently, leading molecular ophthalmologist EN Pugh (University of Pennsylvania), while reviewing the recent study of Tinsley et al. (2016) in the context of the entire body of work on human photon detection (Pugh, 2018), claimed that this capacity of the human visual system to perceive single photons is “astonishing,” “amazing,” and reveals the “remarkable signal/noise ratio” responsible for such performance (and see below, for more on the key role

of the signal/noise ratio in the overall model of the scientific potential of yogic direct perception).

In addition, surprisingly, the experimental setting for these studies of human SPD can actually be regarded as a kind of simulation of a dark retreat setting for the yogic study of light, as I suggested several years ago (Bushell, 2009a). According to scientific research, in order for any person to perceive a minimal amount of light, including a single photon, the person must be situated in a dark-adapted, *scotopic* environment. Furthermore, the person must remain still, in terms of both overall somatic movement, as well as reduced eye movements – a single blink or saccadic movement of the eye can prevent the seeing of a photon (Morrone et al., 2005); this is the condition and scale of both space and time that is required. Moreover, the subject must maintain a high level of vigilance or attention for at least several hours, in order to achieve full psychophysiological dark adaptation, as well as to hold visual attention for multiple trials, as success rates are determined statistically, over the course of the experimental session.

In the Western experimental setting, bodily stillness is artificially produced by a set of harnesses and braces. In the yogic setting, stillness is achieved through yogic practice and has actually been experimentally determined in advanced meditators, by measuring the electromyogram and reduced eye movements have also been demonstrated in advanced meditators (reviewed in Bushell, 2009a).

And of course the practice of meditation has been clearly demonstrated to result in the prolonged enhancement of attention. The Vajrayāna dark retreat practice makes use of a series of graded light proof chambers, and one of the explicit intentions of the practice is to enable the practitioner to learn how to perceive minimal amounts of light (see Ponlop, 2006; Hatchell, 2014; see review in Bushell,



2009a). Hence, it appears that in many ways the same methodology has been utilized in both cultural contexts for similar goals, while in the Western context, the behavior and comportment of the subject is achieved through what might be considered an artificially-induced version of the yogic dark retreat, utilizing harnesses and braces to achieve stillness and presumably aid in the maintenance of alert awareness that is required for achieving the perceptual results. (More on the practices and phenomena of the dark retreat below).

### **Towards An Understanding of Yogic Direct Perception of Particles of Matter: Visual Hyperacuity on the Scale of the Diameter of a Retinal Photoreceptor Cell, i.e. Millionths of a Meter**

[The phenomenon of human visual] hyperacuity refers to the capacity to detect features in the visual field which are smaller than the diameter of a retinal photoreceptor cell, as fine as 2 seconds of arc of the visual field, or in the range of millionths of a meter. Many features of the visual field including line segments, spots, properties of contour, depth, alignment, certain motion-related features, and others, have been found in the experimental psychophysics laboratory to be detectable in the hyperacuity range. (Bushell, 2009a)

Here now under consideration is not light itself, but what is illuminated by light. Citing Princeton physicist Bialek again, he refers to human visual hyperacuity as “remarkable,” in terms of the accuracy achievable on the normally microscopic scale to which it is capable of accessing. The phenomenon of human visual hyperacuity refers to the discovery – again unexpected – that when human subjects were tested while attempting to discern extremely miniscule features of the visual environment, both natural and artificial, there were in fact many features of such scale that were detectable, despite the extremely

small scale. Again, required for the task in the experimental setting is stillness, and competence in maintaining focused attention (Bushell, 2009a; Bialek, 1987, 2003). Many researchers were so impressed that they recognized a level of detection of the human visual system that rivaled some human-manufactured devices.

Indeed, electrical engineers and applied physicists are now developing advanced state-of-the-art digital cameras and other sensor technology based on the newly discovered physical and physiological principles which are responsible for the extraordinary performance and magnitude of the human visual system, specifically in terms of the achievement of levels of hyperacuity performance. In the words of Lagunas et al. (2016, 2017), researchers and engineers in the field of computer vision and pattern recognition:

Previous studies on the human eye have shown us the key of its operational aspects, providing as well an explanation to the phenomenon of hyperacuity which is known as the capability of the eye to see far beyond from the resolution defined by the size and separation of the sensors located in the retina (cones and rods)...[and] we can easily observe how the human eye is able to see very small objects at a certain distance, overcoming the maximum resolution that same number of sensors could achieve in any equivalent commercial digital camera ...[and] the eye is capable to obtain high resolution images due to visual hyperacuity and presents an impressive sensitivity and dynamic range when set against conventional digital cameras of similar characteristics. (Lagunas et al., 2016, 2017)

So when is this human capacity for hyperacuity typically experienced, engaged, “activated” then? When it is called for, as in when there is a need to discriminate features of the environment, such as those listed above – alignment, contours, depth, certain features of motion, etc – in natural scenes and other sets of objects under observation.

Importantly, in Vajrayāna Buddhism, there are multiple objects of both observational meditation and visualization meditation, which require fine visual discrimination, requiring the capacity of visual hyperacuity. These include of course actual mandalas in various forms (thangkas, models of wood and other materials, sand or powder mandalas, etc.), as well as visualized mandalas – and often a practitioner will utilize an actual mandala in order to begin to generate an internal image of the mandala for visualization meditation practice (e.g., Jackson, 1985).

In fact, within Vajrayāna, there are multiple forms of the yoga meditational regimen which are deliberately designed to engage the innate visual hyperacuity potential of the human visual system, and in fact to do so in order to more proactively develop it, as I have argued elsewhere (Bushell, 2009a, 2016). There are multiple reasons for engaging the potential for visual hyperacuity through both observational and visualization meditation, and one reason in particular that has been essentially overlooked, I have proposed, is to further enhance the visual system in meditators in order to allow further access to the realm of the miniscule, the microscopic; to begin to allow access to scales potentially relevant to the observation of “partless particles of matter, etc...” (Bushell, 2009a, 2016; and see below). It is known that hyperacuity may be enhanced through a process known as perceptual learning, in which perceptual experience can lead to enhanced perception. Perceptual learning is another form of learning, one in which the process advances tacitly, and as recent research has shown, perceptual learning is based in turn on the phenomenon of neuroplasticity, a phenomenon which has recently revolutionized contemporary neuroscience and psychology.

New discoveries in neuroscience on what is now called “neuroplasticity,” especially beginning to accelerate in the 1980’s, have shown that the adult brain will change in

response to learning, practice, engagement, and even exposure alone, to increased visual complexity (see Fuchs & Flugge, 2014; Bushell, 2001; 2005; 2009a, 2009b; 2011). Brain changes associated with perceptual learning, via the mechanism of neuroplasticity, include strengthening of synapses, increases in connections of axons and dendrites, increases in brain volume, all of which are associated with enhancements in function (perception, cognition, memory, etc.). The practicing of a range of cognitive exercises, including visual exercises, will activate both perceptual learning and neuroplasticity, the former based on the latter. In terms of hyperacuity, this capacity, although inherent, can be enhanced by such practice, and as I have argued elsewhere, the *deliberate practice* of both observational and visualization meditation on mandalas will in turn enhance those capacities for practice, and eventually lead to *expert and exceptional performance* in the ability to visually perceive features of the physical environment (Bushell, 2009a, 2016).

A particular example of what is likely to be visual hyperacuity engaged and enhanced through meditation – both observational and visualization meditation – was described recently for a key Kalachakra Mandala meditation exercise (Bushell, 2016). The exercise described here is based on the research of Jackson (1985) and others:

In one of the more demanding versions of the Kalachakra Mandala Meditation Practice, a key early milestone in the development of proficiency is when the beginning practitioner, through intensive and extensive practice, becomes capable of creating an internalized (mental) image of the mandala in which all the deities are at once completely visible and perceived in full detail clearly, as a unified whole, in the practitioner's mental visual field. At this point in the analysis we focus on the version of the Kalachakra in which there are 722 deities. In other words, the practitioner is expected at this beginning-intermediate stage to be able to create an

extremely clear and precisely detailed mental image of the Kalachakra Mandala, with all 722 deities, each clearly visible, within the architectural structure in all its details....And furthermore, it is next stipulated that the advancing practitioner must then be able to “shrink” this extremely rich, detailed, and full image to the size of a mustard seed, and to still retain the ability to see all the details fully, in one...act of perception. (Bushell, 2016, p. 36-41).

The size of a mustard seed is approximately 1-2 millimeters in diameter, and hence the capacity to perceive at this scale is hypothetically within the realm of possibility for human visual hyperacuity -issues of featural “crowding” and the ability to “subitize” – to see multiple features in a single glance without counting – are discussed in more detail elsewhere (Bushell, 2009, 2016; and Bushell et al., n.d.). The key point to be brought out here is that practice both in observation meditation – for example, in this context, the preliminary stages of intensively, repeatedly, carefully, and systematically observing all the details of an actual physical rendition of the Kalachakra mandala- and in visualization meditation, or creating a mental image of the same, one of the key goals is intended to engage and enhance visual hyperacuity through deliberate practice. Deliberate practice activates perceptual learning and the mechanism of neuroplasticity, and by “tuning” the visual system (including the retina itself) to smaller and smaller scales, the meditator is able to not only visualize, but visually perceive and discriminate, at a hyperacute level of scale. I submit that this is in fact one of the main purposes of this kind of exercise in Vajrayāna Buddhist practice, particularly for adept, virtuoso practitioners, although I have not seen this recognition elsewhere (see Bushell, 2016). Recent Western neuroscientific research has shown that mental imagery can also lead to the induction of perceptual learning (Tartaglia

et al., 2009), and Kozhevnikov and colleagues have demonstrated that a form of mandala meditation, deity meditation, significantly enhances visuo-spatial processing efficiency (Kozhevnikov et al., 2009). Obviously much more research is needed in order to further explore and investigate the implications of the present model of how Vajrayāna practices may lead to the direction of yogic direct perception of the particles that make up the phenomenal realm of solid objects.

**Hearing Amplitudes of the Magnitude of the Diameter of an Atom, at the Energy Level of a Single Photon, and at Speeds of Under 10 Microseconds (=10 millionths of a second) in Humans?**

When continuing our critical survey of recent psychophysics and neuroscience research into the startlingly unexpected magnitude, sensitivity, and precision of the human sensorium, now into the realm of audition, we continue to encounter the same use of authentically surprised hyperbole of normally rhetorically reserved, conservative scientists, again especially in such hard science domains as psychophysics, which is a branch of pure and applied physics, and includes engineering. We again encounter the comparison of the human sense organs to highly sophisticated, advanced, state-of-the-art human-made technological apparatus. It is worthwhile for our purposes, on multiple levels, to directly quote several of the leading researchers in the field, beginning with one of the leading pioneers of the field, A.J. Hudspeth of Rockefeller University, which is one of the leading scientific institutions in the world in terms of Nobel Prize winners and members of the National Academy of Sciences, including other top-tier scientific honors. According to Hudspeth (Hudspeth 1997, 2005; Reichenbach & Hudspeth, 2015):

Statistics concerning the human ear are astounding. The healthy cochlea is so sensitive that it can detect vibration with amplitude less than the diameter of an atom, and it can resolve time intervals down to  $10\mu\text{s}$  [i.e., 10 millionths of a second]. It has been calculated that the ear detects energy levels 10fold lower than the energy of a single photon in the green wavelength...

And:

The performance of the human ear would be as remarkable for a carefully engineered device as it is for a product of evolution. The frequency response of a normal human ear extends to 20 kHz... Measured at the eardrum, an ear is sensitive to mechanical stimuli of picometer dimensions [i.e., on the scale of one-trillionth of a meter]. The dynamic range of human hearing encompasses 120 dB of sound-pressure level (SPL), a millionfold range in input amplitude and a trillionfold range of stimulus power. Explaining how the ear meets these technical specifications is a major challenge for biophysics. (Reichenbach & Hudspeth, 2015).

In the words of two other leaders in the field of auditory psychophysics (LeMasurier & Gillespie, 2005):

The performance of the mammalian [including human] auditory system is awe-inspiring. The cochlea, the organ responsible for auditory signal transduction, responds to sound-induced vibrations and converts these mechanical signals into electrical impulses, a process known as mechanoelectrical transduction.... *The hallmarks of cochlear transduction are incredible sensitivity, versatility, and speed.*

At threshold, [humans] can detect signals with intensities less than one-billionth that of atmospheric pressure. Remarkably, to detect these minute signals, the cochlea amplifies them. Amplification endows the human inner ear with a tremendous dynamic range; we respond to

sound pressures spanning seven orders of magnitude. The frequency range of human hearing is also impressive; a healthy ear can detect sounds of 20–20,000 Hz.”

Recent research has demonstrated that (large) artificial atoms can be made to direct sound vibrational waves, or phonons (“particles” of sound analogous to photons of light), which appear to be potentially capable of communicating information for utilization in quantum information transfer, as in quantum computing (Gustafsson et al., 2014). Whether there is any implication for auditory hyperacuity in “sensory-perceptual adepts,” such as the advanced yogic practitioners who are the subject of the present paper, remains to be seen, and probably the only way to determine such possibilities would be through direct research on such adepts. Similarly, it would of interest to investigate the potential for other forms of infrasonic capacities in such individuals, like the sensing of certain forms of geophysical and astrophysical phenomena (Haak 2006; Bushell, in progress). Such a proposition may be warranted because of (a) anecdotal claims on the part of such adepts (Seaberg, 2018) for such kinds of geophysical and astrophysical “sensings” or perceptions; (b) because of the newly discovered scales, sensitivities, and levels of precision that the human sensorium is now recognized to perform at; and (c) the fact that advanced adept practitioners of certain forms of observational meditation are capable of controlling attention to the level that the signal-to-noise ratio of their sensations in orders of magnitude higher than normal subjects, as indicated by measurements of sensory-perceptual performance levels (Carter et al., 2005; Lutz et al., 2004; Cahn et al., 2013; and see below).

We already know that sound is a major modality for yogic practice in various branches within Vajrayāna, including in the Great Perfection, the same traditions that also practice dark retreats (e.g., Ponlop, 2008; see also



Chaoul, 2009). Again, stillness and attention are clearly involved in achieving any form of enhanced sensory perceptual functioning. In the states of profound stillness and acutely tuned attention which have been experimentally demonstrated with advanced practitioners, including in terms of sound (Cahn et al., 2013, also cited above), it is quite possible that the sense of audition could extend beyond the formal auditory organs (ears) and involve parts of the somatosensory system responding to the same vibrational stimulation, producing a subtle “sense” of vibrational energy (e.g., Fletcher, 2007). As described immediately below, the sensitivity of human somatosensory systems, such as the tactile/haptic sense, has also recently been found to far exceed previous estimates of performance capacities.

### **Human Tactile Sense Extends to the Nanoscale**

Very recent research has demonstrated that the human tactile sense extends down to the level of nanometers, in other words within billionths of a meter (Skedung, 2013); previous experimental studies had indicated that the limits of the tactile sense of the fingertip was orders of magnitude higher (less sensitive, ie ranging from millimeters to microns). A major reason for the new discovery was improved technology (including the use of atomic force microscopy) and methodology, but interestingly, the research was not motivated by any sense that the human sensorium possessed greater range than already believed. In fact, the extreme results were discovered almost serendipitously, and clearly unexpectedly, as part of a more or less routine research foray into human tactile sensitivity within the context of developing human-machine interfaces for use in virtual reality (VR), robotics, AI, and other ergonomic functions in consumer product design. Again, the unexpected discoveries reveal that human capacities,

including but not limited to the human sensorium (see Bushell, 2009a for discussion of yogic meditational means of radically enhancing cognitive functioning as well), are often in many ways on a par with the best of human-produced technology. What we are actually witnessing here, in the reviewing of this new, unexpected, and extraordinary scientific data, is a cultural divide between the West and a culture – the Vajrayāna – which has recognized for centuries that intensive and extensive training in yogic meditational methodologies, technologies, can lead to the development of “sensory-perceptual adepts” to “hyperperceivers” although it is probably the case that this recognition may be mostly limited to more esoteric (expert) contexts within these cultures. Ironically or paradoxically, it is Western science and technology which are producing evidence supportive of this proposition – and apparently to some significant extent inadvertently – that the “human potential” of the body and sensorium is greater than assumed. Below the discussion further focuses on how such latent capacities may be channeled for potentially commensurate epistemological, scientific, goals.

**Recent Discoveries demonstrate that Human Beings can Discriminate over One Trillion Olfactory Stimuli through Mechanisms that may include Quantum Tunneling of Electrons, with Detection arising through Vibrational Signatures**

Up until 2014, the scientific literature on human olfaction generally held that humans were capable of discriminating about 10,000 olfactory stimuli. In 2014 physicists and neurobiologists from Rockefeller University published a ground-breaking paper in the leading journal *Science*, which proved that over one trillion olfactory stimuli were in fact discriminable by humans (Bushdid et al., 2014). During the same recent period, biophysicists and sensory

neuroscientists have been attempting to determine the mechanisms by which olfaction operates, and the two leading theories are: the molecular shapes of olfactory stimuli fit into receptors which then produce neural signals to the olfactory system, the so-called “lock and key” model; while the other model maintains that each olfactory stimulus is recognized by receptors when electron tunneling from the stimulus into the receptors occurs, with vibrational patterns unique for each stimulus, the so-called quantum “swipe card” model, in which the quantum vibrational information of the stimulus is read by the receptor, which then in turn neurally signals the olfactory nervous system (e.g., Brookes et al., 2007).

Furthermore, in just the past several years, research into olfaction has discovered that olfactory receptors, though concentrated in the nose, actually are spread throughout the entire body in significant numbers (see Mabberg & Hatt, 2018). The function of these receptors is currently under intense investigation, and at least one major category of functions is the monitoring and detection of disease processes. However, it may turn out that there are many more functions of these olfactory receptors, which are a class of chemoreceptors which function in many ways throughout the body, including as detectors of toxins. It will be interesting to observe the ongoing research findings from this line of research, as well as to consider if there might be any form of connection to conscious awareness of the activities of chemoreception generally throughout the body, especially in light of the new findings reviewed so far in this paper, and in terms of some of the basic emerging principles and propositions emerging from those findings, to be reviewed and interpreted below.

## **Major Implications and some Applications of the New Data on the Human Sensorium in the Context of the Present Model or Framework**

Progressively within the last decades, and particularly the last few years, a new picture of the radical capacities in the human sensorium has been emerging. However, the data and information have *not* been actually emerging into the public awareness – as I often find. Much of the knowledge remains at the periphery of the general public awareness, if at all, and even the same situation exists within the scientific community, where knowledge often remains within the precincts of insular fields and subfields of specialization.

A major reason for this state of affairs, as mentioned above and elsewhere (Bushell, 2009, 2016), is that there is no concept in the West, as there is in certain realms of Vajrayāna (and other yogic) cultures, of “sensory-perceptual adepts” or “virtuosi,” and also that the sensory-perceptual “findings” of such adepts possess great significance, as is asserted in the main thesis of this paper – at least provisionally.

The provisional nature of the thesis, or hypothesis, is that it is subject to further critical analysis and challenge, as is every legitimate scientific model or framework. Indeed, this particular model or framework is very much in its beginning stages, and as yet has many gaps and unmapped areas – especially when one considers that the final state of the model should be to scientifically demonstrate and explain how yogic direct perception can actually fully “access” direct and immediate empirical knowledge of the particulate nature (the “fabric”?) of the universe – as certain Vajrayanists claim, and as does the present author, provisionally – based on the outcome of the necessary integrative scientific process, consisting of model generation

and empirical/experimental investigation. If that process is indeed to prove fruitful at all.

I would say at this point in the process that there is a very long way to go towards this landmark. At the same time, particularly within the context of the extraordinary discoveries regarding the human sensorium of the last few years, it seems to me unlikely that this evidence used here to attempt to support the Vajrayāna claims, and the claims themselves, will be found to have no relevance and no substance in terms of the epistemological assertions, and the concomitant *ontic commitments* of the assertions. In other words, I am excited about the journey ahead for this model, as I have been since it was originally conceived, some time ago.

In briefly review, the recent discoveries in psychophysics and sensory-perceptual neuroscience concerning the human sensorium are radical and startling. The crude and powerful inertial effect is to at least inspire and imply that such human capacities, when marshalled and curated appropriately through highly developed yogic techniques, must have at least some relevance to the world in which we find ourselves, based on the fact that these sensory-perceptual faculties are operating on the very levels of the photon, the atom, the nanoscale, the latter also a level at which much of physical importance is occurring in the existence of the universe.

Furthermore, the yogic regimen clearly appears to be utilizing, and based on, sound psychophysical and neuroscientific principles which have been robustly established: perceptual learning is a robust phenomenon which is based on an equally robust mechanism, that of neuroplasticity. Practice produces changes in the “wetware” of the brain, retina, and other components of the nervous system, “tuning” the structural and functional dimensions in the direction of the desired outcomes, especially in this

context, the extended development and enhancement of hyperacuity. Intensive and extensive practice, *deliberate practice*, over time leads to “expert and exceptional performance,” a field of research founded and pioneered by the Nobel Prize-winning founder of AI and cognitive psychology, Herbert A Simon, and his student K Anders Ericsson (see Ericsson et al., in Bushell et al., 2009). This field has provided a highly productive framework for the investigation of the full range of expertise and exceptional performance, including in the cases of chess masters, mathematical prodigies, savants, “geniuses,” virtuoso musicians, mnemonists, calculating prodigies, elite athletes, and more. The same quasi-universal principles seem to apply to expert yoga/meditation practitioners or “adepts,” as I have discussed in more depth elsewhere (Bushell, 2009a.)

Also of primary importance in terms of rigorous principles employed and developed in the yogic regimen, as mentioned above, is the yogic ability to radically enhance sensory-perceptual and attentional performance through the maximization of the signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio. The ability to control attention to the unprecedented extent demonstrated in the experimental neuroscientific context enables utilization of sensory-perceptual capacities by adept yoga practitioners that will guarantee maximal “expression” of the potential of “newly discovered” range of these capacities.

While there is something of an absence of a unified framework within Western neuroscience and psychophysics to understand the full implications of these new discoveries – many researchers are relatively unaware of findings outside their specializations, and there is also no concept of the unified significance of them in toto – some generalizations are emerging, as expressed by the researchers quoted in this review. One prominent type of

implication, as already mentioned, is the positive comparison of the human senses to human-designed and made technological apparatus, devices, sensors, detectors. Earlier recognition of this trend led me to extrapolate the idea, and coin the term, “soft tissue-high tech” to describe the human visual system (Bushell, 2009a), and more recently, to describe the entire human sensorium.

Indeed, when one considers the procedural rigor and absolute discipline with which the Vajrayāna yogic meditational regimen is pursued, and one simultaneously keeps in mind the framework of extreme precision and profound scale that we now know characterizes the human sensorium; one can regard the application of the senses to the phenomenological (in both its physics sense, and its philosophical sense) level of the “partless particles of matter, energy, space, and time” as a form of technological as well as scientific activity. We can consider the adept as engaging in the *deployment* of apparatus, of highly sophisticated and powerful “soft tissue high tech” detectors, sensors, sensory-perceptual devices, for “the data acquisition process.” The range, or assemblage, of these independent modality detectors (in Vajrayāna yogic-analytical terminology, the “eye consciousness,” the “ear consciousness,” etc) is actually physically *deployed* to detect, to gather empirical data. In Hatchell’s recent brilliant book (2014) *Naked Seeing*, he provides the scholarly exegesis to demonstrate that in the Kalachakra, the Great Perfection, and the Bon traditions, all in key formative stages of their development throughout the Vajrayāna Himalaya (~10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries), the quest for the *prehension* (Whitehead) of emptiness is not exclusively nor even primarily through philosophical analysis – although that is of course absolutely necessary to guide and clarify “the data processing of the detected data” – but also via empirical means, and in a most sophisticated sense. This

point is made emphatically and clearly by Klein, too, in her discussion of *yogic direct perception* in the Gelugpa tradition.

In the next stage of this model development, there will be the fuller consideration of how the honed and tuned senses – optimally developed through deliberate practice amplification of perceptual learning, and the achievement of optimal signal-to noise ratio in their functioning – are integrated across multisensory domains to produce performance outcomes which are beyond the levels of unimodal performance. One of the hottest topics in psychophysics and sensory-perceptual neuroscience currently is the field of multisensory integration/ synesthesia, which has been discovering that when multiple sense modalities are in use simultaneously, sensory-perceptual performance often is found to significantly increase (e.g., Lugo et al., 2008; van Leeuwen et al., 2016). Apparently, again, the Vajrayāna yoga meditation system has been ahead of the knowledge curve in this regard as well: acknowledgement of the superior sensory-perceptual access to the world, including on the level of the particulate, via combined senses, has been established in Vajrayāna practice for centuries (Brown 2006; Bushell & Seaberg, 2011; Bushell & Thurman, 2011; Bushell & Seaberg, 2012, and see Bushell, in progress).

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# **Neuroscience and Buddhist Practice: apparent bridges and barriers.**

*Suzanne Cochrane*

## **Abstract**

Neuroscientists have been researching Buddhist practitioners for around 50 years (since the 1960s) and the scientific research of Buddhist-based meditation practices has grown exponentially in the past decade with hundreds of new studies every year. This paper aims to explore what conclusions these examinations of “the Buddhist brain” have made in both cognitive functioning and neuro-anatomy. These results lead me to ask: has the research assisted in building a bridge between Buddhism (contemplative science) and (Western) science? Has it improved clinical outcomes in health care by bringing Buddhist practices into the clinic? Has our understanding of consciousness expanded? What value has this research brought to neuroscience and to health care and most importantly how has it benefited Buddhism? Practices, such as those of Buddhists, are ‘collective possessions and accomplishments sustained through interaction and mutual adjustment among people’ over extended time and in particular places. Does the scientific method currently used to assess Buddhist practices have the capacity to ‘measure’ shared, collective, enmeshed activities bound in an ethical foundation?

## **Introduction**

Neuroscience is a term coined in 1962 and in 1992 functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) was first used to map activity in the human brain. Neuroscience is essentially brain and neurology focused with particular attention given to observation, quantification and the identification of mechanistic causation. In the same way that mapping the human genome became a collective scientific project there have been calls for a combined 'Brain Activity Map Project'. "Understanding how the brain works is arguably one of the greatest scientific challenges of our time. Although there have been piecemeal efforts to explain how different brain regions operate, no general theory of brain function is universally accepted" (Alivisatos et al., 2012). These researchers argue that what is required is a more precise way of imaging complex neuronal activity which will open up 'emergent-level richness'. Elsewhere they propose a national network of neurotechnology centres to enhance and accelerate the 'BRAIN Initiative' – a network of 'brain observatories'. Much of their writing indicates that it will be 'new' technology that will open up the puzzle of the brain rather than 'new' ideas or discoveries. Showing a propensity for new words neuroscientists talk about the 'connectome' and 'connectomics' which they hope will connect brain dynamics and physiology to cognitive function and dysfunction (Kopell, Gritton, Whittington, & Kramer, 2014).

Contemporary research looking for mechanistic causation focuses on the physical body, specifically the brain. Clinically the technological developments within neuroscience have given cognitive rehabilitation, for e.g., 'objective' measurement instruments to assess whether the rehabilitation exercises have been successful (Nordvik et al., 2014). The possibility of the existence of a measurable materialist base for cognition is attractive to clinicians and

scientists. Retraining the impaired ‘brain’ rather than the ‘person’ is a characteristic of much clinical discourse.

### **Studies of Buddhist practice**

Since its inception in the 1960s, the scientific research of Buddhist-based meditation practices has grown exponentially with hundreds of new studies every year in the past decade. Publications on neuroscience and meditation, for example, have been rapidly growing from only 28 in 2001 to 397 papers listed in ISI during 2011 (Tang & Posner, 2013). David Vago (2014) and his colleagues (Desbordes et al., 2015; Van Dam et al., 2018) (using the term ‘contemplative neuroscience’) are contributing to the context of therapeutic interventions and other practical applications of mindfulness. There is enough research done on observation and quantification of the effects of mindfulness-based meditation practices, and not (strong) enough theory to explain it. Their primary question asks what are the mechanisms of mindfulness-based meditation practices. Their aim is to provide neural mechanisms, and in doing so, use neural correlates of psychological experience. Such studies have led to general interest in mindfulness and other meditative methods.

The conclusions of ‘science’ about Buddhist practices such as meditation are still not unequivocal although generally positive. Neuroscience has expressed its fascination with Buddhist meditation (and other contemplative practices) by testing individual meditators, comparing them with other groups or less frequent meditators or non-meditators and using a bevy of assessment instruments to establish what happens in a meditating brain. A summary-survey of the field examining the effectiveness and mechanisms of action for MBSR by Bishop (2002) concludes that the evidence thus far does not strongly support its use for mental wellbeing, due to the lack of good studies free of



methodological problems, yet further research is strongly recommended. Ospina et al. (2007) conclude that while meditation practices produce significant changes for healthy individuals, there is no firm evidence for its effectiveness in alleviating stress, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, or substance abuse. Marchand (2012) found that studies of mindfulness-based meditation practices on brain function and brain structure in all major brain lobes. Eberth and Sedlmeier (2012) examine mindfulness practice's effects outside clinical settings and conclude effects of "higher psychological well-being" on measures of "positive and negative emotions, emotion regulation, personality traits, self-concept, self-realization, stress, and wellbeing." Goyal et al. (2014) which did a comprehensive systematic review (of over 18,000 citations) and meta-analysis concludes moderate evidence for mindfulness-based meditation practices effectiveness for anxiety, depression, and pain.

### **Bridges between science and Buddhism**

Neuroscientific studies have brought a particular arm of science into dialogue with some Buddhists. Geoffrey Samuel argues that contemporary engagement of Buddhism with science is different from the early Sri Lankan dialogues initiated by Theravadan Buddhists to resist the colonising forces that included science (Samuel, 2014). Recently the dominant Buddhist tradition being engaged with science is the Mahayana Tibetan form. This engagement is driven partly by the ambition of the Dalai Lama<sup>77</sup> "[O]ne fundamental attitude shared by Buddhism and science is the commitment to deep searching for reality by empirical means and to be willing to discard accepted or long-held positions if our search finds that the truth is different" Dalai

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<sup>77</sup> Through the 'Mind and Life Conference'

Lama, as cited in Samuel (2014, p. 568). Samuel points out that what happens in this process is less a dialogue between equal systems of thought than an assimilation of the more “acceptable” elements within Tibetan and Buddhist thought into an essentially Western context of ideas. If this is what is going on, he suggests we are perhaps missing an opportunity for a fuller and more genuine dialogue.

A distinct advantage of this engagement has been that the benefits of meditation are broadcast widely outside Asia and small groups of Buddhist devotees. A message that has emerged from this research is that experience matters, thus providing a template for practice that emphasises repetition and commitment. A further theme is that of neuroplasticity. The brain is not fixed. It can be influenced and changed by practices such as meditation. Perhaps this is the most meaningful outcome from the engagement of neuroscientists and Buddhists.

### **Barriers emerging between science and Buddhism**

When examining this short history of encounter, a few deep concerns have emerged. One of the key issues is that neuroscience imports a particular view of what is truth and how to know it. The (Western) positivist perspective is that what can be measured by scientific method is truth. This is grounded in reductive materialism where the focus is on mechanistic causal explanations of meditation by researchers which provide an incomplete understanding of meditative practices. Neuroscience is based on dependence of mind on brain. It ignores the existence of consciousness independent of the brain (or even body) and focuses too much on the localized, explicit, and foreground, but not enough on the whole, implicit, and background processes in meditative practices.

Question arises as to whether science is a final source of authoritative knowledge! particularly in relation to Budd-

hist practice. Perhaps a new colonising process is underway. When we can measure some things, they become the important. Western science is not interested in practices other than techniques. Science as it is practised is not valuing the embedded, the embodied, the social, and the contextual factors. What is declared evidence of 'change' from meditation, for example, narrows to that which can be isolated and analysed. Asia has been experiencing, and resisting, such colonising practices from the West for centuries. It would be a tragedy if sophisticated practices such as those undertaken by Buddhists were to be reduced to MRI and ECG images.

### **Brain as only part of the story**

Consciousness and experience are central to the brain in neuroscience yet there is increasing evidence that this is embodied beyond the actual brain organ. The following are some examples of non-brain contributors to consciousness:

#### **Heart**

East Asian languages all locate (or associate) the mind with the heart. In Chinese, the term for 'mind' nearly always contains the character for 'heart' (xīn 心) and this character is often translated as heart or mind.<sup>78</sup> The attribution of intelligence to the heart organ has a long history in many cultures. Within science there is a new field of neurocardiology which has firmly established that the heart is a sensory organ and an information encoding and processing centre, with an "extensive intrinsic nervous system that's sufficient-

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<sup>78</sup> See the discussion on this blog by Victor Mair for a very detailed discussion of the translation of xīn 心  
<http://languageblog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=14807>

ly sophisticated to qualify as a heart brain. Its circuitry enables it to learn, remember, and make functional decisions independent of the cranial brain. The findings have demonstrated that the heart's intrinsic nervous system is a complex, self-organized system; its neuroplasticity, or ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections over both the short and long term, has been well demonstrated" (McCraty, Atkinson, Tomasino, & Bradley, 2009; Noetic Systems International, 2014). Researchers have described a neurovisceral integration model (Thayer & Lane, 2009) to explain heart-brain connections.

### **Gastrointestinal tract**

The brain and the digestive system interacts. Attention, cognition and free will, that are higher level mental processes (and therefore with major impacts on behaviour) are all influenced by our gastrointestinal tract, our choice of food and our ability to digest this food. And there is of course a new name neurogastroenterology which is defined as "neurology of the gastrointestinal tract, liver, gallbladder and pancreas and encompasses control of digestion through the enteric nervous system (ENS), the central nervous system (CNS) and integrative centers in sympathetic ganglia" (Furness, 2012). The enteric nervous system can control functions of the intestine even when separated from the central nervous system although the key to its importance is as an extensive reflex control system for digestive function working with the CNS and neural pathways that pass through the sympathetic ganglia.

### **Microbiome**

Gut microbiota is essential to human health, playing a major role in the bidirectional communication between the gastrointestinal tract and the central nervous system (Borre et al., 2014). "Recent findings ...point to surprising roles for

the microbiome in shaping brain development and behaviour” (Veenstra-VanderWeele, 2014). In experiments where infant mice are raised from birth, the introduction of gut bacteria to the adult mice raised in sterile conditions did not result in any change in their behaviour, pointing to the importance of the microbiome during early development. Beyond behavioural alterations, the mice also showed myriad changes in the brain, including altered neurotransmitter turnover and synaptic proteins. Again, in mice the administration of probiotics reduced levels of anxiety in the mice.

It is enough to quote the evidence: “Accumulating clinical and scientific research-based evidence is driving our increased awareness of the significance of the human microbiome (HM) to the healthy and homeostatic operation of the human central nervous system (CNS). HM communities occupy several different but distinct microbial ecosystems on and within the human body, including nasal, oral, and otic cavities, the surface of the skin and the urogenital and the gastrointestinal (GI) tracts. The complex symbiotic inter-relationship between the GI-tract microbiome and its host is strongly influenced by diet and nutrition, and when optimized can be highly beneficial to food digestion, nutrient intake, and immune health” (Hill, Ebhattacharjee, Pogue, & Lukiw, 2014).

### **Tacit knowledge**

There is knowledge that is not ‘discursive’ – that is, the knowing does not become expressed in words nor explicit thought – but resides elsewhere within the body and seems to bypass the brain. Look at a craftsperson working with their chosen material – for example, a woodworker with a piece of wood and one sees an intelligent hand assessing the material; or a musician adjusting their body to the musical demands in order to play their instrument; or a martial artist

assessing their opponent with their body; or the ease with which some people can manage parenting. This knowledge has been referred to as 'tacit' (Sennett, 2008) and has been much explored in management studies to assess how to 'capture and transfer' it in the workplace.

### **Social context**

The collective influences the individual. Attention given to the social context identifies how populations and individual bodies are shaped and influenced by forces that we call 'social'. This too is true of the individual brain and the mind that is said to reside there. Habitat is as important to the human animal as it is to the songbirds.

If we remain within a science paradigm as it is currently configured we lose sight of the other actors on human consciousness. Evan Thompson argues that "living is sense-making in precarious conditions" (Thompson, 2011, p. 118). He sees a dynamic interaction between the interior and exterior "living beings enacting environments that pull them along into certain rhythms, behaviours, and internal transformations...In Welton's words: '*The organism enacts an environment as the environment entrains the organism. Both are necessary and neither, by itself, is sufficient for the process of sense-making*'" (Thompson, 2011, p. 120).

### **The baggage of neuroscience**

Implicit within neuroscience is Cartesian dualism which sets a divide between nature and culture. Natureculture is not a binary but two aspects of the one phenomenon. When we believe in duality, we create duality in the world....Once established, a binary landscape of nature and nonnature reinforces itself (Haskell, 2017, p. 178). We are connected within ourselves and with each other and with all 'nature' relationships and connections are the principles/practices that produce life and liveliness. Not

competition as Darwin would have it! Buddhism offers us a nondualistic understanding of the self that does not privilege the brain.

## Conclusion

This critique notes that the methodology used in neuroscientific studies focuses too much on the localized, explicit, and foreground, but not enough on the whole, implicit, and background processes in meditative practices (Cheung, 2017).

A more sophisticated exploration of neuroplasticity has not displaced the mechanistic and reductionist impulses in neuroscience but it has forced neuroscientists to look more broadly at how and why change occurs in an experimental and clinical setting. Pity the suffering of all the sentient beings used as experimental 'guinea pigs' to further this knowledge.

We are radically inter-dependent and not just on other people. Key aspects of the self as we experience it, cannot be separated from their wider social, historical and ecological (and spiritual) context. If we reduce our view (through science) to the mechanics of the brain we risk reducing our lives and our understandings of possibilities.

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# **Meditation and ethics in education**

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## **Introduction**

Since the 1980s, mindfulness meditation has progressively become popular in various contexts, including educational settings. More recently, it has been positioned within a broader framework of contemplative teaching and learning as a way of cultivating the holistic development of students. In this article, a new project focused on the introduction of meditation practices into education, initiated in 2017 by a group of international researchers and educators, is presented and its goals, content, and potential implementations are outlined. The project entitled “Meditation and ethics for educators” aims to incorporate meditation and ethical foundations into educational settings by designing a teacher-training programme. This can enable both educators and their students to develop new approaches to learning in creative ways. The programme is largely founded upon and inspired by Buddhist meditative and ethical training and explores their implementation in contemporary secular educational environments. Within the framework of the project, a manual for educators is being developed, providing the main structure and instruction to train teachers. The programme will initially be trialled in a few selected schools participating in the project, with subsequent research on its applications and efficacy.

The programme aims to investigate new approaches to education, often drawing inspiration from the vast heritage of knowledge, especially concerned with contemplation, which developed for many centuries in Asia around the traditions that we call today “Buddhism.” It has to be noted

at the very beginning of this article that in this programme, the rich repository of teachings and practices, which is labelled today with the term “Buddhism,” is viewed here as a common human heritage rather than a particular *-ism* or “religion.” In the ancient Indian cultures from which Buddhism originated and within which it flourished for many centuries, no specific concept, category or word for “religion” as such existed. Only in the encounter with the West during colonisation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were various living traditions of Asia, which centred around the notion of the Buddha and his teachings, labelled as “Buddhism” (McMahan, 2008). Since the modern construction of the concept of “Buddhism,” its contemplative practices and ethical teachings have been viewed somewhat narrowly as a component of a “religion” and, consequently, have been sidestepped in secular settings, such as education. In this way, the pronounced ethical components of traditional meditation teachings were stripped away, especially by the contemporary secular mindfulness movement. Contrasting with this, the programme “Meditation and ethics for educators,” outlined in this article, aims to introduce a broader, more holistic approach to meditation in education, which includes an exploration of ethics<sup>79</sup> and incorporates deeper questions, such as the roots of human suffering and happiness, or questions about constructs of identity.

This article briefly introduces the fast-growing field of the teaching of meditation in educational contexts and overviews existing teacher training programmes related to

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<sup>79</sup> The term “ethics” is used here broadly as an equivalent for the Pāli word *silā*, usually translated as “character, habit, behaviour; moral practice, good character, Buddhist ethics, code of morality” (Pāli-English Dictionary, sv).

mindfulness. Then it describes the new pilot project, called “Meditation and ethics for educators,” outlining its proposed central premises, overall structure and the main goals. How the programme is enriched by Buddhist traditions, suitably adapted to make them relevant to the students of the twenty first century, is also discussed. One of the main aims of this article is to invite scholars, educators and practitioners who are involved in educational or other relevant fields to participate in the programme, enrich it by contributing innovative ideas and exploring the pathways to introduce it into Bhutan and other countries with appropriate cultural sensitivity and modifications.

### Teaching mindfulness in schools

As discussed elsewhere,<sup>80</sup> meditation is an important component of the Buddhist soteriological project, closely interrelated with and linked to ethical training, which encompasses right speech, right action and right livelihood. Mindfulness (Pāli *sati*, Sanskrit *smṛti*, Tibetan *dran pa*) is an integral part of this meditative training, often explained as the ‘wakefulness’ which occurs together with clear comprehension (Pāli *sampajañña*, Sanskrit *samprajñāna*. Tibetan *shes bzhin*), and is presented as an ethical guardian and foundation for the development of wisdom (Pāli *paññā*, Sanskrit *prajñā*, Tibetan *shes rab*), i.e., an insight into impermanence, non-satisfactoriness and absence of an intrinsic permanent self, or an understanding of the empty nature of all phenomena.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, meditation has been situated as the central component of Buddhist teachings and practices, and mindfulness started to be

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<sup>80</sup> This section very briefly summarizes previous research in Ditrich, 2017b and 2016b.

regarded as the practice that could be cultivated not only by monastics but also by the lay population in everyday life.<sup>81</sup> With the growing popularisation of mindfulness practices in the West since the 1970s, it was gradually taken out of its Buddhist contexts, and applied in new settings, largely as a psychotherapeutic tool and a method for the enhancement of wellbeing. To date, many new programmes for teaching mindfulness have been designed, largely based on the pioneering work by Kabat-Zinn, the “Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction” programme (MBSR), developed in the late 1970s. In the new therapeutic contexts, mindfulness training has been largely understood as “paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment to moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). This definition is in many respects very different from the traditional Buddhist perspective, which presents mindfulness always in conjunction with other components of the eightfold path, firmly grounded in the cultivation of skilful/wholesome mental states and ethical behaviour, aiming at a profound transformation of consciousness and the development of insight into the empty nature of all phenomena comprising human experience (Ditrich, 2017b).

Numerous studies on the efficacy of modern mindfulness programmes for adults indicate positive outcomes, with an overall moderate effect size (de Vibe et al., 2012; Khoury et al., 2013), although it has been pointed out that several methodological issues require more attention (Fox et al., 2014; Sedlmeier et al., 2012; Thomas & Cohen, 2014). The

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<sup>81</sup> Historical circumstances that contributed to the positioning of mindfulness meditation at the forefront are discussed in Sharf, 1995; McMahan, 2008; Braun, 2013; Ditrich, 2016a.

generally perceived benefits of mindfulness interventions set off further (perhaps somewhat under-theorized) expansion of its applications in new settings, such as in various forms of psychotherapy, prisons, wellness industries, the corporate world and schools. It was only in the last decade that several programmes for teaching mindfulness to children and youth started to emerge, nevertheless, their growth has been rapid. The mindfulness training programmes for youth largely replicate the programmes for adults; they are taught by mindfulness instructors or by classroom teachers who have usually received some prior training. Mindfulness is taught in schools after-hours or incorporated into the daily school curriculum, such as MindUP (Maloney et al., 2016) and Inner Kids (Galla, Kaiser-Greenland & Black, 2016). Several studies indicate positive outcomes, which include stress reduction, increased attention, emotional balance, greater wellbeing and improved academic achievements (Kuyken et al., 2013; Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz & Walach, 2014). Research indicates small to moderate effect size, with the main benefits being stress relief and improved student wellbeing. Several methodological issues in the existing studies have been pointed out (Greenberg & Harris, 2011; Black, 2015), including a need to develop a theoretical model for contemplative education, which would allow a better quality of research and teaching (Zajonc, 2016). Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2016, p. 12–14) recommended that developmentally and culturally more appropriate mindfulness programmes need to develop, with the integration of mindfulness at a whole school level.

With the growth of mindfulness programmes designed for youth, training programmes for educators started to occur as well. Some of these focus only on teacher training and do not include a specific curriculum for students; for example, the “Inner Resilience” programme trains teachers

in emotional skills, caring and listening practices, as well as mindfulness (Lantieri et al., 2016); the “Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education” (CARE) programme aims to increase teachers’ awareness and calmness in the class (Jennings, 2015). Other programmes- together with the training for teachers- also incorporate instructions on how to implement different mindfulness practices and activities in the classroom, underlining how important it is that teachers are trained in mindfulness first and then embody their experiences and knowledge in their work with students (Shapiro et al., 2015, p. 93). A training like this is offered by the “Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP)”, where the teachers, prior to implementing mindfulness in the class, are expected to complete an eight week training in mindfulness (such as MBSR or MBCT), followed by a threeor four-day course specifically for teachers. Similarly, the training programme “Mindful Schools” trains educators by firstly teaching them to develop their own practice through a six-week online course, and if they intend to implement it in the class, they are expected to attend a six-week course, where they receive training on how to teach mindfulness to students of different ages. Training courses for teachers are offered partly or sometimes entirely online (e.g., “Mindful Education Online Training”).

Although research on the efficacy of mindfulness programmes for teachers is still very much at an early stage, the studies available do indicate that most teachers evaluate the programmes as very beneficial (Roeser et al., 2013, p. 787), with the main positive outcomes reported being stress reduction, increased emotional regulation, self-efficacy, compassion and mindfulness (Emerson et al., 2017). In addition, studies show that practicing mindfulness increases teachers’ resilience, creativity, awareness and presence in the class (Skinner & Beers, 2016), as well as enhances motivation, flexibility, self-compassion and the



capacity to create quality learning environments (Jennings, 2015).

### **A new programme for teaching meditation and ethics for educators**

Although the existing mindfulness programmes for educators and students are, according to several studies, moderately effective in reducing stress and enhancing wellbeing, usually they do not explore or address the deeper roots of stress and other challenges in education or in broader society, which cannot be profoundly linked to ethical issues in the contemporary world. With a premise that Buddhist teachings could inform and contribute to current mindfulness programmes in education, a new meditation training programme for high school students was developed in Australia in 2013–2014. The programme was based on a design initially developed by the author as a postgraduate course on meditation, which was modified and taught to high school students by an experienced high school teacher, Catherine Ramos. The programme comprised training in mindfulness, concentration, loving kindness and compassion, with a strong emphasis on the cultivation of ethical values and behaviour. Its efficacy was evaluated through a pilot research project, conducted in 2014 in an Australian high school, which indicated positive outcomes and provided some directions for further development of meditation programmes in education (Ditrich, 2017a). One of the outcomes of this study was recognition of the need for developing comprehensive teacher training programmes in meditation, which has also been indicated by several recent studies on mindfulness in education (e.g., Lantieri et al., 2016; Jennings, 2016).

Having successfully taught the twelve-week programme in several high schools in Australia over a number of years, a short meditation training programme for school

teachers was developed in 2015 and has been taught ever since to a range of educators, usually in a seminar or workshop format.

Participants' feedback about this programme indicated a need for a more comprehensive programme and, consequently, a new project, called "Meditation and ethics for educators," was initiated in 2017 involving a group of international researchers and educators. This article outlines its central premises, aims, structure and content, which is also inspired and informed by Buddhist teachings.

### **Aims of the programme**

The main aim is to develop a programme for educators, encompassing meditation and an exploration of ethical values, which they could implement in their lives and then introduce in educational processes, in an appropriate way for their culture and particular age groups. A large component of the programme is a manual for educators, which is currently being developed. The programme will be offered in 2019 in Australia as a university subject for students of education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels across two tertiary institutions. It will be also implemented and tested in a few selected schools, in conjunction with research about their applications and outcomes.

This programme was conceived as an attempt to creatively respond to current societal issues (such as environmental challenges, increasing greed through unbridled consumerism, various forms of conflicts and identity clash, violence and wars, to name a few) that are inevitably reflected, more or less, in educational settings. It is believed that these issues need to be addressed at a deeper level, by trying to understand the roots of the (unnecessarily) large scale of human suffering and offer young generations new options and directions in facing the challenges they will inherit. The views of the author and the research team stem

from a premise that Buddhist teachings can serve as an inspiration for, and inform educational programmes in dealing with issues in new ways. This is by no means the first attempt to find new options and alternative models in addressing human problems, in education as well as elsewhere. The innovative aspect of this programmes lays in its proposal of an educative model in which meditation, which forms a large component of the project, is presented not only as a method for stress relief and improved well-being, but also as a holistic life skill, strongly linked to ethical conduct and, it is hoped, the programme can inspire and enhance innovative responses to current social issues. Such an approach to education, at a deeper level, is intrinsically linked to the question about what kind of knowledge and skills new generations need in the twenty-first century. Thus, this programme intends to focus not only on *how* but also on *what* students need to learn or, in other words, it attempts to link reflective and contemplative approaches to learning to the content of the teaching through an exploration of more fundamental ethical and existential concerns, such as the question of the meaning of life and the human potential for a deeper ethical transformation.

### **Structure and content of the programme**

Unlike most of the existing mindfulness training courses for teachers, the present programme is not designed in a fully set format-one model fits all - but instead leaves considerable space for teachers' creativity, innovation and adaptation to particular cultural circumstances, especially in its class implementation components. The programme provides a comprehensive foundational framework, clearly articulates its ethical aims and delineates the areas of learning, contemplation and exploration, while offering concrete ideas and hands-on examples that can serve as the

starting point. It opens a space for enquiry about how to approach teaching embedded in contemplation, meditation and ethical sensibility; it is hoped that such an exploration may serve as a venue for investigation of new methodologies in education and by involving participants in the interpretation of the programme foster their creative responses.

The programme is currently envisaged as the following ten larger topics or modules:

1. Introduction to meditation
2. Cultivation of kindness and compassion
3. Qualities of the mind: linking meditation and ethics
4. Meditation on the breath
5. Meditation in daily life
6. Contemplation of the body
7. Meditative movements
8. Contemplation of thoughts and emotions
9. Contemplative enquiry into life
10. Interdependence and interrelations: towards a harmonious world

Each module encompasses three components, i.e., a theoretical background, practical instructions for educators and guidelines for implementation in the classroom. The theoretical component situates the topic in question within a broader context, overviewing it from various perspectives. Past research (Ditrich, 2017a) indicates that the theoretical background is a vital component of the entire programme because it: (a) provides a broad range of information on meditation, ethics and related issues; (b) encourages and inspires further exploration and study; (c) challenges preconceived ideas and attitudes; (d) provides an array of perspectives on the topic in question; (e) allows for reflection and innovative responses. The theoretical understanding is thus considered an important foundational component of the entire programme for educators who would then share

their knowledge in the class, with appropriate modifications as deemed suitable for particular educational settings.

The second component of each module comprises practical instructions for educators on how to implement meditation and contemplation in their own lives. It intends to familiarise them with a range of meditation practices, such as, the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion, mindfulness, concentration, and the investigation of ethics in relation to meditation. It also encourages reflection and creative responses to practical issues in their lives. Each module includes also suggestions for writing a reflective journal and recommends further readings by adding an annotated bibliography.

The third component of each module is the most open-ended one; it delineates some guidelines for educators on how to implement meditation and ethics in the classroom, while leaving plenty of leeway for their inventiveness, encouraging them to modify the ideas given in the programme in creative ways that are appropriate for their culture and particular age groups. The guidelines provide a general framework and instructions on how to teach meditation in the class, describe different meditation methods and approaches, with a great focus on the cultivation of loving kindness, compassion and ethical reflections, which are to be implemented in the class as well as in everyday life. It includes also suggestions for discussion topics, story telling, art work, exploration of links between thoughts (which may be observed in meditation), speech and actions, reflection on the relationship between suffering and unskilful mental states, and the significance of ethical behaviour, compassion and wisdom.

### **Examples from the programme**

To illustrate the content of the programme, a short description of elements from a few modules will be outlined

here. The first module introduces meditation in its broader context, exploring what meditation, contemplation and mindfulness are, how they have been understood and interpreted in various cultures and times. Different models of meditation practice are outlined, and the relationship between meditation and ethics is discussed, with a special focus on mindfulness in its traditional Buddhist framework as well as in its modern interpretations and applications in secular environments. This module delineates the aims of the programme, especially its approaches to the main issues in modern education, such as stress, and discusses how the programme seeks to address not only the symptoms but also the roots or causes of problems through an investigation of the links between suffering, ethical questions and the challenges related to the constructs of identity.

The second module focuses on the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion - the fundamental theme of the entire programme and the foundational thread which is inextricably interwoven through all the modules. In the theoretical component of this module, the great significance of kindness and compassion is discussed from the Buddhist as well as other perspectives. Here the qualities of the Buddhist ideal of *bodhisattva* (including the concept of *bodhicitta*, as well as generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration and wisdom) are examined, and the relationship between kindness, compassion and ethics discussed. This module introduces loving kindness and compassion in conceptual framework as well as in practical applications, predominantly from the Buddhist perspective since meditation on loving kindness (Pali *mettā*, Sanskrit *maitrī*, Tibetan *byams pa*) has been for centuries one of the prominent practices across the Buddhist traditions. The term “loving kindness” refers to the qualities of kindness, love, benevolence and friendliness, which are equally directed to all living beings. It is underlined here that loving

kindness and compassion are compatible with other positive mental qualities, such as mindfulness and wisdom, and are presented as the foundation of ethical thoughts, speech and action (Aronson, 2008; Ditrich, 2018, p. 106–107).

Furthermore, the second module strongly emphasizes the importance of non-violence towards all living beings and the concept of “friendliness” as the foundation of all relationships among humans and their attitudes to the natural world. Examples included in this model often draw from the Buddhist sources where such a relationship is proposed in the form of a virtuous noble friend (Pali *kalyāṇamitta*, Sanskrit *kalyāṇamitra*, Tibetan *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*) whose qualities include kindness, generosity, wisdom, forbearance and reliability (Collins, 1987; Ditrich, 2018, p. 107–108). In the practical component of this module, detailed instructions on the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion meditation are given for educators, both as a part of formal daily practice as well as their applications in everyday life. In addition, guidelines on how to address various challenges in this meditation practice are examined and suggestions on the prevention of negative mental states presented. In this section, a set of questions or points of inquiry for the teacher’s self-evaluation, reflection (e.g., in the form of diary writing) and exploration of potential areas of improvement related to one’s own practice are added.

The third component of the second module suggests guidelines for educators on how to implement meditation on loving kindness and compassion in the classroom in the format of short meditation sessions and, in addition, also proposes how to incorporate them more broadly into the delivery and content of the teaching programmes. Several topics for class discussion are recommended here, for example: investigation of lived experiences during the cultivation of kindness and compassion; what implications loving kindness and compassion may have in one’s every-

day interactions; how loving kindness and compassion counteract anger; what it means to be kind to the natural world; what is the experience and significance of friendship. Suggestions for classroom activities include: meditation on loving kindness towards one's friends, parents, people, animals, all living creatures; telling or reading stories about friendship, kindness and compassion while drawing from one's own cultural heritage; exploring kindness through art, music, songs and dance; cultivating acts of kindness through speech and actions (e.g., caring for animals, helping people). Here educators have much scope to inventively modify the recommendations and activities suggested in the programme, as appropriate for their particular educational environment.

In a similar vein, other modules introduce their main themes in the theoretical component, followed by the guidelines for educators' practice and implementations in the class. Moving progressively from one module to another, the topics build upon the previous ones, however, all of them are interlinked and actually present various facets of the main themes of the programme. Thus, for example, having introduced and explored loving kindness and compassion in the second module as the foundational qualities to be cultivated throughout the programme, the ensuing third module focuses on the cultivation of ethical values, linking them to meditation, particularly mindfulness and loving kindness. It explores: what ethical values are in various cultural contexts; the ways educators can cultivate ethical behaviour within the classroom implicitly and explicitly; how meditation on loving kindness and mindfulness relate to ethical values in the Buddhist context; what is the role of ethics and meditation in conflict resolution and transformation. The practical component of the third module includes instructions on meditation on compassion, practice of generosity, methods to facilitate



conflict transformation, and projects that focus on care for the natural environment, to name a few.

The four following modules focus to a large extent on different objects of meditation, starting with meditation on the breath, considering its significance from various perspectives, such as, viewing it as a stress reduction tools or a method for a deeper enquiry into the experience of life itself. The links between mindfulness of breathing and ethical approaches to life are examined here. Various “hands-on” methods for the cultivation of mindful breathing are given for educators and students, and the benefits and contraindications for this practice are outlined. Similarly, contemplation of the body, thoughts and feelings are introduced in the following modules. The interrelation between the body and mind is presented from different perspectives, both Buddhist and Western, and reflections on the perceptions of one’s own and others’ bodies and the issues around the body image are included here.

The last two modules probe into deeper, more existential questions, such as, the causes of human suffering, the role of meditation and cultivation of virtues as a path to reduce suffering and promote human potential for deep transformation. These modules enquire into how freedom is related to responsibility and what happiness and its causes are. The Buddhist model of interdependent origination is referred to here, especially in the light of the question of a separate “identity” and cooperation among living beings, and the significance and role of friendship. The practical components of the last two modules focus on the transformation of negative states into positive ones, especially the transformation of anger and sadness into kindness and peace.

## Conclusion

Having briefly outlined a few facets of the programme for educators, a restatement would be that this project is an exploratory endeavour to address some of the current global issues that are inevitably reflected in contemporary education. Firstly, it poses the question about *what* kind of knowledge, skills and information new generations in the twenty first century need and *how* education could deliver them. This seems to be an essential question in the face of the pressing issues that students will inevitably face, such as, environmental challenges, excessive consumerism with promotion and expansion of greed, various forms of conflict, violence and wars with increasing and escalating hatred. Since the forms of knowledge, science and technology that have developed within the Western discourse are largely perceived and applied outside ethical considerations, the Buddhist perspective on knowledge could incite a re-examination of the currently pervasive Western models. The Buddhist teachings are founded on and imbued with the view that the knowledge that is worthwhile and indispensable is about how to liberate oneself and others from ignorance and suffering, as it is pointed out in many instances, such as the Buddhist parable of the poisoned arrow in the *Cūḷamālunkyasutta* (M I 533–536) where it is narrated that the immediacy of human suffering needs to be addressed first, like a poisoned arrow has to be immediately removed from the wound, before any other questions are investigated (Ñāṇanamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 533–541). The Buddhist discourse proposes that such an essential knowledge, which is about liberation from suffering, can be achieved through the cultivation of ethics, meditation and wisdom, leading to a deep transformation of human consciousness.

Thus, this programme proposes that meditation and the cultivation of ethical values may serve as an enquiry into the

question of how to live our lives in order to diminish suffering for ourselves and all other beings. Meditation is viewed here not only as a remedial or supportive tool to maintain “business as usual,” as it is frequently interpreted in the modern world, but instead to probe into deeper questions about why we suffer, what the causes and conditions for suffering are in the first place, and what knowledge and skills are required to diminish it for ourselves and others. Meditation and ethics are thus viewed as the foundation for potentially deep transformation of ignorance, greed and aversion into compassion and wisdom. The main components of the programme inspired by Buddhist teachings and practices include the explicit cultivation of loving kindness and compassion, mindfulness, understanding of dependent origination, the concept of non-self or emptiness, and wisdom.

In conclusion, this article, which briefly introduced some of the main ideas developed in the pilot programme “Meditation and ethics for educators”, is an invitation to scholars and practitioners from Bhutan and elsewhere—who are involved in education or any other relevant field—to participate in the programme, enrich it by contributing creative ideas from the Vajrayāna and other perspectives, and explore the pathways for introducing it in educational settings with appropriate cultural sensitivity and adaptations. Bhutan can play a significant role in this process since the modern Western model of education was introduced relatively recently and therefore, there is a great potential to be informed by the rich Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition which could be creatively integrated into modern secular educational practices.

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# **Vajrayāna and Healing: The Interface of Imaging and Mantra with Mindbody Medicine**

*Asa Hershoff*

## **Abstract**

Since the 1960's, Vajrayāna has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity, both in Western and modern Asian countries. This closely parallels the logarithmic growth in holistic, alternative and bioenergy medicine in the West during this same period. These two approaches to human betterment, healing and transformation share many areas of mutual concern. Yet in spite of many Vajrayāna rituals focusing on health, vitality and longevity, there has been surprisingly little dialogue with alternative medicine. There is much to be gained by looking at their common ground, particularly how the extensive research into bioenergetic healing modalities impacts our understanding of Vajrayāna. Two core components of Vajrayāna as the basis of a meaningful exchange: creative visualization vs. generative stage (bskyed rim) and sound therapy in relation to mantra recitation (sngags). For each we discuss their differing goals, methodology and the accumulation of scientific evidence and clinical experience from a Western perspective. We can then draw conclusions about what they can learn from each other, theoretically and practically. Through such mutual interchange, Vajrayāna may become much more understandable and accessible for millions worldwide.



## **Introduction**

Since the 1960's, Buddhism, and Vajrayāna in particular, has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity, both in Western and Asian countries (Mitchell, 2016; Fields, 1992; Hewapathirane, 2014). This closely parallels the tremendous growth in holistic, alternative, bioenergy and mindbody medicine in the West during this same period (Barnes, Bloom, & Nahin, 2008). Research also shows that convert Buddhists have a preference for alternative medicine (Barnes, & Sared, 2004). And the practice of Mindfulness and Buddhist Psychology has now become firmly entrenched in both mainstream and corporate America (Winter, 2016). Sociologists and anthropologists have intensely studied the ways in which Buddhism has morphed and adapted to Western cultures. Buddhist traditional medicine or Ayurveda that has been a living tradition in Tibet and Bhutan for centuries, is now popular in Europe and the Americas, and Vajrayāna itself has healing rituals that focus on physical health, vitality and longevity, such as the practice of Medicine Buddha or White Tara that have been popularized in the West (Trangu, 2004). Yet surprisingly there has been no significant dialogue regarding the practices that are the very lifeblood of Vajrayāna, and the similar therapies and healing approaches in the West. We are referring to the heart of tantric Buddhism itself: Visualization and mantra recitation.

Western approaches that use form and sound for healing and spiritual transformation have grown and matured into well-recognized methods of personal growth, change and treatment of both physical and psychological issues. In the arena of creating internal images for healing, the Vajrayāna visualization methods (VV) are analogous to Creative Visualization (CV) and Guided Imagery (GI). Tantric Buddhist mantra, chanting and song are mirrored by music therapy, toning and other Western sound therapies.

Visual experience, visual narratives, voice and music are universals, intrinsic to our daily human experience. Thus an inquiry into the relationship between how these are utilized for healing and personal transformation in different cultural contexts opens up a vast field, a virgin territory that has immense potential. Here we will make some initial explorations and comparisons, examining the benefits, shortcomings and areas for possible mutual exchange and enhancement. And in course of this overview, we can make suggestions for the direction of future investigations and research.

Clearly there are differing goals, methodology, and scientific research norms surrounding these disciplines of sight and sound. VV and mantra are part of a larger Buddhist (specifically Mahayana and Vajrayāna) context. As such, they are inextricably linked to the many concepts within those spiritual systems, including refuge, Bodhicitta, transmission, Guru Yoga and much more (Kalu Rinpoche, 1995). And from the outset, there are different sets of values regarding their defined boundaries. Western therapy is generally open to eclectic, inventive solutions, and even the mixing and matching of techniques, based on their effectiveness and value to the client. For the professional mindbody therapist, the limits are simply to not go beyond what the profession considers normal or reasonable within the scope and paradigm of modern day practice. For the individual or lay practitioner in the realm of CV, those boundaries tend to be far more fluid and limited only by imagination itself. Vajrayāna, however, has far stricter and well circumscribed frontiers. In the words of Dasho Karma Ura (2017, p.9), “The responsibility of Vajrayāna state is to preserve and promote certain special profound philosophies, vision, method and techniques according to various Vajrayāna schools.” So while we wish to enhance the understanding and scientific validity of dharma

methodologies, and increase their appeal to a wider audience, clearly there is no context for embellishment or fundamental shifts in the well established techniques of visualization and mantra recitation within Vajrayāna, let alone its philosophical basis. Yet there are many ways it can, and has, evolved, particularly in its interface with the modern Western world. With proper care, the challenge of adaptation and enhancement can be met without disruptive changes.

Additionally, we must understand that there are different value paradigms between VV, GI and CV, and their counterparts in the realm of mantra and sound therapy. Those practicing different forms of guided imagery wish to treat various issues, such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, or a range of physical disorders. Those who learn about, or get training in CV also extend their reach and range to every form of wish-fulfillment and human desire, including the state of relationships, finances, career, attractiveness and social status. While the Vajrayāna practitioner may wish for the same things, the focus is on an altruistic orientation, and accomplishment of personal goals, only in tandem with, or in service of, helping all sentient being in their own search for ultimate freedom and liberation (Kongtrul, 2005). While this is not exclusive to Mahayana Buddhism, it is an important point of differentiation from many purely therapeutic situations that not only feel it necessary or understand the long term healing power of such compassionate regard.

### **Vajrayāna Visualization & Guided Imagery**

Visualization is how we communicate, persuade, explain, influence, heal and be hurt. Indeed, the faculty of being able to visualize a future result, vividly recall a past event, or to imagine a radically different present than the one we are experiencing at the moment, is an extraordinary

feature of the human mind. The science of visualization also confirms what is obvious to us all. Images in the mind pop up all the time, of their own accord. While this is part and parcel of our everyday experience and functioning, it occurs automatically and randomly, in reaction to circumstances, emotional triggers, sensations, visual or auditory cues and so on. Western psychology classifies these as involuntary visualizations. In contrast, voluntary visualization is involved with creative thinking, problem solving, reasoning, or just idle fantasy. We also have the ability to bring intention and focus to this ability, and actually make it work in the direction we choose.

As a tool for healing and for therapy, intentional visualization has come to follow two distinct lines, a division that has become typical of Western healing paradigms—mainstream and alternative, or professional and public. On the one hand, GI is part of conventional psychotherapy, a professional application with all its regulatory trapping, scope of practice and accepted standards of professional care. On the other, CV is comprised of different kinds of programs, courses, trainings, meditations, holistic treatments and “mind hacks,” all with the intended purpose of bettering one’s life in some way. Even a casual survey of all *these* professional and mainstream methods of seeing with the mind’s eye could-and does-fill a hefty book, such as *The Healing Waterfall: 100 Guided Imagery Scripts for Counselors, Healers & Clergy* (Highstein, 2016).

### **Guided Imagery**

Modern psychology is no stranger to imagery and imaging. In his text *Imagery in Psychotherapy*, Singer (2006) states that imagery is a critical feature of all effective human communication in general, but plays a special role in psychotherapy. And the famous pioneer of humanistic psychology, Eric Fromm tell us that, “Symbolic language is

a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime.” (Fromm, 1951, p. 7). Imaging or active fantasy or visualization has been a tool of psychotherapy since the 1920’s and the Freud’s use of daydreaming. Today it is often used as an integral part of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and a variety of other schools of psychotherapy.

It has been shown that psychological dysfunction, depression, anxiety, and a physical illness as a whole, are made worse through the negative images that are held in the mind or associated with these states. Thus the modus operandi of various forms of GI is to have an individual, by himself, or with a guide or audio recording, alter their reaction to the unhappy images associated with their negative mental states or physical illnesses. In the process, they substitute pleasant, enjoyable, positive images and reduce the habit of spontaneously generating negative ones. Extensive research proves that changing one’s imagery is an essential part of healing and change.

Ronen’s *The Positive Power of Imagery* (2011) provides an excellent in depth explanation on how imagery is currently being integrated into modern psychotherapy and cognitive behavioral therapy. Working with images from past traumatic memories, people can learn to control and change them (Foa, Keane, & Friedman, 2000; Foa & Rothbaum, 2001). Working with current images helps in acquiring skills, interpersonal coping, and increased awareness of internal stimuli, while focusing on future images may help coping and create hope (Fredrickson, 2009; Lyubomirsky, 2007). Still, in America at least, GI is considered by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) to be in the domain of mind-body healing, outside of the mainstream pharmaceutical-based medicine or

standard psychotherapy. In this mind-body classification, it is lumped together with acupuncture, relaxation technique, tai chi, qi gong, healing touch, hypnotherapy, and movement therapies (NIH, n.d.).

Extensive research and clinical experience shows an impressive range of benefits and contexts in which GI has great therapeutic value (Naparstek, 1995; Nixon, 2011; Rossman, 2010). A partial list demonstrates the versatility of this technique:

- Headache chronic pain
- Heart disease, high blood pressure and recovery from stroke
- Depression, anxiety and PTSD
- Stress relief
- Weight loss and cessation of smoking.
- Recovery from surgery.
- Improved cognitive abilities, focus and memory.

Research into the effectiveness and *modus operandi* of GI has been aided by the new science of psychoneuroimmunology (Daruna, 2012) which studies the relationship between thought, emotions and beliefs, and the nervous, hormonal and immune systems. Experientially, we are all acutely aware of how mind affects the body and vice versa, but the scientific proof and dynamics of these mechanisms are now well established (Sternberg, 2001 ).After working with these methods in cancer patients for a decade, Jeanne Archterberg (2002) was the first to popularize this therapeutic approach, and make it widely known and available to the public. It became a tool for helping change all kinds of dysphoric states and accelerating both symptomatic relief and cure of various chronic diseases. This played a major role in the popularization of the other wing of Western visualization.

## Creative visualization

Creative Visualization (CV) is sometimes used interchangeably with GI, but in fact its roots are more in the self-help genre, focusing more on oneself in an idealized, or at least much improved condition. A pioneer in this area of focused imaging, Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* (1937) has sold over 100 million copies worldwide. Shakti Gawain, continuing the strong New Age flavor surrounding that genre of literature wrote a landmark book around the philosophy that there is infinite abundance on all levels, and that we are all entitled to such richness, regardless (Gawain, 1978). These ideas are the basis of the still popular *The Secret*, a pop phenomenon that is centered around the Law of Attraction, a formalized type of wishful thinking. Even though this does require different forms of visualizing or projecting new possible futures, it falls outside of our scope of discussion since it is at best controversial. Nevertheless, its advantages is that it has a positive focus and seeks to uplift and bring hope, though that may be a false promise.

## The Narrative Boost

Visualization is central to human thought and, applied to creating intentional images, immediately touches on the vast area of metaphor and narrative or story. We communicate in evoking still pictures, single snapshots in another's mind, even by the simplest word association. But usually such images are strung together, and form a storyline or plot, with associated or inherent feelings, sensations, memories and values (László, 2008). It is only recently that the general public has started to understand how their lives are molded and shaped by these moving pictures in their heads. Story has now become a very popular topic, outside the usual realm of writers and screenwriters. The advertising industry and marketers were early adopters and became highly sophisticated, and successful, in creating

visual narratives since the 1940s. And governments were early adopters of these ways to promote their ideologies and influence the masses (Bernays, 1923). Recently it has become an essential component of personal development and self-help. This has been a significant boost to both the field of GI and CV.

GI has as its goal the improvement of the individual's psychology, in various ways and on various levels. At its most basic, it seeks the alleviation of any of the countless mundane sufferings that we humans experience. On a deeper level, like mindfulness training, it can help develop a more impartial, calm and open style of experience. At its most refined, its goals may be similar to that of Vajrayāna, for it can help unify and align one's consciousness with deeper kinds of awareness, and identify less with the localized self, and more with a universal, unrestricted being.

### **Vajrayāna Visualization**

All religions use visualization, in evoking higher spiritual powers, and seeing themselves and the world in a different light. Vajrayāna however, has a unique approach, in not only worshipping an outer deity or higher being, but in taking on that form and identity oneself, essentially assuming an inner and outer identity of higher consciousness. This technique is termed the Generation Stage or *kyerim* (Wyl. *bskyed rim*; Skt. *utpattikrama*) as the basis of Deity Yoga or *yidam* meditation (Wyl. *yi dam*; Skt. *ishtadevatā*). All Vajrayāna texts related to *yidam* or deity practice are inherently step-by-step guides to the visualization process, recited or chanted by the practitioners. But separate texts describing the details of the process in a far more comprehensive way are present within all the lineages of Vajrayāna Buddhism, written by particular luminaries of the sect. In spite of other philosophical difference, the texts from the original 8th



century lineage (Wyli. rNying ma) and the later transmissions after 1000 CE (Wyli. gSar ma) are essentially the same in the process they describe. Some are general manuals of development stage visualization, such as Jigmé Lingpa's ('jigs med gling pa. (1769) dissertation within the Nyingma order or Jamgon Kongtrul's text within the Kagyu order (blo gros mtha' yas, c1850). Others relate to a special deity practice as a basis of a lengthy exegesis of the methodology, such as the Demchog text for the Chakrasamvara meditation practice and ritual.(jam dpal dpa' bo, 1750). The stages and meaning of this process has become quite accessible in Western languages, with numerous texts by modern writers and translations of classic works. (Gyatrul Rinpoche, 1992; Khyentse, 1992; Kongtrul, 2014; Khongtrul, 2015). Understandably, these are directed towards serious students of Vajrayāna in the West, and would not be easily understood without a basic knowledge of Himalayan Buddhist concepts.

### **Stages of generation**

The methodology is the creation of a pure vision, where the world is a pure realm, and the "self" that we identify with is a pure manifestation of enlightened mind, the deity or yidam. And all sound that emanates is the pure mantric sound emanating from the heart of the practitioner as deity. Ultimately the entire world emanates that sound. That created world implies a sacred fortress and a mandala of the five elements where oneself and possibly many other deities dwell. These visualizations can be both streamlined, simply involving one's own transformed form, speech and mind, or very elaborate, where the outer world is meticulously created and populated with gods and goddesses and protectors. From this static visualization, there is a continuous emanation of light from one's heart that makes offerings to the highest spiritual sources. In return, healing,

purifying and enlightening energies (literally, grace waves), return to one's "deitized" form. Lights also emanate out to benefit all sentient beings, and at times to accomplish various other activities, such as clearing sources of illness or other obstacles.

## **Discussion**

GI is very similar to VV as far as the mechanics of the method is concerned. But their fundamental purpose, and the content of the imagery are significantly different. Vajrayāna also has a sophisticated system of recognizing and working with human energy fields or the subtle body. While it shares these concepts with other mind-body therapies such as Qi Gong and Hatha Yoga, this is sorely lacking in Western GI and CV. Also, we learn from Vajrayāna that it is extremely important to create what has been called "sacred space," a circumscribed arena for visualization and imagery to take place. Mind is vast, and wild. And the forces of our neurotic, habitual mind are extremely strong. The whole point of VV is to take one beyond the chaos and ultimately beyond meaningless and futile meanderings of our programmed personality. While it may take us beyond the confines of mainstream psychology, bringing in sacred or transformative aspects of visualization can only augment current practices.

On the other side, positive attitude and the actual content of GI has beneficial effects for a wide range of conditions and illnesses. This aspect of Vajrayāna visualization and meditation has not been stressed. Indeed it may be common for practitioners to enter into practice with considerable anxiety, worry, anticipation or doubt. This would be expected to hinder outcomes for physical healing, psychological well-being, and spiritual progress itself. Thus positive mind states could be emphasized, without this in altering the traditional practice in any way. Normally we

think that various activities or successes bring happiness. But it is clear that being happy or joyous in the first place, or for “no reason” (Shimoff & Kline, 2008) has a global improvement on one’s efficacy, satisfaction, relationship, career and so on (Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998). Further, Vajrayāna practice may find success in integrating VV more closely into daily experience, including traumatic events of the past, anxieties about the future, current illnesses and other mundane concerns.

### **Sound, Music & Mantra**

From Africa and Egypt, to ancient Greece, India, China and Tibet, music-based rituals, prayers and mantras are a cornerstone of human social activity, healing, and spiritual transformation. And sound, music and voice have been used in every religious and spiritual tradition across time and space. Yet in spite of our ongoing familiarity with these forms, it is necessary to revise our understanding of sound altogether. In spite of what we were taught in school, sound “waves” that we have heard about since we were children do not exist as a physical phenomenon. Those wiggly waves of amplitude are merely a mathematical model. Far more exciting is the reality that sound exists as spherical, conical, three-dimensional forms or, as described by Reid (2017), in the form of holographic bubbles. These bubbles spread from an instrument, a noise, or the human voice, at 700 miles per hour. In so doing, they cause molecules to rub against each other, exciting them to form infrared light radiation. Reid further suggests that all light is formed originally by sound. This would validate the insights of both the Western bible that “in the beginning was the Word,” as well as ancient Indian and Buddhist thought regarding the vibratory, mantric origin of all substance, emanating from a primary seed syllable. Cymatics, which will be discussed further on,

literally shows us what a “slice” or cross-section of that sound bubble looks like.

Another revelation is that dolphin studies demonstrate their remarkable ability to create pictures through the sonics of their voice. Other dolphins can then unpack these sounds and turn them back into pictures. This has been duplicated using sound capturing and translating devices. This is a form of synesthesia, wherein sound and vision become interconnected. This relates to the meditator’s ability to merge with mantric sound and its representative seed syllable, at the same time changing their visual and psychic experience.

### **Western Music Therapy**

Music, composed of pitch, melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, loudness and softness, and the textures has been existing since the beginning of human existence. For everything from entertainment, and healing to the dynamics of religion, it exists in seeming endless genres and sub-genres. It can stir individuals to war, or put them into a state of calm ease. Spiritually, it forms part of ritual on an outer level, and on an inner level, it has properties that are profound and transformative. While these spiritual methods of transforming body and mind have been known for millennia, and are still transmitted and practiced today, it is only now that they are becoming validated according to Western science. At the other end of the spectrum, noise has indeed been shown to have negative consequences, impacting health, cognition and psychological well-being. It has wide-ranging adverse health, social, and economic effects (Goines & Hagler, 2007).

In the modern era, Music Therapy became a profession, both as an independent modality, and as an adjunct to mainstream psychotherapy, occupational therapy and is used in medical facilities, cancer centers, schools, alcohol

and drug recovery programs, psychiatric hospitals, and correctional facilities (Darnley-Smith & Patey, 2003.) It has been shown to benefit a wide range of effects, as indicated by the partial list below:

- Improved heart rate.
- Stimulation of the brain, and improved learning in children and the elderly.
- Stress relief, reduction of anxiety and depression.
- Aiding neuropathologies such as Alzheimer's disease.
- Reduced pain sensitivity.
- Improved mental health in serious brain disease like schizophrenia.
- Improved motor skills in developmental work.

At this point little has been done to demonstrate the effect of various genres of music or sound. However, a series of groundbreaking experiments are being undertaken that promise to shed significant light on these important differences (Ji, 2017).

## **Cymatics**

One of the most remarkable developments for understanding sound in the modern era, is the use of Cymatics (Reid, 2017). Methods of making sound visible have been known for hundreds of years, from watching sand jump on an African drum, to experiments by Leonardo, Galileo, Locke and Faraday.<sup>82</sup> The actual science of making the vibration of sound visible was developed by Hans Jenny, a Swiss physician. While originally demonstrated using a flat brass plate, vibrated by a violin bow (Chladni Plate), the process has recently become far more

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<sup>82</sup> More information is available at

[https://www.tokenrock.com/cymatics/what\\_is\\_cymatics](https://www.tokenrock.com/cymatics/what_is_cymatics)

sophisticated. The *CymaScope*, invented by John Stuart Reid, an English acoustics engineer, allows the geometries of sound and music to be demonstrated in water, with great detail and clarity (Reid, 2018). Cymatics may even be able to prove the hypothesis that both individual cells and the cosmos have a detectable language through which they communicate (Ji, 2017).

### **Mantra in Buddhism**

Mantra recitation, the repetition of sacred series of words that cause changes in psychic and physiological functioning, are found throughout the world's spiritual traditions, as a means to align with higher consciousness or create altered states. On the heels of the great popularity of yoga, there have been a number of books on the use of Sanskrit, Hindu-based mantras (Andrews, 1992; Ashley-Farrand, 1999; Berendt, 1991; Frawley, 2010; Hersey, 2013; Kaivalya, 2014). These all contain valuable information that should be integrated into the Vajrayanist's knowledge base, especially since literature on Buddhist dharani is not so readily available (Sanchez, 2012). Additionally, there are those based on Sufic-Islamic sources (Khan, 1960). Surprisingly, one of the best explanations of the Buddhist concept of mantra comes from the sage Kukai, who established Vajrayāna in Japan in the 8th century. He tells us that the Dharma teachings are expressed in every single thing (dharma), resonating throughout the entire universe in all its manifestations, including all possible signs and languages (Madery, 2016). Everything is a language spoken by the Dharmakāya and the letters that form its words are part of a universal reality. Reciting the Dharmakāya's words, in this case the syllable of the Buddha Mahavarocana, is like "reading" the cosmic text "aloud". The sacred sounds are ever-present, and thus accessible to all. The average person however, is not aware of them, and are

unlikely to be “accidentally” discovered. Thus both a transmission of this knowledge and the development of skill in their use is necessary for full effect. Notably they are also not part of our normal vocabulary or speech. What makes a word or seed syllable sacred, is that it is a direct communication of the enlightened state, not a reminder, inference or symbol, but a living expression or manifestation. If recited, we partake of that sound, and that state, so that we become aligned with the absolute reality as well. This requires that the sound continues to resonate, and that “I”, the one who recites, disappears from the equation at some point. This transcendence of the limited or localized self, or conversely identification with the universal sound-expression, is the key to Vajrayāna in general and mantra in particular (Ryuichi, 1999).

The most comprehensive study of mantras within the Buddhist context is the dissertation by Castro Sanchez (2011). Within this extensive treatise, he traces the pre-Buddhist sources of Sanskrit mantra and their development over time and distance. Another valuable piece of research by Gao (2016) and his team using twenty-one seasoned Buddhists as test subjects, showed that chanting the name of Amitabha, as opposed to “Santa Claus” or nothing at all, showed significant effects. Using EKG, EEG and galvanic skin response, the reactions to negative stimuli had much less emotional and cognitive impact in the Amitabha chanters. This may be due to conceptual schema as much as the influence of sound, but it is important nonetheless.

### **Music and Vajrayāna**

In the Vajrayāna tradition, there is a strong emphasis on group performance as well as solo chanting of sacred melodies, and recitation of power syllables related to Deity Yoga, and its relation to the inner alchemy of energy, channels, chakras and breath control. Dance and other ritual

movements can be performed either simultaneously or alternatively with music or song. Generally the specific melodies and rhythms are considered to originate in Wisdom Mind, or higher consciousness, rather than being simply the product of musical composition or inventiveness. As such, once established, they are treated as sacrosanct and not to be altered, amended or adlibbed. Though many melodic traditions exist, each stays true to its form and or traditional style. Indeed different lineages and monastic seats are known for their unique musical styles and well-established liturgies, passed on unaltered from generation to generation. While the music that accompanies Tibetan or Bhutanese rituals may seem “foreign” to Westerners, many find it haunting, and deeply moving, creating a sense of presence or stillness. A particularity lucid exposition about the interface of Vajrayāna music and alternative medicine is given by Caballero (2013), providing a jumping off point for future research. Music therapy in the West has yet to investigate the deeper effects of sacred music, as opposed to popular or mainstream music. But one can expect this future direction to be promising and highly beneficial (Linton, 2008).

### **Narrative and Voice**

Once again, narrative and story needs to be more closely integrated with Vajrayāna, In guided imagery and music therapy, combined or alone, things generally “happen”. With intentional visualization, there is some kind of narrative which we display within the mind’s eye. This rich tradition goes back to the bards or storytellers who sang African griots, the Norse skalds, the Anglo-Saxon gleemen, the French troubadours, the Navajo singers, the Russian kaleki or the Japanese zenza, across time and culture. Vajrayāna also has a variety of actions and prescribed



activities that qualify as analogies, narratives and story lines (László, 2008).

While Buddhist mantra has lofty goals as its basis, there is a whole realm of mantric use within Vajrayāna for the more mundane but very important realm of healing. Though little known by Western (and even most native) practitioners, Buddhist literature and praxis has a unique tradition of mantric formulas for physical healing. These have been taught in the West extensively by the Tibetan traditional doctor, Nyida Chenagtsang. His institute for Tibetan medicine even includes a Faculty of Mantra Healing (<http://www.iattm.net/uk/faculties/mh-welcome.htm>).

Most recently he has published what appears to be one of the most comprehensive manuals of mantra healing in the Tibetan language (Heruka, 2016). While this has yet to be fully translated, an overview of the text, the table of contents and several chapters are available in English online (Joffe, 2016). The text covers both the traditional philosophy and methods, as well as specific healing mantras for various ailments.

## **Discussion**

Vajrayāna can benefit from the Western sound research, the practice of sound therapy and GI on many levels. Particularly, this interface may offer:

- Valid proof of physiological and psychological effects of sound, music & mantra.
- Knowledge about which aspects of practice are most effective or appropriate for different contexts or for healing.
- The ability to more clearly individualize practice based on different predilections and capacities, modify or accentuate aspects of practice, without altering traditions.

- Improvement of the positive emotional tone of the practitioner's experience.
- Incorporating healing narrative visualizations into appropriate sections of the VV process.
- A broader scope and appeal to more contemporary understandings and practices, i.e. extending to the corporate world, general media and so on.

Western standards and styles of sound work, GI and CV can equally benefit from the exchange by allowing:

- Incorporation of sacred forms, sound, melody and mantra as a tried and true tradition, known to affect the human mind, and body.
- Access to an ancient body of knowledge that has an authoritative origin and empirical evidence of effectiveness over several thousand years.
- Taking individuals beyond the limited happiness of relief from symptoms and into a greater domain of growth and development.
- Integrating more potent methods of sight and sound with current models of mindfulness, and its broad applications.

Vajrayāna meditations can be expected to have similar outcomes as other, well-researched sound therapies. But would results be superior, considering the spiritual or sacred origins and nature of such practices? Future studies would elucidate this. What improvements over regular GI or sound-based therapy would there be in terms of speed, quality or depth of improvement? Without appreciating and integrating the known effects of mantric healing practiced successfully for thousands of years, therapists and private individuals alike may miss a unique opportunity of this marriage of science and spirituality.

## Conclusion

There are many good reasons to make these comparisons during this brief survey, but much of it is summed up in the words of the inimitable scholar, Geoffry Samuels. “As the riches of Vajrayāna’s approach to healing become part of many people’s everyday experience, then Vajrayāna’s wider horizons will become less alien and more approachable for millions of people” (Samuels, 2017). At the core of Vajrayāna is the profound depth and breadth of visualization practice and mantra recitation. With the established parallels within the Western healing paradigm, this is an area of meaningful dialogue and collaboration. Future directions require studies to verify according to modern science what Vajrayāna has demonstrated for millennia. And meditators and practitioners will benefit from a deepened knowledge of how their methods work, and how to optimize the time and effort required to accomplish their lofty goals, as well as mundane happiness.

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# **Meditative and yogic practices for mental health: Bridging psychotherapy and contemplative practices**

*Borut Škodlar*

## **Abstract**

A long tradition of meditation and yoga experts in dialogue with leading psychotherapists have brought ground-breaking insights into how to integrate the two traditions, that is contemplative and psychotherapeutic practices. Buddhist meditation and yogic practices are taken as a key to present and understand this dialogue more thoroughly. In the paper, I would like to explore the ways in which meditative and yogic practices can be used in contemporary psychiatry and psychotherapy. First, I will present some research data on implementation of these techniques in the treatment of varieties of mental disorders. Then, some clinical experiences with patients practicing contemplative practices will be presented. And lastly, the culture-and context-sensitive considerations about bridging these two traditions, i.e. between more than 2500 years of contemplative practices and the 120 years of systematic explorations of human psyche in psychotherapy will be discussed.

## **Introduction**

Meditative and yogic practices, which are both central to Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition, are methods which contribute to human being's search for balance and health, both physical and mental. In their original contexts, i.e. religious and philosophical traditions, they were primarily

not healing practices, but practices for establishing psychosomatic equilibrium, clearly not unrelated to health on all levels, and insights into its mechanisms on human being's path to spiritual awakening (Pečenko, 2014; Mallinson & Singleton, 2017).

In Vajrayāna medicine and psychiatry (usually called Tibetan medicine), practitioners focus precisely on such mind and body interactions with ultimate "medicines", i.e. compassion and emptiness. Through the practice of Dharma, they are aimed at eradicating etiology in root causes of all human illnesses, i.e. greed, hatred and ignorance or delusion (Clifford, 1994). The criteria for delusions and mental disorders are in the Buddhist psychology far stricter than in modern psychiatry and its classificatory systems of mental disorders, i.e. DSM-5 and ICD-10. We are all profoundly deluded unless we are purified and liberated (Buddhaghosa, 2010).

In spite of their main spiritual scope, many insights from meditative and yogic practices have nonetheless trickled into medicine, and especially into psychiatry and psychotherapy. Within the field of psychotherapy, the stream which explores contemplative practices and translates their insights and techniques into psychotherapy is known as *contemplative* or *transpersonal* psychotherapies (Walsh, 2011; Shorrock, 2008).

We can trace a long history of interest of leading psychotherapists in contemplative practices, e.g. Jung. Fromm, Maslow, and Podvoll. Some of them had a long-lasting relationship with respected masters of contemplative practices, e.g. E. Fromm has had it with Nyanaponika Thera, E. M. Podvoll with Chögyam Trungpa, etc. Alongside the rapid spread of mindfulness in psychotherapy (Germer et al., 2013) in the last decades, they have crucially expanded and enriched the field of psychotherapy.

## **Contemplative practices in contemporary psychotherapy – research data**

The use of contemplative practices, i.e. meditation and yoga, in contemporary psychotherapy has been expanded by a strong research impetus, especially from the year 2000 onwards. The increase in the number of studies and research projects per year has been exponential and it continues to be so.

A short and focused overview of research findings in the field of application of meditation, mindfulness and yoga for mental disorders are given below:

1. *Chronic pain syndromes*: meditative practices are beneficial for improvement and self-regulation of chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn et al., 1985) and quality of life in fibromyalgia (Grossman et al., 2007; Schmidt et al., 2011), in endometriosis (Kold et al., 2012), and in the treatment of somatization and functional somatic disorders (Fjorback et al., 2012), what has been confirmed also in a meta-analysis (Grossman et al., 2004).
2. *Existential anxiety*: meditation can be of help for patients with cancer in establishing tranquillity, finding a purpose in life, promotion of personal growth (Labelle et al., 2015); in decreasing levels of anxiety and depression in outpatients with cancer (Specia et al., 2000), and improving quality of life in women with breast cancer (Hoffman et al., 2012) and in patients with cardio-vascular disorders (Abbott et al., 2014).
3. *Depressive disorders*: meditation, especially mindfulness and yoga, has been studied extensively in the fields of treatment and relapse prevention of depressive disorders. Individual studies and meta-analyses have shown it to be very effective (Teasdale et al., 2000; Ma & Teasdale, 2004; Pilkington et al., 2005; Hofmann et al., 2010; Fjorback et al., 2012). Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), a treatment regime for relapse

prevention in chronic depression has been originally designed for this purpose (Segal, Williams & Teasdale, 2002).

4. *Anxiety disorders*: treatment of anxiety, which is in a constant search for new strategies due to its ubiquity and pervasiveness, has found in meditation, relaxation techniques and yoga some important allies, manifested in meta-analyses (Hofmann et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2012; Vøllestad et al., 2012), and individual studies, e.g. general anxiety disorder (Roemer et al., 2008), social phobia (Piet et al., 2010), and so on.
5. *Psychotic disorders*: meditative practices, especially bodily-oriented and yoga, have been positively evaluated in this group of patients, in spite of reservations expressed by some clinicians (Shonin et al., 2014). The results of the studies (Khoury et al., 2013; Chadwick et al., 2005; Gumley et al., 2010; Braehler et al., 2012, Langer et al., 2012) are encouraging.
6. *Addiction disorders*: meditative practices has been successfully applied also to the patients with addiction disorders, especially for reduction of craving and prevention of relapse (Alexander et al., 1994; Chiesa & Serretti, 2014; Marlatt & Chawla, 2007; Witkiewitz & Bowen, 2010; Bowen et al., 2014).
7. *Sexual disorders*: are part of the field where meditative and relaxation practices have proven to be very important and beneficial (Brotto et al., 2008; Silverstein et al., 2011).
8. *Eating disorders*: meditative and yogic practices may positively contribute to eating disorders (Rodríguez et al., 2014; Neumark-Sztainer, 2014), especially for compulsive over-eating (Kristeller & Wolever, 2011; Telch et al., 2001), and for bulimia nervosa (Tapper et al., 2009).

## Contemplative practices in contemporary psychotherapy-clinical experiences

In clinical practice – be it psychiatric or psychotherapeutic, in-patient or out-patient – we can work with contemplative practices on two levels. On one side, we can integrate them into our theoretical considerations and practical skills, which can be called *contemplation-informed practice*. On the other side, we can directly introduce contemplative practices to the patients and accompany them in that, which can be called *contemplation-based psychotherapy* (Germer et al., 2013).

Why is it so important to have knowledge, experience and expertise in contemplative practices for a psychotherapist and to address them in a psychotherapeutic process?

First, patients search and need contemplative practices for their psycho-somatic balance and spiritual needs. They find them on their own and practice them prior or outside our psychotherapeutic interventions. As therapists, we thus do not have a choice over whether our patients will look for and practice contemplative practices or not. We have only a choice of discussing these practices with them or of indulging the safety of selective inattention (Yalom, 1980) and ignore them.

Secondly, contemplative practices are autonomously practiced by the patients between sessions. Thus, a chance of gradual exploration of patients' psychological reactions, patterns and needs are more widely opened. Much more of psychological "material" is gathered between the psychotherapy sessions than in verbally focused psychotherapies. Psychotherapeutic process is enhanced in such a way.

Thirdly, in contemporary psychotherapy there is a relative lack of attention to bodily reactions and expressions of psychic conflicts or disorders. Contemplative practices introduce and compensate precisely that gap. Primary "entrance point" for majority of contemplative practices are

explorations of bodily sensations, including so called “felt sense”, and changes. Similar approach can be fruitfully applied in psychotherapy, as it was shown by mindfulness, yoga or focus oriented psychotherapies (Gendlin, 1996).

Fourthly, contemplative practices are embedded in their respective religious and ethical frameworks. They rise and fall with them. Ethical concerns, which are at the heart of any attempt at understanding human being, are central to psychotherapy. In psychotherapy, it is usually considered as positive side-effects of attained maturation or individuation within the psychotherapeutic process. Meanwhile contemplative practices address ethical concerns as a vital, necessary, and even crucial healing element from the very beginning and throughout the practice. Contemplative practices may thus inform psychotherapy in ethical considerations to be respected in every moment of any psychotherapeutic process and at any stages of life.

If we take as first a look into mechanisms at work in applying yogic practices to psychotherapy. Through body postures (*āsana*), we expose individual body parts, detect tensions in them and, in connecting them to breathing, we relax and integrate them into a more fluent and flexible body-schema. E.g. in the shoulder stand (*sarvangāsana*), the region of shoulders and occiput is exposed, while other muscular regions not involved in the pose maintenance are relaxed, breathing is calmed and thoughts are directed to something limitless or eternal (Kavalayanada, 1982). After returning to the starting pose, the corpse pose (*śavāsana*), the subtle flow of feelings in the exposed region “echoes” for some time and then it is again integrated into the body schema. Yogic poses in that way gradually expose different body regions and together with relaxation and breathing lead to a vitalized body schema, which is more clearly brought to awareness. Anxieties, depressions, even psychotic states can be prevented and treated through such a way



empowered and stabilized embodiment or body awareness, as the abovementioned studies have shown. An important new stream of body oriented psychotherapy, called sensorimotor psychotherapy, works with trauma and its aftermath through similar body interventions (Ogden et al., 2006). Psycho-therapy, which works only on a symbolic level, i.e. through verbalization, in many patients cannot reach the traumatic core of patients' symptoms.

Breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*), another important part of yoga, are also very important in yogic therapy (Kuvalayananda & Vinekar, 1963). In *prāṇāyāma*, we channel and modulate the process of breathing in such a way that different aspects of breathing are exposed (Nagendra, 1998). If we take as example the alternate nostril breathing (*nadiśodhana* or *anuloma viloma prāṇāyāma*), we attentively follow subtleties of the touch of air in the nostrils. As first, we become relaxed and we again feel more clearly the tensions in our body, which can be through further practice released. Body sensations and tensions are often part of emotional processes involved in processing of emotional distress and trauma. Releasing tensions in the body induces better awareness and "digestion" of emotions, which in turn affects regulation of moods and affects, anxiety and depression among them.

Meditative practices have positive effects on medical and psychiatric conditions, as we have seen from the studies earlier. They bring more focus and concentration, which is a powerful and necessary tool for regulation of emotional, rational and behavioral processes, i.e. to induce change in one's life, which is a goal of psychotherapy. They are "points of observation", *punctum Archimedis*, through which we can panoramically see the connections and mechanisms between mind and body, emotions and thoughts.

Beside benefits of concentration-based meditative practices (*śamatha*), there are also insight-based practices

(*vipaśyanā*), which are important for seeing through the psychological patterns at play behind different mental disorders. They open the stage to face existential anxieties, such as death, meaning, freedom and responsibility etc. (Yalom, 1980; Frankl, 1992). Through panoramic insight, we can reframe our life situations, priorities and hierarchies. It brings along change of attitudes toward symptoms, syndromes and illnesses, and a profound emotional relief from the unnecessary complications. Precisely reframing, changing attitudes and emotional reactions to symptoms seem to be the main mechanism of a meditative practices in medicine (Shapiro et al., 2006).

In our hospital, i.e. University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana, Slovenia, we conduct group and individual sessions with patients, both in-patients and out-patients, since 2010. We offer first a psycho-education to patients and their family members on meditative, yogic and relaxation practices. Then patients themselves choose if they wish to know more and practice them on a regular basis. The patients, who choose meditative practices to be part of their treatment program, are further accompanied and followed-up by clinicians, well-versed in contemplative practices and psychotherapy.

### **Contemplative practices in contemporary psychotherapy – some reflections**

There is no doubt, that we face a lively and increased interest in contemplative practices within contemporary psychotherapy. We have witnessed many new formats and packages of these practices for medical or therapeutic purposes, e.g. from transcendental meditation and yoga programs to mindfulness-based formats. They have been accompanied as mentioned above by the wide-spread and enlivened research.

The good side of such pragmatic, manualized, decontextualized (from the original religious contexts) and recontextualized (in contemporary secularized formats) applications of contemplative practices is their translatable-ability into research designs. So much research is being conducted in this field than we had ever before. Evidence is a good base for further clinical applications and for designing new research.

However, we should not forget the original sources of contemplative practices and to read from original contexts and texts to ensure, that not too much is “lost in translation”. The theoretical dialogue between contemplative practices in their primary homes, be it Vajrayāna or Theravāda Buddhist psychology or Christian contemplative tradition, and the major psychotherapeutic paradigms – psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioural, system and family or existential – is weak, under-researched and sometimes misleading. It is – and it would be even more so if better developed – a prevention of reductionism, of unethical conduct – be it on the side of a patient or a therapist – of disorientation and loss of connection with values, etc. In severe decontextualization lies a danger of the further uprootedness of the already uprooted individuals as our patients and many times we ourselves are (Škodlar, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

We can conclude that meditative and yogic practices, even if they were not conceived as primarily therapeutic practices, have considerable therapeutic potential for many mental disorders. Renowned Franco-American psychiatrist and neuroscientist, David Servan-Schreiber (2011), listed them under evidence-based treatment methods for overcoming stress, anxiety, and depression “without Freud or Prozac” as the title of his monograph reads.

There are many ways how to introduce, integrate and follow these practices in contemporary psychotherapy. Some of them are problematic, unethical and misleading. The cure and prevention of these dangers is a thorough, systematic and enduring study of contemplative practices on theoretical and practical level with clear awareness of their traditional roots. In the dialogue between the two sources of knowledge about human being, i.e. between the 2500 years of contemplative practices and the 120 years of contemporary psychotherapy, the latter could be humbler and the former louder.

Vajrayāna medicine and psychiatry are very good topics for such a dialogue. They are, as we have seen above, founded on mind and body interactions with ultimate medicines, i.e. compassion and emptiness, which are achieved through the practice of Dharma, aimed at eradicating the root causes of illness, i.e. of greed, hatred and ignorance or delusion. This dialogue is cultivated through individual study and practice of both, traditional contemplative practices and psychotherapy, clinical experiences in both, as well as in conferences like the Vajrayāna conference in Thimphu, Bhutan. It represents a crucial step for bringing together knowledge from philosophical and religious traditions and from contemporary medicine for a more balanced guidance for our patients, for prevention of illnesses and for a well-being of every one of us.

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# Tantra and Tourists: Sharing Shingon Teachings at Yochi-in on Mt. Kôya, Japan

*Barbara S. Morrison & Kaiji Yamamoto*

## Introduction

In 2004 Mt. Kôya, the monastic center for Vajrayāna Buddhism in Japan became an International Heritage Site and the number of international visitors increased substantially; especially at Yochi-in, a temple on Mt. Kôya where 90% of overnight stays (*shukubô*) are tourists from abroad. Every year an average of 25 people per night are able to encounter Vajrayāna teachings in the context of Japanese culture as well as to understand the significance of Kôbô Daishi, the founder of Shingon (Vajrayāna) Buddhism in Japan. Kûkai (774-835: posthumously known as Kôbô Daishi), a remarkable scholar, engineer, poet and priest, founded the monastery complex on Mt. Kôya in 816 C.E. after studying in China for three years (804 – 806 C.E.). This paper is an effort to share the ways and means through which Yochi-in is able to sustain a full temple schedule of ritual/worship while successfully meeting the needs of both believers and non-believers, Japanese and non-Japanese who come to stay for a night (or a day or two nights) expecting a lived experience of Vajrayāna Buddhism. It is our hope that this paper may empower other temples throughout the world to open their doors to guests so that we may all have the opportunity to benefit from an exposure to Buddhist practice in the context of temple life.

In our efforts to convey what is happening at Yochi-in, we offer the mandala below as a means toward appreciating the totality of challenges for Buddhist practice in the

presence of tourists. While explaining the six outer and six inner aspects of the mandala (Buddhist practice) in the context of running a tourist business it is important to bear in mind that this dynamic process is in continuous flux. As Buddhists we are well aware that all is impermanent; indeed, our practice bears witness to this truth. As practitioners engaged in the world around us (here in the form of tourism and hospitality) we must also come to grips with the understanding that we are not only beings amidst change per se, but also involved in an *exchange* between self and other. Our daily service to guests is a manifestation of practice that does not unfold in isolation on a cushion, but amongst a myriad of beings outside of ourselves who are all in need of care, sustenance, comfort and prayer.

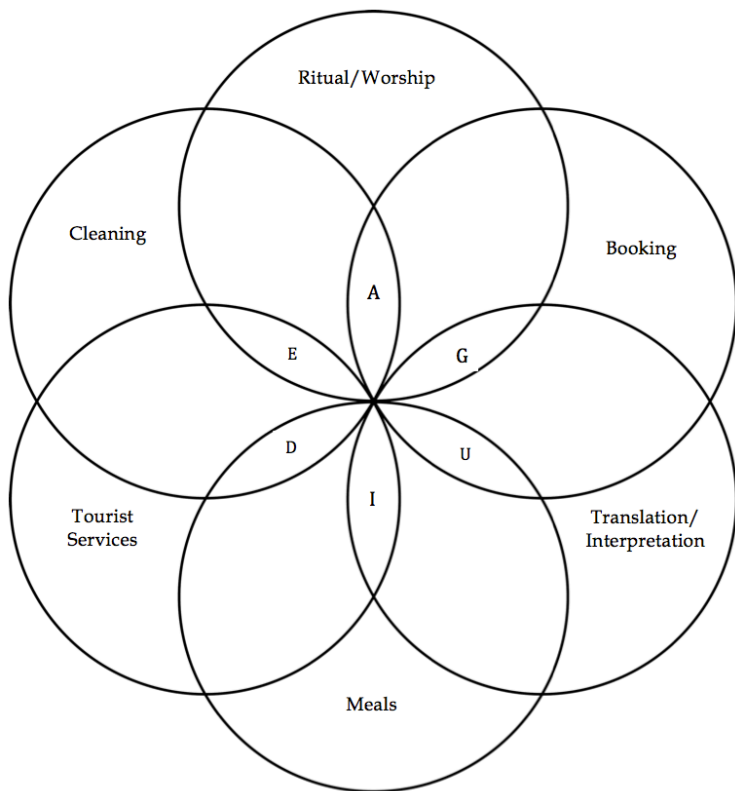
### **Temple Management Mandala**

For all these reasons noted above, the Temple Management Mandala shown below is a means to draw attention to the inter-relational aspects of temple management and the ways in which six outer manifestations (an encounter with other) in the form of ritual/worship, booking, translation/interpretation, meals, tourist services, and cleaning are inextricably interwoven with six inner manifestations (an encounter with self through critical thinking) in the form of assumptions, goals and gathering information, understanding multiple points of view, implications, deciding the problem/issue, and evidence. These inner manifestations have been presented in the form of “a guide” – a mnemonic based on my research into modalities of critical, reasonable thinking. By making apparent the principles of clear and reasonable thought we enable ourselves to engage more fully and consciously with both ourselves and world in a multicultural setting such as we find at Yoshi-in. Being aware of our own thinking is one aspect of meditation that is shared by all Buddhists in their

practice, both lay and cleric. As we step off our cushion and into the world, maintaining an awareness of our own thinking; to see “things as they are” requires skill and training to actively develop our thinking processes so that these processes become more clear, effective and beneficial for those around us.

#### Outer Manifestations : Temple Activities

- 1) Ritual/Worship
- 2) Booking
- 3) Translation/Interpretation
- 4) Meals
- 5) Tourist Services
- 6) Cleaning



### Inner Manifestations: A Guide

- a) Assumption
- b) Goal/Gather Information
- c) Understanding Multiple Points of View
- d) Implications
- e) Decide Problem/Issue
- f) Evidence

## Outer Manifestations

Above all, and as a temple, the priority at Yochi-in is on maintaining our identity as a Buddhist temple. This fundamental identity requires clarity - for each and every guest must act in accord with the general etiquette and manner required of a temple space; no raucous drinking (though one can order alcoholic beverages at dinner), no outrageous behavior. We are a temple, not an inn, nor a hotel. We have no central heating and there are no private baths. There is no room service though we do our best to make our guests as comfortable as possible. Morning services begin without fail at 6:30 in the morning, breakfast hour is fixed, dinner hour is fixed. While it is possible to eat in your room, we encourage all our visitors to eat together at both breakfast and dinner. Through our experience we have found that by clearly and reasonably explaining as early as possible to our guests what is required from them, they graciously respond in kind. The key element in this exchange is that of *reasonability*. By taking in visitors from all over the world Yochi-in has propelled itself into a multicultural public sphere, a social space for the experience of Japanese Vajrayāna where one's own actions (clerics, staff, guests and believers) affect the welfare of every other. For staff and clerics this practice of being-in-relation is on going.

Understanding under these conditions is founded on dialogue - a reasonable dialogue that exhibits itself in the public use of reason as a means of accommodating multifocal sensibilities. The principle of rationality that underlies this process of an inner manifestation of self-understanding (a guide) is by no means adverse to the fundamental mission of our temple (ritual/worship). Instead, we would argue that the principle of rationality - of reasonability in dealing with self and other - is the very basis on which we are able to succeed in maintaining our: 1) legitimacy as a Shingon

temple, 2) social integration of tantric practice with tourists and 3) economic welfare (temple as profit center).

This ongoing dialectical enrichment through reasonable dialogue with self and other is a relation of dynamic process that manifests itself as a sphere for collective reflexivity – in relations of interpretation that are enabled by discussion and the imagination of all concerned. One's own positioning in that discussion entails a degree of maturity found in the cultivation of a certain critical distance. There is a constant stream of conversation among staff and clerics during the tourist season regarding arrivals, special needs, tourist services, dietary needs and special requests. Invariably problems arise born of miscommunications, unmet expectations or botched time schedules. Stress can run high. People of different belief systems, different cultures, genders and class bring different sensibilities into the same living space. All of these sensibilities must be integrated, accommodated and dare we say, cherished (if not celebrated) and it is in this sense that we can begin to think of our Buddhist temple as a multicultural public sphere. Needless to say, empathy and mutual understanding are required from all parties involved. Clergy, staff, believers and guests are all required to engage with a level of critical rationality of self and other that acknowledges the reality of the other as well as each individual responsibility in that shared relation.

Toward an understanding of self and other and the dialectical relation between the two there is a need for trust. In the practice of temple management as a source for economic welfare, clerics, and staff will be brought into contact with money. In our experience this relation will manifest through issues of trust. For example, when a guest asks for services at the last minute for which they have not paid in advance, those responsible for temple affairs must see to it that money is collected. This is a responsibility. At



the same time, impediments to compassion may come to the forefront of interpersonal relations when, for example, a staff member demands payment from a guest just before she or he sits down to an act of devotion and begins to copy the Heart Sutra (a service for which we ask a small charge). Other monks in training may observe that the charge for this service could have been added to the bill at check out the next day. Handled in this way, our guest would not have had money demanded from him or her as a prerequisite for an act of devotion. At times, not only tourists, but also temple staff and clergy forget that they are in the midst of Buddhist practice and that the temple is a site for a ceaseless awareness of compassion exercised in the service of reason that can and should be continuously realized; perhaps most especially in the face of perceived economic pressures.

### **Inner Manifestations**

In terms of inner manifestation our colleagues are not engaged in any form of mono-cultural assimilation – an attitude rooted in fear and withdrawal. Rather, we seek a multicultural integration. This integration requires an attitude of courage that pervades our work and takes many forms; from the ability to smile in the face of an incomprehensible torrent of noise (another language), to the courage to confront and quickly resolve one's own rush of anger before addressing a guest who has inadvertently blundered into the most sacred, inner chamber of our temple.

To see “things as they are” is to be “fair-minded” and to treat all points of view without prejudice that prioritizes one's own gain. In a temple setting this practice of fair mindedness is all the more apparent because we are integrating Buddhist practice with customer service while realizing a profit. Being fair-minded in this context becomes a challenging endeavor because what is “favorable” (what

we agree with) in the field of profit making may not be in the interest of compassion and what is “unfavorable” (what we disagree with) in the field of profit making may be truly compassionate. “A guide” (as outlined and imaged with the inner wheel of the mandala) is a practical framework for critical thinking that supports staff and clergy to begin to work through their own thinking/being in a multicultural sphere where rationality can and does support Buddhist practice. Thinking critically, being open (fair) minded and being investigative of one’s own thinking as well as the thinking of others is crucial. From the point of view of reasonability, sound thinking, being fair minded and having an open mind are all based on a fundamental confidence in the tenets of rationality.

There is also an emotional constellation of feelings and attitudes: humility, courage, honesty (with oneself and others), empathy and perseverance, that animates this rational framework constellated in the inner manifestation of “a guide”. These skills, attitudes, and qualities are supported and celebrated in the Vajrayāna tradition. The on going process of improving our own thinking/feeling/being in relation to the dharma, as well as to self and other, is challenging in that all of us must cooperate equally in working through biases and distortions (ignorance and delusion), even in traditional, feudal settings. At Yochi-in clerics, guests and staff participate equally in spheres of integrative activity through a spirit of service to the dharma, self and other. At its best this process results in confronting our own self-deceptions and our own ego attachments.

As human beings our thinking is our responsibility. For a fair-minded world an awareness of the ways in which we think as well as an awareness of the means to improve our thinking is required. In the context of Vajrayāna Buddhism where paradox is the path this awareness of our own thinking mind is crucial. The danger of giving too much

weight to more powerful self-centered modalities of thinking/acting - particularly in a traditional framework, are very real. Using the same thoughtful standards for others as one uses for oneself (whether giving more or less weight to views that differ from our own) is one means for all of us (Buddhist and non-Buddhist), 'traditional' or 'modern', to continuously question our own convictions and improve our thinking as we travel toward the truth of our own being.

### **Start Where You Are**

On entering the mandala it is important to note that the inner wheel ("a guide") is a vehicle for questions. Indeed, the "quest" is rooted in "quest/questioning" our own thinking and our own approach to our own minds. It is through our minds that change happens and that fair mindedness is accomplished. The inner wheel is dynamic; one may think about assumptions in the area of ritual/worship, then turn the wheel counter clockwise and set about clearly establishing the goal(s) for ritual worship and gather information from a variety of sources in order to accomplish that goal. Turn the wheel of inner manifestations once more and we are in a position to begin to understand the multiple points of view involved in ritual/worship (staff, clerics, guests and believers). Another turn and we think about the implications for ritual/worship on ourselves: guests, staff and the world at large. With the next turn one can begin the process of deciding the most important issue or problem with regard to ritual/worship. Finally, we turn the wheel for the sixth time and we are in a position to work through what constitutes evidence for our thinking about ritual/worship. The wheel of inner manifestations in the form of "a guide" is free to turn in any direction (either clockwise or counterclockwise) and can be used to enhance reasonability in any one of the six outer

manifestations of temple activities. By enhancing reasonability with regard to temple management we thereby enhance the communicability of our thinking, which then leads to a more collegial and supportive work environment.

For the purposes of this paper, we will use the inner manifestations of “assumptions” and work with this aspect of critical, reasonable thinking through three outer manifestations: ritual/worship, translation/interpretation and tourist services. We demonstrate that each human being is free to employ his/her critical thinking through an encounter with the mandala in his/her own way. Having a dynamic, flexible framework that puts critical thinking in relation to temple activities has provided us with a useful tool to improve communication between ourselves while supporting reasonable discourse as required in a public multicultural sphere such as Yochi-in.

### **Ritual/Worship and Assumptions**

In a country such as Japan there are a great number of unexamined assumptions when it comes to the consideration of all things “foreign”. These assumptions, when left unexamined, can accumulate and calcify into a veiled, unconscious form of estrangement from the world at large. There may be a sense that guests will not want to participate in ritual/worship due to the lack of a shared language or belief system. The assumption is that this lack becomes a barrier, making it unreasonable to expect guests to participate in Buddhist services. Japanese visitors do not share the same positioning with regard to ritual/worship as guests from abroad who cannot read Japanese. By unconsciously ascribing to the assumption that it is impossible to balance the needs of believers (Japanese and non-Japanese) with non-believers (Japanese and non-Japanese) guests may be prevented from an experience of the dharma. Operating in a multicultural public sphere at Yochi-in requires careful

consideration for accommodating understanding multiple points of view.

Non-believers and believers, Japanese and non-Japanese are all capable of participating in morning service at various levels given a measure of support. For example, at Yochi-in, on entering the worship hall (*hondo*) two clerics or staff are positioned at the door, one engaged in purification rites for each entrant, the other responsible for providing laminated sheets of paper that: 1) explain in English how to enact the incense purification ritual (*shôkô*) performed at the beginning of the service, 2) contain the Romanized version of the Heart Sutra that can be chanted out loud by believers and non-believers near the end of the service, 3) contain an English translation of the Heart Sutra that can be read and understood during the service by English speakers, and 4) contain a Japanese version of the Heart Sutra. Guests begin to enter the worship hall at 6:20 a.m. and the service begins promptly at 6:30 a.m. During these 10 minutes guests are instructed to read the laminated sheets of paper (most naturally do so) so that they are able to prepare in some measure to chant (in unison) the Heart Sutra near the end of the service. Believers who already know the Heart Sutra chant in Japanese by memory, non-believers read the sutra (whether in Japanese or Romaji) from the page. In this way every being who enters the worship hall has been provided with some measure of access to Buddhist teachings and each guest is empowered to participate at whatever level he or she is capable. Clerics (at least three are needed for services) lead the chant of the Heart Sutra with an understanding that many participants in the space are encountering Buddhist scripture for the first time, others have chanted before, many know 'of' the Heart Sutra but have never encountered the text in Japanese, and some may have studied and practiced with the Heart Sutra but have never chanted the text before.

Chanting the Heart Sutra in unison among such a diverse group of beings from all parts of the globe is an emotional catharsis that has brought some participants to tears. At the end of the service a space is opened for questions. Non-Japanese guests invariably have questions, Japanese not so much. Nonetheless, this space for inquiry is rewarding for all involved by bringing a sense of community to what has once been simply a group of strangers assembled in one space. In Japan there is a rich tradition rooted in the multivalent notion of tourist/pilgrim that serves to assure a measure of respect for all travelers who come to Yochi-in, no matter how remote their place of origin.

While morning services unfold, breakfast is set out for guests in another room and ritual/worship continues during breakfast with a ceremony known as Shikiji Raku Saho (食事略作法) - a time and space for clerics and monks in training to consider the needs of those afflicted by addiction and desire (hungry ghosts). During this ritual worship, guests do not chant but maintain a ritual form while eating with clerics and monks in training. All assembled sit on tatami (there are chairs available if requested). Miso and rice mark the cushions (*zabuton*) for clerics and monks in training, while an elaborate array of vegetarian fare is set out for each guest. All are instructed using simple English phrases as to when to begin eating, and when to stop, depending on ritual cues. This breakfast ritual is a time for believers and non-believers, Japanese speakers and non-Japanese speakers, to engage with the sacred through the simple act of eating.

**Booking: Goals, Understanding Multiple Points of View, Evidence**

Just as ritual/worship is the lifeblood of the temple, booking is the life-blood of the temple as profit center. Turning the inner wheel we can begin to think about goals for booking. At Yochi-in, we seek to operate an accommodation facility; therefore we have at least one staff member (usually cleric or monk in training) in charge of booking at all times. With our goal of expanding the number of guests, evidence (in terms of feedback) is crucial because our web presence depends on feedback provided by our guests - as a quick Google search under "Yochi-in Temple" will attest. There are other methods for booking such as having a web page, using Agora, and/or tie-ups with both international and domestic travel agencies.

As our goal is to accommodate guests we have a room for an office with two entrances: one fronts onto the hall and is accessible to guests for booking purposes such as check-in, check-out and general inquires, the other (back entrance) is accessible by staff and clerics from the tatami break room. Wholly dedicated to booking, this office is a small western style (no tatami) room and equipped with office facilities such as a large wooden desk that greets each guest as they enter the room. On the surface of the desk is a blotter, pens, paper, pencils, scissors and all manner of office supplies. The computer and printer are off to the side so as not to interfere with interpersonal contact across the desk between guests, clerics and staff.

Understanding multiple points of view is crucial in terms of booking. Not only must we understand the needs of guests (allergies and health issues, needs of children, etc.) but also understand the multiple points of view of staff. Greeting guests while developing communication strategies for cross-cultural interaction can be stressful, but is also an opportunity for empowerment for clerics and staff as they

communicate with complete strangers. Just as we have empowered guests to partake in morning services, we empower staff and clergy to participate in the care of guests by supplying all concerned with booking information received from the web, phone or word of mouth. Before or during a morning meeting that occurs each morning at 8:30 (after breakfast) staff and clerics receive a piece of paper containing information for each guest. The meeting occurs in front of a large white board that hangs on the wall and shows the exact same format for recording information as printed on individual papers in the hands of staff. Booking information is transferred onto the board by the person in charge of booking so that all staff, clerics and monks in training have access to the same information at all times throughout the day. The morning meeting is a chance for each of us to voice concerns, ask questions and make comments regarding the workflow for the day. Items of a more personal nature may also surface. Temple chores are announced, special guests, tours, anything of import is brought out, explored and understood in this meeting space as each member reads through the paper with the names of guests and their needs for the day and night. All booking information regarding each guest is available on paper and is both in the hands of staff and clerics for easy reference (stashed in pockets to be referred to throughout the day) or is visible to all on the white board near the kitchen (not visible to guests).

Being aware of multiple understandings among staff is crucial for the smooth operation of an accommodation facility. That awareness extends to break time as well. These brief periods of time occur every day without fail - in the morning at 10:00am and in the afternoon at 3:00pm. Wherever we are (gardens, bathrooms, hallways), whatever we are doing (pruning, cleaning, practicing) we break for at least 15 minutes (longer during less busy periods) to enjoy a



cup of hot tea or beverage and some form of snack in the company of one another. While the worship hall may be considered the heart center of temple as worship, this tatami room (known as the break room or *gakuseibeya*) located between the office and the temple kitchen, is the heart center of the temple as an accommodation facility.

### **Translation/Interpretation and Assumptions**

There is a prevalent assumption in Japan that foreign visitors will be unhappy when they are instructed, taught or “told” what to do because (the assumption goes) the task of the host is to provide anything and everything (to the best of their abilities) that guests require. What we have found at Yochi-in is that guests are – on the contrary – grateful to be instructed, happy to be taught and their level of satisfaction increases when they are guided through their exposure to Vajrayāna practice in the context of Japanese culture.

Japanese culture, just as any culture, maintains unwritten rules of behavior that must be followed for members to work smoothly with one another. As a temple, we not only adhere to the unwritten rules of Shingon Buddhism, but we also adhere to the unwritten rules of Japanese culture. The task in a multi-cultural public sphere such as Yochi-in is to make these unwritten rules apparent. There is a subtle and profound difference between treating guests as beings of inordinate power and treating guests as fellow human beings. The former attitude, while perhaps serviceable in a capitalist framework (tips and income stream) or in a feudalistic framework (people with power are never questioned) this is not a realistic attitude for temple accommodation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As such, and in strategic locations all over the temple, translations of instructions are posted regarding every facet of behavior, ranging from what to do with one’s shoes (take them off) to taking a bath (wash first), to finding the temple

office (this way), to what to do at the water cooler (do not fill your water bottle). Once guests are greeted at the temple entrance (there is a buzzer with English instructions for use) they are met and taken to their assigned rooms (staff consult their paper on querying the name of the guest). On a low-lying table in the guest's room tea and a sweet are to be found with a sheet of (laminated) instructions for their stay. These instructions amount to a single page of English that includes "Manners" (seven points) and "Misc. Info" (five points). These instructions range from room etiquette to comportment during religious services. Instructions are sometimes repeated when posted in the halls and at strategic locations throughout the temple.

The other assumption often made in Japan is that tourists from other countries ("foreigners") are helpless because they not only know nothing about Japanese culture, but they are also incapable of learning or speaking the Japanese language. Underlying this assumption is another; that the burden of communication rests with Japanese speakers themselves and they must speak perfect (grammatically correct) English to be understood. Because our guests (by and large) do not speak Japanese and our staff is by no means fluent in English, translation serves to empower and support pleasant communication among all parties concerned.

Translations posted at strategic locations take the burden of explaining acceptable conduct off everyone by explaining unwritten rules in a reasonable, non-threatening format (words on a page). Speaking in English then loses the frisson and fear born of difference because guests, staff and clerics are consciously aware that they share the same basic knowledge of conduct. This knowledge allows a space to open for playfulness, laughter and a general sense of well-being. Basics of comportment are made known to all guests from the very beginning of their stay (in their rooms at

check-in). Sometimes guests post comments on the web about lack of heating or the thin nature of the walls (paper screens), but these facets of temple life at Yochi-in have remained unchanged for over a thousand years. Coming to stay at Yochi-in is to come reasonably prepared to engage in an experience of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the Japanese tradition.

### **Meals: A Guide**

Based on evidence (feedback) we understand that meals are invariably the best part of the stay for temple guests. The assumption that outsiders cannot eat Japanese food - let alone enjoy vegetarian cuisine - deserves to be reexamined. Eating dinner and breakfast together while seated on tatami allows a space for guests to share their reactions, opinions and points of view about what they are eating. Great care is given to the presentation of meals and traditional rules of service are strictly followed. Staff and clergy encourage and participate in this sharing of reactions and opinions by responding to guests' questions and reactions as best they can. A feeling of empowerment often ensues as opportunities unfold for temple members to teach and to instruct. Explaining meals and engaging in dialogue regarding something so basic as food is an important opportunity for sharing Japanese culture and personalizing the temple experience for each individual. For many guests, meals at Yochi-in are their best memory. With regard to implications; our approach to food service through care, tradition, dialogue and instruction means that guests circulate information regarding their meal experiences among themselves, through social media (SNS), and between friends. As one of our goals is to increase repeat visits to Yochi-in, meal times are a venue to consider the implications of conviviality not only for increasing bookings, but to determine the nature of those bookings in the form of repeat visitors. Because the

implications of meal service are so important for booking there is a constant need for kitchenware (expensive lacquer ware, aesthetically pleasing bowls, plates, etc.) and better kitchen facilities to maintain the quality of taste. As we serve traditional Buddhist vegetarian cuisine (*shojin ryori*) we must ensure that quality, taste and preparation are maintained by those who truly understand (and who practice) this style of cooking. During one of our stays at Yochi-in we had an intern from Denmark come specifically to study *shojin ryori* with us. Those interested in understanding, practicing and engaging in an experience of this style of cuisine are part of a unique Buddhist practice.

### **Tourist Services: Assumptions**

One may be prey to the assumption that tourists are not particularly interested in Buddhist practice, or, if they are, somehow these practices have to be “dumbed down” for easy consumption. At Yochi-in we offer two traditional forms of Buddhist practice: copying the Heart Sutra and copying Buddhist images. Both of these endeavors are accepted forms of worship as the time devoted to copying the sutra or Buddhist image is considered a form of meditation that amounts to an offering. The single sheet of paper produced through copying a Buddhist image or sutra text is offered and incorporated into the morning services the next day and guests are informed of that fact. Copying the Heart Sutra can take up to two hours to complete. Guests are brought to a quiet room where incense is prepared as they sit down at low tables on tatami. Given two brushes (sold in any convenience store in Japan) lest one should run out, guests are instructed in what amounts to laying tracing paper over written text (Japanese characters) or line drawn Buddhist images. If possible, guests are instructed as to the meaning of each Buddha image so that they can choose which image is most meaningful for them at that point in

time. They then set carefully to work, tracing the lines of the image or the lines of Japanese characters with their brush. Guests with absolutely no prior knowledge of Japanese, let alone Buddhist sutras have found this experience to be extremely rewarding.

For us, instructing guests in this practice has been particularly meaningful as a means of engaging with self and other. We realize that we had assumed that because guests could not read nor write Japanese this profound exercise would be rendered meaningless. The quiet room for copying allows time and space for more personal interaction with guests regarding Buddhist theory and practice. Once instructed (briefly) as to the contents of the sutra and the tradition of sutra copying, guests are left alone to finish their work. Verbal interaction with guests ranges from fairly perfunctory to deeply sustaining - depending on the needs of those assembled (including staff and clergy). Staff or clergy may meet guests again later in the evening in the traditional bath or *ofuro* (separated by sex) and conversations continue albeit in a radically different setting. Meditation instruction is also available and may, or may not, include the characteristic Shingon meditation practice of Ajikan (meditation on the Sanskrit letter 'ah').

### **Cleaning: Goals and Implications**

The goal of cleaning at Yochi-in is not only to keep the temple operating, but is also an important aspect of Buddhist training in the Japanese tradition. The notion of *kiyomeru*, of purification, of sincerity and of clarity are deeply intertwined with both Buddhist practice and Japanese culture to the degree that cleaning is considered a form of practice on par with meditation or sutra copying. Monks in training are always assigned the task of mopping and sweeping corridors. Removing and replacing futon, cleaning and vacuuming guest rooms, collecting cotton

robes (*yukata*) and towels for laundry off-site, washing and drying dishes – all of these tasks are considered to be service to the self, to others and to the Buddha. Cleaning as meaningful religious practice is recognized at Yochi-in as integral to the pursuit of Buddhist practice.

In the context of cleaning as Buddhist practice the implications for cleaning expand, radiating outward to include not only the notion that guests are happy (evidence is provided via comments on the web) and the temple is well maintained, but that those performing the cleaning schedules (clerics and staff) are directly engaged in the practice of purification of spirit that is integral to ritual/worship. The ability to apply oneself to washing toilets, baths and floors, corridors, rooms and gardens amounts to a meditation – time to reflect on karmic ties, on purity of intent toward compassionate action and as such, carries implications of religious merit for all involved.

## Conclusion

Conceptualized in this way the practice of temple management can be a profoundly empowering experience. Local staff and clergy as individuals can develop their personal ability to exert control over their own spiritual lives while also gaining access to personal as well as cultural resources. The interlocking circles of temple activities amount to discrete systems that operate seamlessly together. An individual who participates in temple management may find herself moving smoothly through all six circles in the space of one hour: checking the white board (booking) while bringing out a dinner tray for a guest (meals), discussing food (translation/interpretation) then helping to wash dishes after the meal (cleaning) before instructing a guest in the principles of the Heart Sutra for sutra copying (tourist services: ritual/worship).

What may perhaps begin as personal empowerment (one wall of our break room is home to thank you postcards, notes and messages from all over the world) can extend to collective empowerment of staff and clergy. At the level of community empowerment (and elsewhere in the world) a whole town may gain access to new economic resources. In regional areas, opening temples to travelers, lodgers and guests may allow community members to realize social empowerment through communication among individuals and groups both inside and outside the temple. *Social empowerment* is maintained through the practice of social cooperation and mutual respect. The practice of accommodating tourists also realizes an income that both supports and requires *technological empowerment* in the form of booking and information management via the Internet and social media. The subsequent generation of income encourages other local businesses (e.g. restaurants and cafes, groceries and specialty shops) and supports entrepreneurial development. Finally, and on a global scale, there is *political empowerment* that is realized through the emergence of leadership and an awareness of community welfare.

The notion of temple management as a site for Buddhist practice holds enormous potential for all parties involved. It is our fervent hope that by opening our temples and our cultural heritage to international guests, we may all enhance our own Buddhist practice by understanding our own thinking/being in the service of Dharma, others and ourselves. In this way, wisdom and compassion are made manifest among us.

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# **Social Constructionism and religious experience: Case of Tibetan Buddhist converts in Finland**

*Maria Sharapan*

## **Abstract**

The focus of this essay is the social-constructionist treatment of participants' experiences, which bear distinct non-naturalist tone (referred to as 'religious experiences', or REs). The data sample consists of examples of religious experiences, mentioned by interviewees, who are Tibetan Buddhist converts. The 16 interviews were collected among members of two Tibetan (Vajrayāna) Buddhist groups in Helsinki, Finland, for a research project, unrelated to religious experiences per se. Based on the analysis of different qualitative (and quantitative) methods and their limitations, the essay suggests a five-fold framework for approaching religious experiences in qualitative data, rooted in social-constructionist understanding and methodological agnosticism.

## **Encountering religious experiences**

Religious, spiritual and mystical experiences have been under scholarly scrutiny for more than a century, formally since William James' *Varieties of religious experience* (James, 1902/2009). Nevertheless, they remain an enigmatic theme within humanities and social sciences, and recently also in neuroscience (for example, McNamara, 2009; Newberg, 2010). In qualitative research, a focus on religious or any non-naturalist experiences might be tempting, but it is also problematic in terms of methodology, epistemology and

ontology. What is the most comprehensive way to study them? How do we evaluate the validity of reports? How genuine are the memories and interpretations? How much of her own implicit views is the researcher projecting on the research? The implications of the answers are far-reaching. Since religious experiences deal with the 'unseen' and are inherently subjective, it makes the questions truly difficult.

Nevertheless, many have dared to answer them (Baker, 2009; Glik, 1990; Porpora, 2006; Yamane, 2000), and in this essay, I am going to address the treatment of religious experiences, when they are *not* the focus of research, but rather a side-story. The paper is inspired by my own dissertation project on adoption of Tibetan (Vajrayāna) Buddhism among Westerners, and is based on the interviews with Finnish practitioners of Vajrayāna I collected in 2016. While the research was not concerned with religious experiences *per se*, I quickly noticed that such accounts appear frequently throughout the answers, and play an important role in the process of becoming a Tibetan Buddhist. I also quickly noticed that these narratives are just as important as they are hard to address fairly using the epistemological tools available. Based on what we know from quantitative and qualitative research on religious experiences<sup>83</sup>, as well as the limitations of the available

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<sup>83</sup> This essay by no means strives to analyse the whole array of quantitative and qualitative methods for the study of religious experiences. The focus is on some qualitative methods, which have been and could be used, but it does not include all available ones. Widely used and respected methods like ethnography or grounded theory are beyond the scope of this analysis, firstly, because I have not encountered any research on non-naturalist experiences, involving these methods, and secondly (also mainly), because these methods are so thorough and rigorous that it would be hard to involve them into any kind of multi-method framework. However,

studies, I suggest a framework to address similar experiences when they come up in the data. The framework is rooted in a social-constructionist understanding, a restricted relativist/pluralist view of the *truth* (Baghramian, 2004), and methodological agnosticism (Porpora, 2006) as an ontological position over the issue.

### **Varieties of religious experience**

The topic of 'religious experiences' has been discussed for more than a hundred years. James (1902/2009) pioneered the discussion by collecting and reporting with academic impartiality the wide array of subjective experiences, described by his respondents. The field of psychology has developed considerably in more than a century, and similar phenomena have reached beyond humanities and social sciences into neurology (Newberg, 2010). Aden (2012) differentiates between daily or usual religious experiences, such as joy in worship (not the topic of this essay), and "extraordinary" ones (p. 206). He classifies the latter into a) everyday feeling of divine presence/harmony; b) dreams, visions and "presences"; c) ecstasies and out-of-body experiences; d) realizations<sup>84</sup>; and e) oneness. Aden's (2012) list does not include many other non-naturalist experiences, which can nevertheless be relevant to religious individuals. In studying Buddhists, past life memories (studied with academic rigour, see Stevenson, 1980, 2000, and his

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claiming that, I would see the principles outlined here applied to participant observation as well.

<sup>84</sup> Aden (2012) uses a word "enlightenments", but this wording may be confusing in view of its meaning in the Buddhist vocabulary. While Aden refers to various insights achieved by spiritual practice, enlightenment in the Buddhist sense is used in singular and refers to the ultimate goal of such insights, nirvana.

successors), or extra-sensory perception (also enjoying scientific attention with varying success) could be just as or more relevant than some of the “classic” forms of religious experience.

The debate about what kind of experience can be called a religious one, as well as various categorizations, involving words ‘spiritual’, ‘mystical’ or ‘paranormal’ are beyond the scope of this study (for an analysis of extra-natural experiences, see Cardena, 2017; Hood & Chen, 2015). It is indeed difficult to draw distinct conceptual lines when speaking of phenomena, which in terms of natural sciences do not even exist. However, we need to make best possible use of language to convey messages, and for the purposes of *this* study I will be using the term ‘religious experience’. The rationale is that all of the respondents considered themselves to be Buddhist, and Buddhism is a religion (despite a misconception, see Faure, 2011, p. 27); and even though their reports do not necessarily follow Buddhist doctrinal tenets, they are still talked about as important for the shaping of their Buddhist identity and lifestyle. However, the social-constructionist studies I analyse below address a range of non-naturalist experiences, not bearing a connection to any religion. The experiences referred to as “paranormal”, “psychic”, are also included in the analysis, as well as near-death and out-of-body experiences (NDE and OBE). All these experiences form questions in research in terms of applying methodological atheism or naturalism, and are potentially enhancing to experient's spirituality. For the purposes of this essay, I will be referring to a broad range of such experiences simply as REs (religious experiences), but the same reasoning could apply to any non-naturalist experiences, bearing no explicit connection with any religion or organized spirituality.

## Varieties of social constructionism

Social constructionism (from now on, SC) is a prevalent paradigm of good qualitative research (Patton, 2014; Prasad, 2005). It represents a range of various thoughts and views, sometimes mutually enhancing, and sometimes mutually exclusive (Lock & Strong, 2010). Social constructionism can stand for different epistemological perspectives and ontological claims, ideally, depending on research purposes, and practically, on views, sometimes inadvertently, adhered to by the researcher (Burr, 2003). The internal complexity of SC is further aggravated by its interdisciplinary usage across the broad fields of humanities and social sciences, which might in its turn be aggravated even more severely by any given discipline claiming its 'dominance' over social constructionism, such as Burr (2003, p. 2), who said "Social constructionism is a term that is used almost exclusively by psychologists". Thus, when it comes to definitions and features of SC, some overlapping and controversies are to be expected. Nevertheless, in this essay I will try to make sense of the key classification of SCs, in terms of their epistemology and ontology, limiting the analysis to how they relate to studying religious experience.

Ideas, which gave rise to SC, can be traced to the 18th century (Lock & Strong, 2010), or even earlier, to Pythagoras (Baghranian, 2004), and throughout the European philosophy. However, the term came into active usage after the work by Berger and Luckmann (1966) titled "*The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*," which conceptualized the 'social reality' as coming into being by the process of communication and social interaction, in three interconnected steps: *institutionalization*, *legitimation* and *internalization*. The borders between the social reality and the physical reality, as well as what is 'real' and what is 'socially constructed', and whether the two are in contradiction, are among hot issues of disagreement bet-

ween social constructionists (Hacking, 1999). All forms of SC can be roughly placed into two categories. Most common distinction is between 'weak' SC, which accepts the reality of 'brute facts', i.e. some level of objective reality, and its opposite 'strong' SC (Burr, 2003; Danziger, 1997). Danziger (1997) prefers naming these two categories 'light' and 'dark', because while the former sees the social reality constructed through discourse, the latter sees discourse as being shaped by and shaping the reality through the "dark" social forces. For the 'light' SC the 'brute facts' of physical reality are either acknowledged, or irrelevant (bracketed), while for the "dark" SC, they are either irrelevant or rejected (Burr, 2003; Danziger, 1997; Lock & Strong, 2010). Concerned about the connotations of "weak", "dark" etc., Burr (2003) suggests to term the categories 'micro' and 'macro' respectively. This way she also shifts emphasis more from the ontological implications of these varieties of SC to their practical application: 'micro' is about the textual level, while 'macro' is about context at large, including the "dark social forces".

Within contemporary SC thought it would not be fair to ascribe 'micro' social-constructionists to realism and the 'macro' ones to relativism. The whole range of realism-relativism includes different grades (how 'real' things are) and levels (relation to 'truth', our knowledge, or morals) (Baghrmian, 2004; O'Grady, 2014). Many prominent philosophers tend to move around on the spectrum and often have one foot in epistemological or moral relativism, and the other in the critical realist view of the natural world (Rorty, 1991; Rorty, 2009; Putnam, 1991, 2013; Hacking, 1999). Contemporary emancipatory research, mostly keen on very 'real' and tangible issues of gender, race and class, employs the 'dark' SC, while keeping the 'reality' of these issues intact (Flatschart, 2016; Haslanger, 2012). Similar attitude has been applied to religious issues (Lynch, 2017; Schilbrack, 2017, p. 304):

The concept [religion] is a product of contingent historical and cultural influences, and its invention and use serve certain particular interests. But I judge that that there were forms of life predicated on superhuman beings and powers - including practices like making offerings, visiting shrines, and celebrating feast days; roles like *oracles* [emphasis added], renunciants, and jurists; and institutions to regulate and reproduce those practices and roles - all of which existed in history prior to and independent of the concept "religion." Those forms of life are not fictions and the modern concept of "religion" categorizes but does not invent them.

However, while physical religious signs (for example, the Muslim hijab), affiliations and vocations do bear unambiguously observable implications, the issue of *experience* is more problematic and demands a relativist take. The example of an *oracle* from Schilbrack's (2017) argument is illustrative: the job of an oracle is to be in contact with *spirits* (whatever fulfills that function). In the absence of spirits or any cognate entities, leaves the oracle in a realistic position of either suffering from hallucinations (delusion), or being a charlatan, deceiving the gullible for a living (deceit). Either option would put his employment at stake, although the modernist naturalistic worldview is probably the only paradigm in human past and present, denying the possibility of existence of spirits, and deliberately abstaining from reliance on conclusive evidence for the denial. This is not to say that spirits exist. It just means that a realist view over the 'unseen', bound to obey the paradigm of naturalist psychology, will interpret participants of qualitative research in a way they would not interpret themselves. Apart from inaccuracy, it could possibly bear serious 'real' implications for their wellbeing and interests (Bishop, 2009; Richardson, 2009; Slife & Reber, 2009).

In contrast to objectively measurable physical reality of particles, mental disorders or racial features (Hacking,

1999), I would argue that reports of subjective experiences, bearing strong non-naturalist tones, have to be approached through a moderate relativist framework of methodological agnosticism (Porpora, 2006), instead of binding their interpretation to a framework, laden by scientific *assumptions* (Sheldrake, 2012) and ideological mechanisms (Feyerabend, 1993), reflected in methodological atheism (Berger, 1974; Berger & Luckmann, 1981). Methodological agnosticism does not include an eager personal acceptance of assumptions behind the stories (Porpora, 2006). Instead, it acknowledges the importance of the stories for the experiencers themselves, their biographies and interests, simply accepting the indefinite possibility of them either being what they seemed to be or being fabrications. It also does not dismiss the external contextual factors and facts, which could strengthen the probability of either possibilities, without feeding a ready-made personal conclusions to the reader disguised as authoritative evidence-based truth-claims.

### **Approaching religious experiences**

Based on the available quantitative and qualitative research into religious experiences, I will critically discuss the narratives and reports of religious experiences that appeared in my data. In the fall of 2016 I collected 16 interviews with members of two Tibetan Buddhist groups of different schools, Nyingma and Gelug, operating since 1996 and 2007 respectively in Helsinki, Finland. Half of the respondents were male, half were female, their age ranging from early thirties to late fifties, and their experience in Buddhist practice ranged from two to twenty years. Five respondents had some foreign background (European), others were ethnic Finns. The interview questions concerned their self-ascribed religious identity, attitudes to different aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, other religions, relevant social



issues, the nature of their practice, level of commitment, as well as relations with their teachers (Sharapan & Härkönen, 2017). Every respondent I talked to expressed some level of belief in Buddhism's transphenomenal concepts. All except one respondent expressed a belief in reincarnation, and agreed that without it one cannot really be a Buddhist. The only 'reincarnation-agnostic' respondent nevertheless believed in the Buddhist theory of karma, and in the possibility of enlightenment, and was also talking of gurus' superpowers with casual ease. This way, whether or not the respondents shared any experiences, their picture of the world was *non-naturalist*.

### *How common are religious experiences?*

Some sort of religious and spiritual experiences are reported by a large part of human population (Castro, Burrows & Wooffitt, 2014; Greily, 1991). Despite popular attempts to link the reports to some demographic correlates, like gender, ethnicity etc., recent surveys demonstrate that they correlate with them only lightly (Castro et al., 2014). This means that white middle-class males are not unlikely to experience the 'transcendent' in some way or another. Yamane (2000) drew attention to the treacherous role of language in surveying people about their religious experiences. Questions are often conceptualized through one religion (normally, Protestant Christianity), and the wording can be ambiguous, which accounts for a large variation in statistical results. Another drawback of surveys is the wide array of religious experiences, which they do not include. Potentially, telepathy or sensing 'energy' can be a strong factor in shaping one's religiosity or spiritual identity, but few surveys include them.

Nevertheless, the surveys do convey a strong picture that religious experiences are common, ranging from 20-65% of a population, depending on how, when, who and

what you ask (Baylor Religion Survey, 2005; Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997; Pew Research Center, 2009). In my own study I asked convert Tibetan Buddhists in Finland. These are people, who have opted for the religion, switching either from a Christian background, or from atheist views. Without being asked about ‘experiences’ as such, about a half (N=9<sup>85</sup>) of respondents reported or mentioned something like that. This way, whether looked for in the data on religious and existential issues or not, religious experiences are likely to be there.

*What kinds of experiences are they?*

Qualitative research into experiences, claimed by respondents, demonstrated both how similar and how varied they could be (Hardy, 1979). Experiences may range from premonitions to unity with God, and have been roughly categorized as introvertive and extravertive (Hood et al., 2001). While some academics have expressed an idea that experiences are shaped by the experient’s religion and culture (e.g. Katz, 1978<sup>86</sup>), the accumulated accounts also

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<sup>85</sup> The number is approximate, because some reports could be referring to some extra-naturalist experience, but they could also be easily regarded as poetic ways of talking about psychological events. For example, some respondents talk about their relation with their teachers using the word “connection”. While the word can be read in psychological sense as meaning personal compatibility with and charisma of a teacher and also has a more spiritually-laden sense of a spiritual bond, relying on karma, previous contact with this teacher in past lives and his or her transcendent qualities of a bodhisattva

<sup>86</sup> Katz (1978) and other academics, following a constructivist/contextual interpretation of religious experiences, do have good and important arguments. The strongest difference between them might lie in the philosophical clash over whether there is such a thing as a conceptually-unmediated experience. Important to note, that nei-

demonstrate recurring patterns in described experiences, which are assumed to be cross-cultural (Stace, 1960). Hood (1975) suggested a common cross-cultural scale for mystical experience (M Scale), including parameters of *Ego Loss*,

*Timelessness/Spacelessness, Unity, Inner Subjectivity, Positive Affect, Sacredness, Noetic Quality, and Ineffability.* Apart from the well-studied contexts of Christians and Muslims, the model has also proved itself valid on the study of Chinese Pure Land Buddhists (Chen et al., 2011a) and Tibetan Buddhists in Tibet (Chen et al., 2011b). Finding a common core in the reports among Buddhists is a significant argument in favour of empiricism as opposed to constructivism, since Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, situated in Asian context, and in the case of the two studies, being clearly culturally different from Western or Middle-Eastern societies. However, Yamane's (2000) criticisms in terms of language ambiguity do apply and are acknowledged by the authors as well. It poses questions whether the "common core" exists on the level of the experiences themselves, or appears on the level of inquiry and interpretation, i.e. in the eyes of the beholder.

In any case, it would be consistent with research and intuition to claim that reports of religious experiences are products of some universal human events, which are interpreted and recalled in agreement with the experient's personal and cultural background. Overall, my interviews included references to experiences of presence, visions, memories of past lives, feeling the energy of people and places, life-changing prophetic dreams, serendipity and "just knowing". All of these were somehow related to

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ther Katz nor Hood tend to challenge the authenticity of the narratives, i.e. are not reductionists.

Buddhism, particularly Vajrayāna, so the respondents mentioned them in relation to that. Particularly, thematic analysis revealed that relying on feeling people's energy or 'presence'<sup>87</sup> was a decisive factor in attending to and following teachers (or gurus), which is a central and a complicated issue in Vajrayāna (Sharapan & Härkönen, 2017). This also suggests that not only general cultural factors are important, but also particular contextual ones.

*What do they mean to the experiencers?*

As a subjective event, a religious experience cannot be accurately accessed by an outside researcher. Yet, for the person recalling it, it may be the most real and important thing that ever happened to them. Wilde and Murray (2010) suggest phenomenology to be the right lens for addressing religious experiences. First presented by Husserl, phenomenology concerns with how things appear to a subjective mind, as well as how they are tied to one's biography and worldview at large. It is an intuitive choice for the study of religious issues (Blum, 2012; Spickard, 2012). Phenomenology keeps questions of validity of the subjective aside, 'bracketing' their reality. To illustrate this approach I will bring an example from my data. Erik (M33, entrepreneur, ethnic Finn with a couple of years' experience in Buddhism) was explaining how thinking in terms of synchronicity<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> In this case referring to the commonly shared feeling of a teacher's strong energy or uncanny charisma, not to an other-worldly presence of some deity or power

<sup>88</sup> A concept, introduced by C. G. Jung, referring to meaningful coincidences, puzzling and unlikely from a mundane point of view, but reflecting one's psychological state or concern.

became natural to him after one experience he had in a Buddhist country:

I was in one of the islands and I was drinking all night, then I went to the hotel, but at that time I just didn't go to the hotel, but I went to the beach, drew a circle and was sitting there cross-legged, doing nothing. Then it was like, very weird, because usually when you're on the shore, there are waves coming. And there were waves coming, and then suddenly you know, no sound of the waves. And it was long time, very long time, and I thought like... Like at that time I was thinking like the world is my temple, like I don't need to go to the temple to pray, instead the whole world is my temple, like that. There was some sort of communication happening, I don't know what the message was, but I felt like some kind of divine thing, sitting there on the beach, and there was no waves, it was kind of a mystic experience.

In this case, a mystical experience is not something that just happened. It becomes a meaningful event in view of Erik's eventually becoming a Buddhist, having lived in a Buddhist country and having had interest in spirituality, but not as much in his original religious denomination (Lutheran Christianity). It happened at a certain time and bore a certain life-changing meaning.

However, phenomenology alone has a downside of focusing on the subjective (or intersubjective) reality of participants, as if it was something separate from their social context (McCutcheon, 2001; Fitzgerald, 2000). The social-constructionist lens (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991) is more sensitive to the context and the relations between the social world and the individual psychological reality.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Although Lock & Strong (2014) list phenomenology among SC lines of thought, the approach was verbalized by Husserl before the SC came into usage, and could be seen among sources and predecessors

However, Wilde and Murray (2010) argue phenomenology should not be dismissed completely in religious studies, but rather complimented by other methods.

In a similar fashion, but with a shift of focus from *what* is being told onto *how*, researchers may employ the narrative method. Wary of methodological inaccuracy of most quantitative and qualitative studies of the issue, Yamane (2000) emphasized its benefits it providing a closer and more accurate account of the report and its connection to the rest of the personal story. The analysis of Erik's example would include a broader look at how he shared his Buddhist journey, including his change of heart from a scientifically minded sceptic: "I was priorly kind of materialistic, materialistic scientist thinking like that after we die, I don't know what there is, I cannot know for sure", to a Buddhist sceptic of naturalist ideology: "...it's kind of more like pointing, like look at this thing. Do you know that this is a fact? Is it a fact or is it just a belief?", because "there's very funny things that happen."

However, narrative methods, similar to phenomenology, always contain a potential for unreliability, when used exclusively. An experimental study held by Wildman and McNamara (2010) demonstrated a need to accompany narrative methods in REs with other approaches to ensure validity. This way, personal accounts described phenomenologically or as narratives form fascinating stories, but they fail to provide an accurate picture and are easily exposed to doubt. The most blatant gap in both cases is that of larger context, which is shaped through ideologies and institutionalized power through discourse. This factor, although

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of SC, or even a strand within SC, but SC of Berger & Luckmann and contemporary SC have a much broader reach.

somehow related to the cultural interpretation debate described above, presumes a different level of impact, particularly considering implied power imbalance and interests at stake.

### *What influences REs?*

So far we have stayed on the safe side of 'light' social constructionism, but when the broad social context steps in, we make a step onto the 'dark' side. The methods, commonly associated with this strand, are Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Foucault created a real stir in the intellectual environment of his time, raising issues of mental, sexual and political 'norms' (Foucault, 1969/2002; Foucault, 1980). Similar to his partner in postmodernism, J.F. Lyotard, he also expressed an understanding of science as a tool for asserting truth and order under the guise of discovering it (Lyotard, 1985). The postmodern philosophers left a rich baggage of ideas and perspectives, some of which have cozily carpeted the thinking space in social sciences and humanities, others are still causing fury among more positivist colleagues (example, Hicks, 2004). However, what they did not leave, was any form of theory or rigorous methodology. This makes Foucauldian approach quite loose: Foucault is rather a perspective, a state of mind. McKenzie (2014), for example, applies Foucault's interpretation of 'discourse' in a rather loose and schematic way, to describe the development of motivation in a Western Tibetan Buddhist group (Rokpa Scotland). CDA, on the other hand, applies academic rigor to its claims, and is represented by three major agents: Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1993; 1997), and Wodak (2001). Their foci and methodologies differ, but they all "focus on the ways in which discourse sustains and legitimizes social inequalities" (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 138) and presuppose analysis of big sets of naturally-occurring data, done in stages.

What unites them with FDA is attention to the context, and seeing the discourse as shaped by social, historical, political and other forces. Questions of power, dominance, voice, claims to truth and rights are in the spotlight. I will try to interpret some samples in terms of institutionalized forces, affecting the conversation to see what issues manifesting in my data could be of interest for a CDA researcher, and also, how this perspective should be incorporated into approaching REs. Before I do that, two critical remarks are that a) CDA is not normally applied to interviews, and b) CDA is notorious for limiting the analysis to merely the *linguistic* manifestation in a *given* context, despite dealing with context at large (Blommaert, 2005). So, below I discuss the possible issues forming CDA interest, rather than its technical application.

Bruno (M54, engineer, immigrant from South Europe with several years of experience in Buddhism) was talking about his visits to a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in South Europe.

Bruno: ...there is a resident geshe. And of course, it is a different thing when there is some geshe or lama teaching, than a simple monk. Already the fact that there is a basic monk, is a lot. But of course... I don't know, somehow, always when I have been somewhere, where there were these lamas and geshees, somehow... I don't know, it feels like wisdom is in the air. I don't know, I get much more, maybe it is also kind of also between the ears. (translated from Finnish)

What he describes ("wisdom in the air", "a kind of a good energy") does not sound mundane or even psychological. Realizing that, he hedges down his claim: "Maybe it's also between the ears". What makes Bruno back up and reinterpret his feeling or experience as self-persuasion?



Another example is Marina's (F44, partially foreign background, more than ten years' experience in Buddhism) meeting her teacher for the first time:

*Marina:* When the doors opened, from the customs side, and Rinpoche came out smiling and sunny, with his bags, I went completely nuts. I started behaving really stupidly, I couldn't come up with a single proper word, like when he came up and said: 'Hello', I went just: 'Aaaaa ...' Just crazy.

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Marina:* I don't know, he has this kind of effect on me. I just got locked. I couldn't behave appropriately, I just stood there and watched the floor, feeling like I cannot say anything. Then I just knew it, because his impact was so strong. After that I didn't have to think whether I met the real teacher: I definitely did. (translated from Finnish)

Here she accounts for her choice of a guru (against another candidate), based on her experience of his 'presence': "I definitely did". According to her accounts, since then her practice has been "consisting closely of the meditation practice guidelines, coming from the teacher's advice," dedicating much of her personal time to the dharma center, which means that the experience was truly seminal. This is not just a narrative describing how something happened and how important it was: there could have been alternative ways of interpreting her feelings, as well as alternative ways of acting upon them. Something made her stick to that teacher as her guru based on their startling first meeting.

These examples can be regarded in view of institutionalized forces. In the first case it is the institution of science with its ideology of naturalism, together with secularism and materialism as a dominant social narrative of modernity. The scientific worldview presupposes a likely naturalist

explanation to 'mystical' phenomena. Incongruence of one's subjective experience with what is constructed as 'scientific truth' creates a pressure to either question the mysticism of one's subjective experience or one's sanity/integrity. The more stakes you have on your 'normality' (status and income), the less likely you would be to confess a RE, potentially challenging it in the eyes of your peers (Yaden et al., 2016). Parallel to that, is the opposite force of 'liberating' the subjective and the spiritual, cultivated by postmodern culture. Specifically, it is resistance to science's truth-power-claims, a shift from a totalizing meta-narrative to "small narratives" (Lyotard, 1985), empowering subjectivity, return to tradition and attention to non-Western thought, and of course, the magical realism of postmodern literature, cinema and culture (McHale, 2015), since it has a tendency to influence religious life (Davidsen, 2016). The claim that postmodern culture, growing individualism, and a shift from religious institutions towards private religious experiences has a statistical reflection as well: 20.5% Americans claimed to have had a religious experience in 1962 and 48% did so in 1987 (Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997). Pew surveys demonstrate the same trend (Pew Research Centre, 2009). Therefore, the 'masking' of one's religious experience, the hesitation and questioning can be connected with the dominant forces of naturalism as a framework for intelligent conversation; and at the same time, the mentioning of such experiences, seeing them as life-changing, but normal, can be connected with the influence of the postmodern culture.

In the second case, we could acknowledge that the "small narrative" of Tibetan Buddhism/Vajrayāna is clearly an important one for the participants. Based on that, we could suggest that their interpretations and narratives are inspired by its discourses and stories. Many people in the West associate Buddhism with its less mystical branches, particularly Zen or Theravada. These branches of Buddhism

have been refined and renegotiated by Western intellectuals and Asian modernizers into the so-called Buddhist Modernism (see McMahan, 2008). Tibetan Buddhism properly entered the Western intellectual circles in the time of postmodernism, psychedelics, social movements and oriental fantasies, bringing some sharply non-naturalist elements from the "mystical Shangri-la" (Lopez, 1998), which was medieval Tibet. It was presented as 'science' in its own right, not only compatible with Western science, but also in some ways more 'advanced' (Lopez, 2009). It also had its 'scientists', the charismatic gurus with their unquestionable tantric authority. Stories of mystical meetings with one's guru were common in Indian Vajrayāna, Tibetan stories, and memoirs of twentieth century Westerners. All of my respondents had some taste or appetite for such stories in their personal biographies as well (Sharapan & Härkönen, 2017).

Are these accounts of religious experience simply stories elicited by some forces and balanced by others? Do they carry a power imbalance? There is no easy answer. Besides, the message is conveyed through language, and language is a notorious trickster. How are these experiences recalled? How do the experiencers make sure I understand them 'correctly'? What are the intentions behind linguistic and extra-linguistic tools? Some methods from the 'light' side of social constructionism, focusing specifically on the micro-level of discourse, shed light on the *actual* communication of a religious experience.

*How do people talk about experiences?*

The methods, which take a zoomed in look at discourse, are conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP). CA predated discourse analysis, and has strong roots in linguistics (Sachs, 1984; Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Schegloff, 1972). Its main focus is the 'mechanics' of how

interlocutors understand each other (Wooffitt, 2005), but some CA researchers have also paid attention to meanings and intentions, communicated through language means, and how they affect the micro level discourse (example, Billig, 1992). CA may also include the larger context, particularly the way it manifests in conversation; Whetherel's work (1983) is an example of that, disclosing gender ideology manifested in talk. But even staying on the micro level, CA can reveal something about how reports of non-naturalist experiences are (or may be) constructed. Through the CA of reported paranormal experiences Wooffitt (1992) revealed a recurring pattern of constructing factuality through acclaiming prior scepticism (also, Lamont, 2007) and linking the situation to a mundane setting. Remarkably, this pattern did not seem to occur in my data in relation to experiences as such, and only three respondents have claimed being sceptics before turning to Buddhism. The reports of religious experiences, found in my data, are not accompanied by preliminary persuasive tactics, described by Wooffitt (1992) and Lamont (2007). The stories of the 'unexpected' either flow through the talk as implicitly natural, like in the case of Kirsi (F54 school teacher of science):

*Kirsi:* I think, when you start, you get a lot of these signs, like you are being given a kind of a confirmation. I remember once, when I did Chenrezig-practice, one morning I got scared when I looked into the mirror and there was Chenrezig in the mirror. And it was my own face. I got a bit scared. Then I was like, aha, it is that close. Such signs I got in the beginning. Or, for example, a teacher's photo on the altar was just like alive. It waved a hand or nodded. (translated from Finnish)

Or are explicitly posited as natural, like in the example of Helmi (F34 science researcher):

*Helmi:* I think it is very easy to believe in them [karma and rebirth] through own experience. I get everything

through my own experience. Not just as a belief. It is not enough for me that there is some belief. I need to experience it, and then it becomes reality. I think it is important.

*Interviewer:* Experience? How have you experienced, for example, karma or rebirth?

*Helmi:* Well... In my opinion, they are obvious things. In a way. If you just think about them, they are completely reasonable. If you look at your life, or anyone's life, they happen all the time.

*Interviewer:* Could you give some example of what has strengthened your belief, or not a belief, but your understanding of, for instance, rebirth?

*Helmi:* Well, I have some memories of them, a few, of where I was before. I have seen them as kind of visions, of my previous lives, for example. That I was kind of, in different places.

*Interviewer:* And it gave you a confidence that it is true?

*Helmi:* Well, in my understanding it is clear, that it is like that, and then, of course, there are many other people's experiences. There are very many of them.

(translated from Finnish)

The ease is perplexing. Of course, the interviews are private and anonymous conversation with a familiar person, perceived as an in-group (myself), so the need to "construct factuality" (Wooffitt, 1992) is redundant. In that sense, interviews, although they are somewhat defied by discourse analysts (Silverman, 2015), present an interesting case. They are identity-forming situations (Nikander, 2012) and are conversations in their own right and should be approached as such (Wooffitt & Widdicombe, 2006). These factors could be behind the difference in discursive strategies used by trusting anonymous interviewees and people sharing experiences publically. The CA approach to

religious experiences, might also be problematic in terms of its closeness to positivist linguistics, presupposing realism, in turn, presupposing methodological atheism. The factuality of REs is something to be constructed through linguistic means, because within that paradigm the recalled events simply *cannot* be true. 'Micro' forms of social-constructionism, as the one associated with CA, typically keep the ontological questions in brackets. Opposite to phenomenology, we do not try to step into the experient's shoes and describe their vision, but on the contrary, to take a sober look at their talk from the heights of positivist scientific assumptions. Non-naturalist experiences enjoy no consensus in natural sciences, are beyond the scope of methodological naturalism and are impossible from the perspective of metaphysical naturalism (which often go hand in hand for no conclusive reason, see Bishop, 2009). This way, a CA researcher would gain control over the 'factuality' of religious experience, leaving the experient to sound as gullible or fraudulent without much reason.

DP, instead, has a distinct relativist touch (Edwards, 1997; Edwards et al., 1999), which brings it closer to methodological agnosticism (Wooffitt & Allistone, 2005, p. 330). It is not just a method, but also an epistemology, a way to see human psychology. Counter to seeing mental events as inner psychological reality of human beings, proponents of DP see them as happening within and through interaction (Edwards, 1997). Memory (or *remembering*, in the DP terms) is of particular interest, when studying non-naturalist experiences, and central to DP in general (Edwards & Potter, 1992). When it comes to sharing stories or narratives, as it is with referring to REs, Edwards and Potter (1992) argued that people have their interests at stake, so they *act* with discourse using discursive techniques and anticipating opposition, taking care of their potential accountability. According to their explanation, Agata (F34, a beginner

Buddhist, immigrant from Eastern Europe) would account for her choice of the teacher by acting through words:

*Interviewer:* How do you define that he is your teacher? On what basis? Why this person and what is his role in your spiritual...?

*Agata:* Strong experience. A strong experience in his teachings, and I always get good tips about what to do. He can sometimes without words give me, or he reflects, if you have such experience. He reflects what I still have to work on. What I have to work with, among my stuff.

*Interviewer:* How can it happen? Can you give a simple example?

*Agata:* I can give an example of how when he was here last time, he hugged me so beautifully, so warmly, his touch was so tender and this tenderness stayed in me, and was nourishing me after that, you know. It was a message that I needed to be tender towards myself. This kind of experience.

*Interviewer:* Or, you felt it also after...

*Agata:* Of course! I felt it still afterwards, it remained like a memory in my body.

Although the beginning of her description sounds purely psychological, rather than parapsychological, at further questions, Agata mentions "memory in the body", confirming its super-natural duration with "Of course!" Attributing the choice to her intuitive, embodied feeling of the teacher's energy, adds the 'special' touch to that encounter. Neither the reader, nor the interviewer, nor even the respondent can go back in time to document what really happened at that moment. However, Agata's recalling the fact of this extra-physical impression is not a random memory, but her argument in favour of asking this particular person (a Westerner, former monk) to be 'her teacher', and keeping

him in mind in that function, despite his suggestion to stay 'friends'.

The insights into the discursive activity of recalling and mentation lead Wooffitt and Allistone (2005) to suggest DP as a lens for parapsychology. Admitting that DP would deliberately stay away from making ontological conclusions concerning parapsychological events (the focus of the field), they draw attention to the effects of constructing memories and mental events *in conversation* and the interactional factors at play (Wooffitt & Allistone, 2005). However, DP or CA do not offer a sole conclusive framework for approaching religious experiences, but rather an additional perspective. First, DP and affiliated forms of CA are still a marginal school within linguistics and psychology (unlike the more structuralist CA, defended by Schegloff, 1992). Second, these approaches tend to bracket not only the 'reality' of experiences, but also their meaning within the subjective world of the experient (realm of phenomenology), and the 'external' social world of power struggles (revealed by 'dark' social constructionists). Finally, they offer no help in making conclusions on how unique (or how common) religious experiences are, how they can be categorized as dependent on cultural narratives.

### **The five-fold framework for approaching REs**

In spite of the limitations, associated with all the methods I have described, when minded together, they do provide a framework for a qualitative researcher, who, like me, might stumble across religious, spiritual, paranormal or other experiences, bearing strong non-naturalist tones. Throughout more than a century of inquiry into REs, the number of non-believers and atheists has been stably growing, unimpeded by how 'real' spiritual truths feel to be to experients (Pew Research Center, 2016). Despite the decades of experimental research in parapsychology and a



strong record of replication (Honorton, 1985; Utts, 1992), ardent sceptics have reduced the field into an example of a 'pseudoscience' (see more detailed analysis in Wooffitt & Allistone, 2005). Qualitative researchers, with their focus on human and social reality, and their roots in social-constructionism in its various forms, are redeemed from these battles.

The goal of this overview of social constructionist methodologies was to come up with a framework for approaching religious/non-naturalist experiences. Based on the argument above, the frame-work lists five factors to keep in mind. Thus, REs are:

1. normal, pervasive. Some categories of people tend to claim them more often, but no one is secure they will not happen. There is nothing novel or strange about such narratives, in fact, the researcher's neighbour, physician or in-law is quite likely to have a story like that to share. For qualitative research, it means that such stories may come up as an organic and meaningful element of the data, which can bring forward important conclusions.
2. cross-cultural, but culturally-embedded. Although very similar experiences might happen to people of different backgrounds (however close we can come to comparing something as hidden and subjective), they would bear distinct differences in interpretation. We construct our social reality and it constructs us in turn (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), so the details of stories can rely on whether the person is an atheist from New York, a Buddhist from Helsinki or a Catholic from Tanzania.
3. real to the experients. Although the possibility of (self) deception or delusion is always present, the relative reality of REs is very compelling: they are memorable events, often life-changing, perplexing to the experient, shaping their identity, worldview and choices. They often connect to their biographies in a distinct and

noteworthy fashion. To the experients, they may be more persuasive than the most persuasive of sceptics and the most compelling of data.

4. affected by dominant discourses. Truth is power, and power tends to favour some and disenfranchise others. Truth also has its fashion seasons, and reactions to the power of science truth-claims become themselves a power. Being upgraded from a “small narrative” to a “chosen narrative”, a marginal truth can gain more power than the mainstream one. Narratives of REs exist in the world of converging and centrifugal powers, and are bound to be affected by the influence of their balance.
5. themselves, discourses. A qualitative researcher would study a remembered event, told by a particular person for a particular reason, to a particular audience. Though each conversation is unique, there are patterns to its construction, which are often recurrent, and there are common discursive strategies people use to protect their stakes, when sharing controversial experiences and ideas.

### **Conclusions on choosing a paradigm**

Factor #4 is the most demanding part, and also the one, which is often in the blind spot. Wooffitt & Allistone (2005) talk about the other factors listed here, ignoring this one. And yet, it includes not only the social forces forming representational imbalance, but also the tacit force of scientific and academic discourse. In its crudest form embodied in the framework of methodological atheism and metaphysical naturalism, it easily devours the rich human data by explaining it away. A researcher might not be explicitly aware of its force, like that proverbial fish unaware of water. Or she might be in tacit agreement with it, which is a valid position to be in, but it has its limitations for qualitative research. However, the emancipatory discourse

analysts would directly or indirectly place a decisive emphasis on the factor of institutionalized power of truth not for no reason. In terms of science, academia and any modern research, the scientific ideology is the institutionalized power, with its unquestionable ideology, its guardians, and its discursive toolbox. However, the vast majority of people around the world, whether they accept this power or not, are not scientists, and it is them, not the scientists, whom a qualitative researcher would most likely study. Without aiming for a conclusive list, I believe that this analysis helped me make sense of the 'spooky stuff' in my data, and I hope it will be helpful to other researchers as well.

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# **Vajrayāna Buddhism's Evolution and Development in Malaysia**

*Loka Ng Sai Kai*

## **Early Buddhist History in Malaysia**

Malaysia has been the focal point for Buddhist masters since the beginning of the Old Kedah period to the arrival of migrants from China, Sri Lanka and India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historical spread of Buddhism in Malaysia can be denoted by three waves of development.

The First Wave started from the Indianization process during the arrival of traders and missionaries to the Old Kedah or Bujang Valley at Malay Peninsula in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. The Malay Peninsula then was known to have deposits of gold, iron and tin and the natural flow of the Northeast and Southwest monsoons facilitated the travel of the Indians across the Bay of Bengal to Bujang Valley, Kedah. The importance of Bujang Valley for sea travelers can be traced from archaeological artifacts and literary records from Indian, Chinese and Arabian sources.

Buddhism was thriving when Southeast Asia was under the rule of the Sri Vijaya Empire from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The dominance of the Buddhist-based Siamese Kingdoms in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries ensured the continuity of Buddhism especially in the northern Malay Peninsula states of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu.

The Second Wave of Buddhism in Malaysia started with the arrival of migrants from China from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and the large scale influx of Chinese labourers for tin mining and other economic ventures in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under British's rule. The Chinese migrants brought with them a

syncretism of Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and traditional Chinese beliefs and practices. When the British took over the administration of Penang in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it also attracted migrants from Thailand and Burma (now known as Myanmar) which traditionally are mostly Theravada Buddhists. The British colonial administration brought in the Sri Lankans as supporting staff to the government machinery in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the Sinhalese from Sri Lanka who migrated to Malaysia are predominantly Theravada Buddhists and they invited Buddhist monks from their homeland to provide teachings and religious services.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a majority of the Buddhists still followed a mixture of Chinese religions in Malaysia. This situation has led those who aspired to promote the Buddha's teachings to seek for a change in order to maintain the distinctiveness of Buddha's teachings. This was the beginning of laity organized Buddhism in Malaysia with the formation of Penang Buddhist Association in 1925 and followed by many Buddhist organizations thereon. This was the catalyst for the Third Wave of Buddhism in Malaysia which is still evolving.

### **Evolution of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Modern Malaysia**

The Schools of Buddhism as practiced in contemporary Malaysia are influenced by Mahayana missionary monks from China and Theravada missionaries from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar. Majority of the estimated 1,500 Buddhist temples and laity-managed Buddhist centres are Mahayana based while Theravada based temples are mostly linked to monks and missionaries from Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The Buddhist laity plays an important role in the development of Buddhism in contemporary Malaysia where the laities provide leadership in Buddhist organizations; organized Buddhist classes and meditation retreats;

runs Dhamma Schools for children; provide welfare services to the needy and other activities for their members and the public.



*Plate 1: His Eminence Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche first visited Malaysia in 1971.*

Based on records, His Eminence Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche was the earliest known teacher to introduce Vajrayāna Buddhism to Malaysia when he visited the country for the first time in 1971 and then visited again in 1974. However, the visit by His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje to Malaysia in October 1976 was the main spark that strengthened the growth of Vajrayāna Buddhism in modern Malaysia.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> In 1975 a group of Malaysian devotees visited Nepal to attend a Buddhist event and had invited His Holiness 16<sup>th</sup> Gyalwa Karmapa to visit Malaysia. It was not until October 1976, when His Holiness was en route to America that he made a brief visit to Malaysia (<http://www.karmakagyuds.com/history-of-kkdskl/>)

During His Holiness the 16<sup>th</sup> Gyalwa Karmapa's final day of stay in Malaysia, he gave his consent to a group of devotees to establish the Karma Kagyu Dharma Centre Kuala Lumpur.<sup>91</sup> The centre was duly registered with the government in 1977, making it the first Vajrayāna based Buddhist society to be officially established in Malaysia. The spread of Buddhism in modern Malaysia are known to have gained tremendously through the efforts of many Buddhist organizations established and managed by laities. The development process of Vajrayāna Buddhism also follows the similar path taken by the Theravada and Mahayana traditions where foreign teachers laid the groundwork in transmitting the teachings to the devotees while the laities further strengthened the efforts by providing leadership in organized Buddhism.

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<sup>91</sup> "On 25th Oct 1976, just before his departure, His Holiness handed a letter of authority to the committee, directing them to start a centre in Kuala Lumpur. Thus the seed of Vajrayāna Buddhism was planted in Malaysian soil  
(<http://www.karmakagyuds.com/history-of-kkdskl/>)



*Plate 2: H.H. 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpe Dorje was the catalyst for the growth of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Malaysia*

His Holiness visited Malaysia again in 1980 when he toured the whole of Malaysia, visiting all the Karma Kagyu Centres to give teachings, empowerments and to perform the sacred Vajra Mukut Ceremony. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso also visited Malaysia in July 1982 and met with local Buddhist leaders and also former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra.

From then on, many other Vajrayāna based Buddhist centres were established all over Malaysia which provide a platform for Malaysians to follow the teachings of Vajrayāna Buddhism through teachers that are invited from overseas particularly from India and Nepal.

### **Growth of Vajrayāna Buddhism**

Historically Buddhism in Malaysia has been predominantly influenced by Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism but during the last 40 years, Vajra-

yāna Buddhism has been experiencing constant growth with centres being established by devotees with teachers from overseas invited to provide teachings and meditation retreats and other religious activities.

To have a better understanding on the factors that provide the impetus towards the constant growth of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Malaysia, a survey among the leaders of Vajrayāna based Buddhist centres on the development of Vajrayāna Buddhism was carried out and this paper is based on the preliminary survey findings and other reports on activities related to Vajrayāna Buddhist centres in Malaysia.

#### I. First contact with Buddhism

As mentioned earlier, Malaysians of Buddhist faith mainly follow either the Mahayana or Theravada traditions. Results of the survey regarding which tradition respondents followed when they first started to learn Buddhism shows that 38.5% were originally Mahayana-based, 23.1% Theravada and 15.4% started with Vajrayāna Buddhism itself. There were 23.1% who stated that they did not follow any specific tradition when learning Buddhism.

#### II. What are the main reasons that inspired the shift from another tradition to Vajrayāna Buddhism?

Based on the fact that many current Vajrayāna followers have started with other traditions of Mahayana or Theravada, they were asked for reasons that inspired them to shift their practice. More than half (52%) said they were inspired by a Vajrayāna Buddhist teacher via their personal engagement. Some of them turned to Vajrayāna after gaining more knowledge from books on Vajrayāna and other media which made them realize that the methods and teachings are more applicable to their own training and practice. Only 16% of respondents said that they first started with Vajrayāna Buddhism.



III. What are the elements or practices in Vajrayāna Teachings which attracted followers to this tradition?

It was found that the existence of systematic teaching methodologies such as Lam Rim, Lam Dre, Mahamudra and Dzogchen teachings were the main elements (84.6%) which attracted practitioners to Vajrayāna Buddhism. The second most important element shared by the respondents was the availability of well preserved teachings based on historical texts (61.5%), and third, because the teachings provided better understanding of the modern sciences (57.7%). The other elements include the availability of various types of preliminary practices, such as the Ngondro practice (53.8%). Although not a very significant figure, there are practitioners (19.2%) who were attracted to the teachings due to the colorful presentation of the Buddha images, arts and culture of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

IV. What are the usual activities participated/involved in Vajrayāna Buddhist centres?

Practitioners of Vajrayāna Buddhism participate or involve in different activities. Nearly all (92.3%) of the respondents favored attending teachings in the Buddhist centres and also attending religious ceremonies or puja (84.6%), while a little more than half of people (53.8%) are also keen on understanding retreats. The importance of having teachings and religious ceremonies for the practitioners are reflected in the activities done by visiting Buddhist teachers where 69.2% are said to give teachings and 76.9% to conduct or participate in religious ceremonies.

Another major function (65.4%) of visiting Buddhist teachers to Malaysia includes teaching or conducting meditation sessions or retreats. As Malaysian Buddhists are widely known to provide support to Buddhist centres all over the world, it is not surprising to know that there

are some who thought one of the activities of the visiting Vajrayāna based teachers include raising fund for temples or projects in their home country.

V. Are Buddhist teachers from overseas important?

The visits by Buddhist teachers of Vajrayāna traditions from overseas since the 1970s played a very important role towards the growth and development of Vajrayāna Buddhism in Malaysia. These visits not only provide opportunities for devotees to attend the teachings and ceremonies conducted by the visiting teachers but also an encouragement to established new centres under the guidance of their respective foreign teachers.

These new centres provide the platform to facilitate and enable the teaching systems of Vajrayāna Buddhism to be promoted and spread in Malaysia (86.37%). These centres also facilitate and provide opportunities to Malaysians to engage with Buddhist teachers in various occasions (73.3%) and organize activities for the Malaysian Buddhist community (46.7%).

### **Vajrayāna Buddhist Council of Malaysia**

When the number of Vajrayāna based Buddhist organizations grew steadily all over the country, it was felt that there was a need for an official representative of the Vajrayāna Buddhist Community in dealing with the government and Buddhist groups of other traditions. After few years of planning, the Vajrayāna Buddhist Council of Malaysia (VBCM) was duly registered by the government on 12 June 2002 with twenty founding member organizations. The VBCM acts as an umbrella body for member organizations of Vajrayāna Buddhist traditions in Malaysia and to co-ordinate the religious activities of Vajrayāna Buddhists.

Currently there are sixty-four Buddhist centres affiliated to the VBCM and majority of the survey respon-

dents feel that VBCM should represent the interests of the member organizations in dealing with the authorities and to maintain unity and understanding among all Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners. VBCM is also expected to coordinate with other national level Buddhist organizations to promote mutual understanding and aspirations within the Buddhist community.

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# The Importance of Generation Stage Yidam Practice in Vajrayāna

*Maria Kozhevnikov & Elizabeth McDougal*

## Abstract

We compared the neurophysiological correlates of Mahamudra (a meditative practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism leading to emptiness realization) performed after a relaxed mental state versus Mahamudra performed after Generation Stage Yidam practice (visualizing oneself as a Tantric deity). The main goal of this study was to examine the role of Yidam practice in reaching the state of Rig-pa from a scientific perspective. The electroencephalographic (EEG) data from 7 nuns and 9 monks were recorded during 15 minutes of rest followed by 15 minutes of Mahamudra meditation at one time of the day, and 15 minutes of Yidam followed by 15 minutes of Mahamudra later during the same day. The results showed significant differences between Mahamudra performed after rest versus after Yidam. The EEG data also showed there were significant differences between the two types of Mahamudra, with more power in the beta and gamma bands during Mahamudra after Yidam practice. Overall, the neurophysiological correlates of Mahamudra performed after rest resemble those of Mindfulness or Vipassana (Theravada styles of meditation) reported in previous studies. In contrast, Mahamudra after Yidam practice exhibited a unique pattern of neurophysiological correlates, indicating a significantly more energetic state of body and mind. Thus,

Yidam practice is shown to have an important role in facilitating the achievement of a wakeful state of Rig-pa through the use of visual imagery and the emotional arousal associated with it.

## Background

The past two decades has seen a significant amount of Western scientific research on neural and cognitive correlates related to meditation. The bulk of this scientific research has studied Vipassana, Shamatha, and Zen mindfulness techniques of the Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions and, far fewer studies on Vajrayāna Buddhist meditation has been conducted. Few studies have investigated the neural correlates of non-conceptual awareness styles of meditation, referred to in scientific literature as Open Presence, Rig-pa<sup>92</sup>, or Nondual Awareness, including Vajrayāna “Completion Stage” meditations of Dzogchen and Mahamudra that aim to realize emptiness (Lutz, Dunne, & Davidson, 2007). However, “Generation Stage” practices core to Vajrayāna Buddhism, involving visualization of a Yidam (Tib: *yi dam*; a Tantric meditational deity), have been largely ignored. Only a few recent studies have shown the significant effect of Yidam practice on enhancing cognitive capacities, not through relaxation, but through the use of visual imagery and emotional arousal (activation of the sympathetic nervous system) when the practitioner is required to imagine his/her mind, emotions, and feelings as

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<sup>92</sup> Rig-pa is used in scientific literature to denote both the state of Rig-pa (the state of pure awareness) or meditative practices leading to the state of Rig-pa (see Kozhevnikov et al., 2009 for review). In Vajrayāna, the term is used only in Dzogchen and is cognate with the Tibetan term “yeshe” (primordial awareness) in Mahamudra.

those of a specific deity (Amihai & Kozhevnikov, 2014; Kozhevnikov et al., 2009).

The neglect of Generation Stage Yidam practice is not only taking place in communities of scientific research on meditation but also among the Vajrayāna practices. While in most Vajrayāna schools, “Generation Stage” Yidam practice precedes the “Completion Stage” meditation pertaining to realization of emptiness, there are also cases when Yidam practice is not considered essential. Furthermore, in some contemporary settings where Vajrayāna is being taught and practiced, particularly in the West, the traditional centrality of Yidam practice is diminishing or being bypassed altogether. Some Tibetan lamas in the West sometimes omit Yidam practice in their teachings, guiding students according to a Western rational worldview that prefers a direct approach to higher Dzogchen and Mahamudra meditations.

*Generation Stage* Yidam practice involves visualization and mantra recitation of a meditational deity, often surrounded by the deity’s mandala, or entourage. The content of Yidam visualization is rich and multimodal, requiring the generation of colorful three-dimensional images (e.g. the deity’s body, ornaments, and environment), as well as representations of sensorimotor body schema, feelings, and emotions of the deity. The image temporarily replaces one’s sense of egotistic self and perception of the real world (Gyatrul, 1996). *Completion Stage* has two sub-categories: *Completion Stage with Signs*, involving subtle-body yogas like *tummo* (Tib. *gtum mo*) and dream yoga that work with psychophysical energies and their pathways in the human body; and *Completion Stage without Signs*, involving non-conceptual Dzogchen and/or Mahamudra meditation that directly recognizes and abides in the essential nature of mind (or emptiness). This Completion Stage realization of the essential nature of mind is referred to as “Rig-pa” (Tib. *rig pa*) in the Dzogchen tradition.

In Vajrayāna, visualization of oneself as a Yidam deity is what constitutes the practice of Generation Stage (Tib: *bskyed rim*), the first stage of the meditation practice (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1990). The very terms “Generation” and “Completion” Stages indicate a developmental process leading to completion. Traditionally, Vajrayāna meditators in Tibet usually practice Completion Stage Dzogchen and/or Mahamudra after years of preliminary Generation Stage training that psychologically prepares the meditator for subtlest states of consciousness. Although there are occasional instances of spontaneous “Rig-pa” or Completion Stage realization among Vajrayāna practitioners, these instances have almost always been preceded by earlier cultivation of Generation Stage practices (Gebchak Urgyen Chodron, personal communication, 2006).

During Completion Stage meditation (i.e. Mahamudra or Dzogchen), which follows the final stage of Yidam meditation, a meditator visualizes the dissolution of the deity and its entourage into emptiness and then abides in non-conceptual awareness. In Mahamudra or Dzogchen, the meditator’s attention is evenly distributed so that it is not directed toward any object or experience. Although various aspects of experience may arise (e.g. thoughts, feelings, images, etc.), the meditator is instructed to let them subside in their own empty nature, without dwelling on them or examining them (Goleman, 1996).

Considering the strong emphasis on Generation Stage Yidam practice at every level of traditional Vajrayāna meditation training, and its weakening in contemporary settings, it is timely to question the value of Yidam practice from a scientific perspective. Although a few previous scientific studies have been conducted on Completion Stage Mahamudra and Dzogchen meditations, they have not been able to distinguish these Vajrayāna Completion Stage meditations from meditations of other Buddhist traditions,

such as Vipassana or Mindfulness that require distributed attention and open monitoring (Lutz et al., 2007). It is important to note that this previous research has studied these meditations outside of their original Vajrayāna context of Generation and Completion Stage training.

The main goal of this study was to examine the role of Generation Stage Yidam practice in reaching the state of Rigpa, or pure Mahamudra awareness, from a scientific perspective. In this study we compared the difference in brain dynamics of Mahamudra meditation following rest and of Mahamudra following Yidam practice. Our first hypothesis was that the brain dynamism as measured by EEG recordings for Mahamudra meditation performed after rest will be different from that of Mahamudra performed after Yidam practice.

## **Research method and data results**

**Participants:** The study was conducted in Bhutan under the guidance of H.E. Gyaltsen Tulku Rinpoche, a respected retreat master in the Drukpa Kagyu lineage. Sixteen of his experienced retreat nuns and monks, who follow the Drukpa Kagyu lineage of Vajrayāna training and Mahamudra meditation, participated in the study. These participants (7 nuns and 9 monks) had a mean age of 42.5, and an average of 8 years of meditation experience. The participants provided written, informed consent for their participation in the study. The study was approved by the National University of Singapore's review board.

**Procedure:** The data for the seven nuns was recorded at Gyaltsen Rinpoche's retreat center in Trashigang (Eastern Bhutan), while the data from the experiments with monks was collected in Thimphu. EEG data was continuously recorded throughout the study.





*Plate 1: Participants doing meditation*

At the beginning of the session, each participant sat for 15 minutes of rest, during which they were explicitly instructed not to meditate but to remain seated with their eyes closed, and to simply relax. Following a 5-minute break, the participants were asked to perform 15 minutes of Mahamudra meditation. At a later time on the same day, the participants first performed 15 minutes of Yidam meditation, followed by 15 minutes of Mahamudra meditation.

**EEG Recordings and Protocol:** EEG was continuously recorded at the Fp1, Fp2, F3, Fz, F4, F7, F8, T3, T4, T5, C3, Cz, C4, P3, Pz, P4, O1, O2. scalp regions positioned according to the standard 20 channel system using a B-Alert portable EEG cap (Advanced Brain Monitoring, Inc.), as well as from two additional electrodes placed on the right and left mastoids. EEG was sampled at 256 Hz and referenced to the average between the two mastoid electrodes. Signals showing ocular and muscular artifacts were manually excluded from the study, and a high-band pass filter of 0.1 Hz was applied to the EEG data. Moreover, a digital notch filter was applied to the data at 50 Hz to remove artifacts caused by nearby electrical devices.

**Spectral Analysis:** For each electrode and 1-second epoch, the power spectral distribution (PSD) was calculated

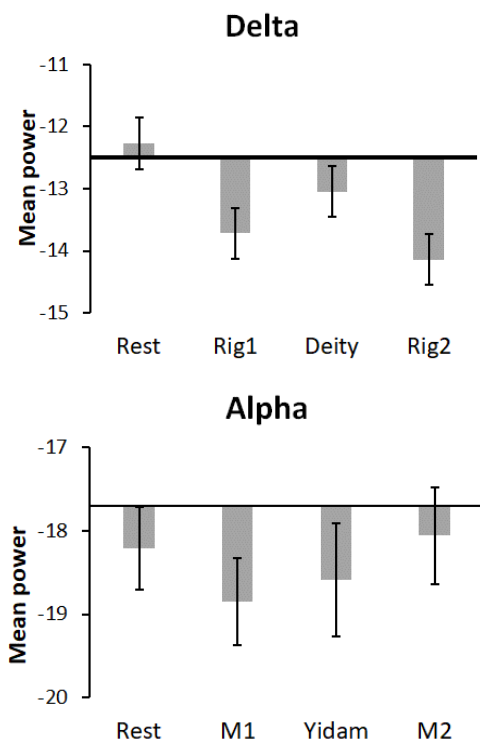
using Welch's method (Welch, 1967), where power values are averaged and a 512-millisecond time window is applied. Subsequently, the mean power at the Delta (1–4 Hz), Theta (4.5–7.5 Hz), Alpha (8.5–12.5 Hz), Beta (13–25 Hz), and Gamma (35–44.5 Hz, 60–95.5 Hz, 110–128 Hz) frequencies were used as the dependent variables in the analyses. Importantly, we analyzed only a 3-minute epoch at the end of the meditation period, during which the meditators were most likely to be in a deep meditative state.

First, the mean power at the Delta, Theta, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma frequencies across all 18 electrodes for Mahamudra after Yidam (Mahamudra 2; M2) and Mahamudra without Yidam (Mahamudra 1; M1) were compared using within subject ANOVAs, with Condition (Rest, Mahamudra 1, Yidam, Mahamudra 2) as a within-subject variable. Then, we divided the scalp into 4 regions, each of which consisted of an average of several electrodes that were selected according to their location: Temporal– T3, T4, T5; Frontal – Fp1, Fp2, F3, Fz, F4; Central– C3, Cz, C4. Parietal – P3, Pz, P4, and Occipital (O1, O2), and conducted paired-samples t-test to examine the differences between M1 and M2 meditations for different scalp locations.

## **Results**

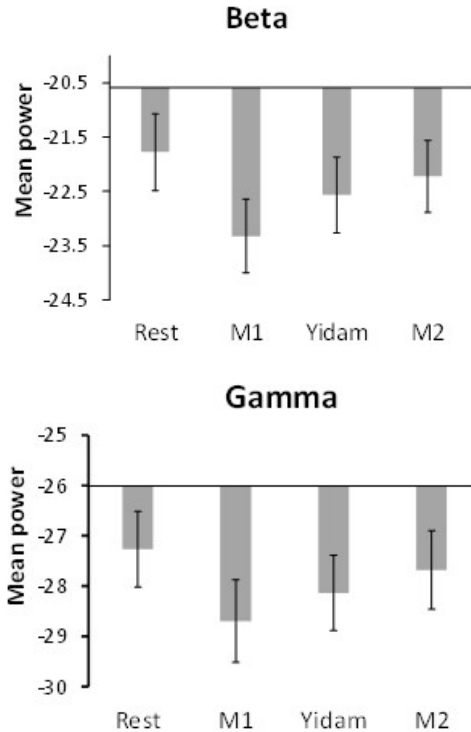
We compared the mean power at the Delta, Theta, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma frequencies across all 18 electrodes for Rest, M1, Yidam, and M2 conditions. The results for within-subject ANOVA revealed significant differences between all four conditions for delta:  $F(3,45) = 3.91$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . There was a significant decrease in delta for M1 and M2 conditions ( $p < 0.05$ ) but not during Yidam ( $p = 0.2$ ) in comparison to Rest. No differences, however, were observed between M1 and M2 ( $p=0.48$ ). As for theta, there was no significant difference between all 4 conditions:  $F(3,45) = 0.81$ ,  $p = 0.4$ .

For alpha, there was also no significant difference between 4 conditions, a  $F(3,45) = 1.17$ ,  $p = 0.4$ , although there was a marginal decrease for alpha during M1 in comparison with Rest ( $p=0.1$ ), and there was also a slight difference between M1 and M2 ( $p=0.1$ ). Below are the graphs representing mean power for delta and alpha.



For beta, the difference between 4 conditions was significant,  $F(3,45) = 3.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . There was a significant decrease for beta during M1 in comparison with Rest, and also, there were significant differences for mean power beta between M1 and M2 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, there was only a marginal difference between all 4 conditions for gamma,  $F(3,45) = 2.109$ ,  $p = 0.1$ ; there was a marginally significant

decrease in gamma during M1 ( $p=0.05$ ), and there was a marginally significant difference between gamma during M1 and M2 ( $p = 0.06$ ). The graphs for beta and gamma are below:



Overall, the patterns for M1 and M2 somewhat resemble Theravada styles of meditation, such as Vipassana or Shamatha (see Amihai & Kozhevnikov, 2014 for a review). Specifically, delta power was shown to be reduced during Vipassana and Shamatha, in comparison with Rest, similar to the decrease in delta power for M1 and M2 (but not for Yidam). As for theta, similar to the results of Vipassana and Shamatha meditations (Amihai &

Kozhevnikov, 2014), no changes in theta were observed during M1, M2 and Yidam practice in comparison to Rest.

As for alpha power, previous neuroscience research (Klimesch, 1999; Strijkstra et al., 2003) also showed that decreased Alpha power is associated with deep relaxation, Mindfulness, and Vipassana meditations, while increases in Alpha are associated with wakefulness, attention, and task load. In this study, alpha power slightly decreases for M1; M2, in contrast, is not different from Rest, and there is an increase in alpha power from M1 to Yidam, and then to M2. This suggests that M2 represents a more wakeful state in comparison with M1, achieved through Yidam practice.

For beta power, it has been shown to decrease during Theravada styles of meditation (Amihai & Kozhevnikov, 2014), similar to M1 in this study. M2 is also not significantly different from M1. Finally, for gamma, previous studies (Cahn, Delorme, & Polich, 2010) have shown increases during Vipassana styles of meditation. We, however, observed significant decreases in gamma for M1 with an increase of gamma to Yidam and then M2.

Overall, M2 represents a more wakeful state in comparison with M1, as it is indicated in increased alpha power for M2 in comparison with M1, and higher gamma power for M2 than M1. To examine which scalp location contributed to the significant difference described between M1 and M2 we conducted paired-samples t-test (2-sided) to compare alpha, beta, and gamma mean power between M1 and M2.

For alpha, there was marginally significant difference between M1 and M2 in frontal areas,  $t(14) = -1.95$ ,  $p = 0.07$ , and significant differences between M1 and M2 for central,  $t(14) = 2.43$ ,  $p = 0.03$ , and parietal areas,  $t(14) = 2.852$ ,  $p = 0.01$ .

For beta, there was a significant difference between M1 and M2 in the central,  $t(14) = 2.59$ ,  $p = 0.02$  and parietal areas,

$t(14) = 2.28$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , and there was a marginal difference in occipital area,  $t(14) = -1.772$ ,  $p = 0.09$ .

Finally for gamma, there was a significant difference between M1 and M2 in the central area,  $t(15) = 2.38$ ,  $p = 0.03$ , and there was also a slight marginal difference in the parietal area,  $t(15) = 1.677$ ,  $p = 0.1$ .

Previous studies have demonstrated that changes in beta power and high gamma-band oscillations play an important role in sensorimotor control (Muthukumara-swamy, 2013; Gaetz et al., 2013). Furthermore, alpha modulation is often observed simultaneously with central beta changes. The predominant hypothesis is that alpha and beta band activity reflect the coordination of a motor act with sensory (e.g. movement cues) and cognitive processes (Cheynem, 2013; Kilavik et al., 2013). Like alpha and beta, the gamma activity localizes to contralateral centro-parietal electrodes and often appears more focal, suggesting it may reflect local recurrent network processes (e.g. binding of neuronal activity within a small neuronal population) involved in the formation and maintenance of a motor activity (Donner et al., 2009; Wang, 2010). Importantly, previous findings show that centro-parietal alpha and beta rhythms may also be activated by sensorimotor imagery (Neuper et al., 2009) and action observation (Koelewijn et al., 2008) without actual movement or external somatosensory stimulation. In contrast, the post-movement beta modulation often referred to as the “rebound” is hypothesized to reflect a reset of the motor system in preparation for the next movement (Gaetz & Cheyne, 2006). We suggest that the increases in alpha, beta, and gamma power on centro-parietal areas observed in our study reflect a “rebound” effect from an active mental state in which subjects are immersed in multimodal imagery and mental manipulation of the sensorimotor body schema. Similar to athletes who use visualization before a challenging task in order to

enhance their subsequent physical performance, Tibetan meditators use Yidam practice to prepare for Completion Stage meditation and enhance their attentional capabilities to achieve it successfully. In fact, without Yidam meditation, Mahamudra meditation appears to be more similar to a relaxation type of meditation in other Buddhist traditions.

## Conclusions

Overall, as hypothesized, the neurophysiological correlates of Mahamudra performed after rest resembled those of Mindfulness or Vipassana, as reported in previous studies. In contrast, Mahamudra performed after Yidam practice exhibited a unique pattern of neurophysiological correlates, indicating high sensory alertness, mobility and readiness to respond. These patterns are markedly significant in indicating the state of *phasic alertness* (a significant boost of enhanced focused attention), crucially important for Completion Stage Mahamudra and Dzogchen meditations in Vajrayāna. It should be noted that this data pertains only to self-visualization as a Yidam deity, and not when the deity is visualized in front of or above oneself as is practiced in Generation Stage.

Our study has shown that Yidam practice plays an important role in facilitating a wakeful state of awareness and enhanced focused attention in subsequent Completion Stage meditation, related to phasic alertness (a boost in attentional capacities, as found by Amihai & Kozhevnikov, 2014). This is distinct from other Buddhist traditions which aim at the achievement of tonic alertness, a state of optimal vigilance where attention is sustained for a prolonged period of time. It is phasic alertness that is critical in creative discoveries and successful performance in creative fields, in boosting creativity, and optimizing human performance. Further knowledge about the mechanisms underlying Yidam practice will help scientists to better understand

states of enhanced focused attention and the ways to achieve them.

An interesting finding of the study is that without the self-generation practice of Yidam preceding Completion Stage meditation, the Completion Stage meditation (in our case, Mahamudra) becomes very similar to open monitoring practices of other Buddhist traditions, such as Vipassana or Mindfulness, which are relaxation practices. Thus, this study scientifically substantiates the centuries of meditation experience that have skillfully assigned Generation Stage Yidam as an essential, core practice in the Vajrayāna training scheme, and shows its critical importance for Vajrayāna.

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# ༄། རྡོ་རྗེ་ཐེག་པའི་སྤྱིང་པོ་མར་ལུགས་རྒྱུད་སྡེའི་སྐོར་ཆེ་ལོང་ཅམ་བཞེད་ པ་བཞུགས།

༄། ། བཅོམ་གུ་རུ་རྟེ་ཡེ། །

ཀྱེ་ཡི་རྡོ་རྗེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྐྱེ་འཆང་བ། །

རིག་འཛིན་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་རྒྱུ་མཆོ་སྤྱོད་བའི་གཞི། །

གསང་ཆེན་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་རྒྱུ་མཆོའི་དབང་ལུག་ཐེ། །

མར་སྟོན་ལོ་རྒྱའི་ཞབས་ལ་གྲུས་ལུག་འཆོལ། །

དབང་རྣོན་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱིས་འདུལ་བའི་ལས་ཅན་ལ། །

རབ་འབྱམས་ལྟ་སྤྲུགས་ཏིང་འཛིན་ལྟ་ཆོགས་སྤྱོས། །

སྐྱེ་འཕྱུལ་བྱ་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ཆེ། །

མར་ལུགས་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་ཆེ་ལོང་འདི་ན་སྤྱོ། །

དེ་ལ་འདིར་རིགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་བདག་པོ། དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་བྱེད་པོ།  
ལྟ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྱོད་གཞི་གཅིག་གི་བདག་ཉིད། ཟབ་གསང་རྡོ་རྗེ་ཐེག་པའི་ཆོས་སྐོར་ལྟན་  
གྲུབ་རྒྱུ་ཆད་མེད་པར་སྐོར་ནས་བཞུགས་པའི་ རྡོ་རྗེ་ཐེག་པ་འདི་ནི། ཡང་དག་པར་  
རྡོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ཐུགས་གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས། སངས་རྒྱས་ཉིད་  
དུ་སྐྱབས་པའི་གདམས་ཟབ། གཞི་ལམ་འབྲས་བུ་གསུམ་དུས་གཅིག་ཏུ་ལམ་དུ་བྱེད་པས།  
འབྲས་བུ་རྡོ་རྗེ་ཐེག་པ་ཞེས་ཡོངས་དུ་གྲགས་པ་འདི་ཉིད་ལ་དབྱེ་ན། མར་སྟོན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྒོ་  
གོས་ཀྱི་ཀྱའི་རྡོ་རྗེའི་རྒྱུད་འབྲེལ་རྟག་གཉིས་ཀྱི་འབྲེལ་པ་འབྲམ་རྒྱུད་ཉི་མ་ལས།  
“འདོད་ཁམས་ཀྱི་འདོད་ཆགས་བཞིའི་བྱེད་པ་དང་གོ་བསྟན་ནས་ གསང་སྤྲུགས་རྒྱུད་

སྡེ་བཞིར་བཤད་ན་འདྲ་བཤད། གང་ཟག་དབང་པོ་རིགས་ཅན་བཞི་དང་ གོ་བུ་ན་ནས་  
གསང་སྤྲུགས་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་བཞིར་བཤད་ན་འདྲ་བཤད། འཛམ་གླིང་ལས་ཀྱི་ས་པའི་མི་རིགས་  
བཞིར་གོ་བུ་ན་ནས་ གསང་སྤྲུགས་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་བཞིར་བཤད་ན་འདྲ་བཤད། ལར་གསང་  
སྤྲུགས་འདི་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་བཞིར་ཁ་མཆོན་ཆོད་པས་ཆོག་པ་ཡིན་གསུང་།” དེ་ཡང་བཤད་  
རྒྱུད་གྲུང་ལས།

དམན་པ་རྣམས་ལ་བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད། །

བྱ་མིན་རྣལ་འབྱོར་དེའི་ལྷག་ལ། །

སེམས་ཅན་མཆོག་ལ་རྣལ་འབྱོར་མཆོག ། །

རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྤྲ་མེད་དེའི་ལྷག་ལའོ། །

ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་ དབང་པོ་དམན་པར་རན་པ་བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད་ནི། འབྲུས་དང་  
གཙང་སྤྲ་གཙོ་བོར་བྱེད་ཅིང་། དམར་ཟས་དང་སྒོག་གཙོར་སྤང་བ་ ལུས་ངག་གི་བྱ་བ་  
གཙོ་བོར་བསྟེན་ནས་ ལྷ་མཉམས་པར་བྱས་ཏེ། ལྷ་འི་མཐུས་ཆོ་འདིར་མཐུན་མོང་འདོད་  
གཟུགས་ཀྱི་རིག་འཛིན་གྲུབ་པ། ལྷ་དེ་ཉིད་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་འབངས་ཀྱི་འབྲེལ་བའི་རྩལ་དུ་  
སྦྲུབ་ཅིང་། མཐར་ཐུག་ཆོ་རབས་བཅུ་དྲུག་ན་རིགས་གསུམ་བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པའི་གོ་  
འཕང་འབྲུབ་པར་འདོད་པ་བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད་དང་། སྦྱོད་རྒྱུད་ནི་གོང་ལྟར་ལུས་ངག་གི་བྱ་བ་  
གཙོ་བོར་མི་བྱེད་ཀྱང་ ཟས་སྦྱོད་གོང་ལྟར་བྱེད་ཅིང་། ལྷ་དེ་ཉིད་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་སྒོན་པའི་  
འབྲེལ་བའི་རྩལ་དུ་སྦྲུབ་ཅིང་། ཆོ་རབས་བདུན་ན་རིགས་བཞིའི་སངས་རྒྱས་སྤྲ་འབྲུབ་  
པར་འདོད་པ་སྦྱོད་པའི་རྒྱུད། དེ་ལྷག་རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་རྒྱུད་ནི། གོང་ལྟར་ཕྱིའི་བྱ་བ་གཙོ་  
བོར་མི་བྱེད་པར་ནང་གི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ལ་གཙོ་བོར་བྱས་ཏེ། རང་དང་ལྷ་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱང་ རྒྱལ་  
པོ་དང་བཅུན་མའི་བར་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་ལྟར་སྦྲུབ་ཅིང་། སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ རྒྱ་གསུང་ཐུགས་

མཛད་པ་དང་བཅས་པ་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བཞེས་རྒྱས་བཏབ་ནས་བསྐོས་པས།ཆོ་རབས་གསུམ་  
ན་རིགས་ལྟེན་བདག་ཉིད་འཆར་རྒྱ་བར་འདོད་པ་ རྣལ་འབྱོར་རྒྱད། མཐོ་ཤོས་རྣལ་  
འབྱོར་སྤྱོད་མེད་མེད་པ་ནི། བདག་དང་ལྟ་ཡེ་ནས་གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པར་དཔེར་ན་རྒྱལ་པོ་  
དང་རྒྱལ་སྐུ་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་ལྟར་འདུ་འབྲལ་མེད་པ་ ཆོ་འདི་ཉིད་དུ་ སྤྱོད་ཡེ་ཤེས་ལྟ་ཡེ་  
བདག་ཉིད་བཟུང་འཇུག་རྟོག་འཆར་གི་གོ་འཕང་འཐོབ་པར་འདོད་པ་ རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྤྱོད་  
མེད་པའི་རྒྱད་དོ། །

རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྤྱོད་མེད་ལའང་དབྱེ་ན་པ་རྒྱད་དང་། མ་རྒྱད། གཉིས་མེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱད་དུ་  
དབྱེ་བ་ལས། ཐབས་སུ་རྒྱུད་གཙོ་བོར་སྟོན་པ་པ་རྒྱད་དཔེར་ན། གསང་བ་འདུས་པ་ལྟ་  
བྱེ་ལས་རྒྱུད་གི་རྣམ་གཞག་རྒྱས་པ་དང་། སྤྱོད་ལས་དང་ འོད་གསལ་དང་བཅས་པའི་  
གདམས་པ་གསལ་པོར་སྟོན། ཤེས་རབ་བཅ། རྩ་གཙོ་བོར་སྟོན་པ་མ་རྒྱད་རིགས་བཅུ་  
བཞི་འཕ། མ་རྒྱད་བདེ་དབྱེས་སོགས་ལས་རྩ་དང་ཐིག་ལའི་རྣམ་གཞག་རྒྱས་པ་དང་།  
གཏུམ་མོ་ལས་རྒྱ་དང་བཅས་པ་རྣལ་འབྱོར་རྒྱས་པར་བསྟན་པར་མཛད། གཉིས་མེད་  
དུས་འཁོར་གིས་ཟུང་འཇུག་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྩལ་དུ་སྟོན་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ལོ། སྤྱིར་བཏུ་བརྒྱད་རིམ་པོ་  
ཆོ་འདི་འོག་གསང་སྤྲུག་སྡེ་རྒྱུ་པའི་བྱ་རིམ་ལྟ་བུ་དང་། བཀའ་བབ་བཞི་ཡི་སྤྱོད་པ་བརྒྱད་  
པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་དེ་བཞིན་མར་རྟོག་རྒྱུད་སྤེ་བཅུ་གསུམ་གཙོས་པའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་དང་། དེ་  
དག་སོ་སོའི་རྟོགས་རིམ་ཕྱག་ཆེད་དང་བསྐྱེད་འཕོ་སོགས་ཀྱི་སྐོར་ མཐའ་ཡས་པ་ཞིག་  
སོའི་ཆོས་འབྱུང་དག་ཏུ་གསལ་ཞིང་། འདིར་བྱེད་གམར་སྟོན་ལོ་རྒྱུ་ (༡༠༠༠-༡༠༤༡)  
ནས་བརྒྱད་པའི་མར་རྟོག་རྒྱུད་སྤེ་འོག་ཆོ་འཕོ་ཅམ་ཞིག་གསལ་བའི་ཐོག་མར་སྟོན་པོ་  
དབྱེས་པ་རྟོག་ལ། གུར་ནས་མ་རྒྱུད་རིགས་དུག་གི་དབྱེ་བ་བཅུ་བཞིར་གསུངས་པའི་  
ནང་ནས་འདི་ཉི་ཅུ་ཀའི་རིགས་སུ་གཏོགས་ཤིང་། དེ་ཡང་དབྱེས་རྟོག་རྒྱུད་ལས།

གང་གིས་མི་ཤེས་ཀྱི་དོན་མེད།

དེ་ཡི་ངལ་བ་དོན་མེད་འབྱུང་།

ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་འདི་ཉི་ཅུ་བའི་རྒྱུ་ནི། ཨོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ཡུལ་ནས་མགོན་པོ་ལྷ་སྐྱབ་  
 ཀྱིས་ལྷགས་པར་བརྩམ་ཏེ་ རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་གསང་ཕྱག་ནས་ འབྲེང་བ་ལ་  
 མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ་དག་གིས་ཀྱང་གནང་བ་ཐོབ་ཚུལ་མར་པ་ལོ་ལྷོས་བཞེད། རྒྱུ་སངས་  
 རྒྱས་ཀྱིས་ གསང་སྤྲུགས་སྟོན་པར་མཛད་སྐབས་དོན་མེད་འཆང་གི་སྐྱར་བཞེངས་ཏེ་ དོན་  
 སྤྲིང་པོ་དང་ བདག་མེད་མ་ལ་སོགས་པས་བསྐྱལ་ནས་ཁྱུས་ཤིང་། དགེས་དོར་ཅ་བའི་  
 རྒྱུ་རྒྱས་པ་འབྱུང་ཕྱག་བདུན་དང་། དེ་ལས་བསྐྱལ་པ་འབྱུང་ཕྱག་ལྔ་རྣམས་གསུངས་  
 པ་ལས། ཅ་རྒྱུ་འབྲིང་པོ་འབྱུང་ཕྱག་ལྔ་པ་རྟག་པ་སུམ་ཅུ་ཅ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་འགོ་ནས་ཁྲིགས་  
 ཆགས་སུ་ཕྱུངས་པ་དགེས་དོར་ཅ་རྒྱུ་བསྐྱལ་པ་བརྟག་པ་གཉིས་པ་དང་། བཤད་པའི་  
 རྒྱུ་དོན་མེད་ཀྱང་། མཐུན་མོང་གི་རྒྱུ་སྐྱུའི་ ཆ་མཐུན་གྱི་རྒྱུ་ཕྱག་ཆེན་ཐེག་ལེ། ཡེ་ཤེས་  
 ཐེག་ལེ། དེ་ཉིད་སྒྲོལ་མ། སངས་རྒྱས་གསང་མཛད་། ཆོག་པ་མེད་པ་སོགས་བྱུང་།  
 དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ལ་རྟག་གཉིས་ལས་གསུངས་པ་ མི་བསྐྱོད་དགེས་པ་དོན་མེད་ལྷ་སྐྱ་སོགས་  
 དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་དུག་བསྟན་ཅིང་། དེ་བཞིན་བཤད་རྒྱུ་དོན་མེད་ཀྱང་ལས་དངོས་སུ་འཁོར་  
 སྐྱར་ལྷའི་ལྷ་ཆོགས་སོགས་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་བཅུ་དང་། གཙོ་བོ་འཕོ་བས་དུག་ཅུ་རེ་གཉིས་  
 གསུང་། ཡེ་ཤེས་ཐེག་ལེ་ལས་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ལྔ་བསྟན། རྒྱ་གར་འཕགས་པའི་ཡུལ་དུ་  
 དཔལ་ཀྱི་དོན་མེད་འདི་རྒྱ་ཆེར་དར་བར་བྱུང་པས། རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་དང་ བསྐྱེད་རྫོགས་ཀྱི་  
 ཡིག་སྐད་ཆོས་སྐོར་ ༡༢༠ ཐལ་ཡོད་པ་དང་། བོད་དུ་འབྱུང་ ༧༥ ཅམ་བྱུང་བར་  
 གྲགས་ཤིང་། རང་རེ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་རིན་པོ་ཆེར་དཔལ་ཀྱི་དོན་མེད་ཆོས་སྐོར་ནི། དགེས་  
 མཛད་མར་སྟོན་ལོ་ལྷ་བཙུན་གྱི་སྒྲོ་གོས་ཀྱིས་པཎ་ཆེན་རྣམས་པ་དང་། མཁའ་བདག་མི་

ཉི་གཉིས་ལ་ཡང་ཡང་ཞུས་གཏུགས་ཏེ། དཔལ་རྒྱ་རོ་པ་ཁོ་ནའི་རྩེ་ནས་དགེ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་  
 དབང་ལན་བདུན་གསལ་ཞིང་། ཅ་རྒྱུད་བརྟག་པ་གཉིས་དང་། བཤད་རྒྱུད་རྩི་ཁྲུ་  
 མཐུན་མོང་གི་རྒྱུད་སྤྲུའི་སྤྲུག་གི་ དབང་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་བཤད་མན་དག་དང་བཅས་པ་  
 ལམ་ཆ་ཆོང་བ་རྒྱུགས་པར་གསལ་ནས། དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྒྲོ་ནས་བྱུང་བ་བརྟེན་པ་ཡིན། མར་  
 སྒྲོན་ཆེན་པོ་དེ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ མ་འོངས་སྒྲོ་བ་མ་རྣམས་ བཅེ་བས་རྩེས་སུ་བཟུང་ནས་ཆོས་  
 བསྐལ་དུ། རྩི་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་བཀྲི་ཤི་ལའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་དུ་དཔལ་རྒྱ་རོ་པའི་ཞབས་རྩེ་དུ་  
 ཟེན་བྲིས་སུ་བཏབ་པ་ཅ་རྒྱུད་བརྟག་གཉིས་ལ་འབྲེལ་པ་འབྲུམ་རྒྱུ་ཉི་མ་དང་། བཤད་  
 རྒྱུད་ལ་གྲུག་གི་སྤྲོ་བ་ཤིང་། དེ་བཞིན་དབང་གི་དཀྱིལ་ཆོག་མདོ་རྒྱུར་གི་ འབྲེལ་པ་  
 མཛད་པ་དག་དེང་བར་མཇལ་ཡུལ་དུ་བཞུགས། འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁའ་བཅེ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྒྲོ་  
 བྲོས་དང་། འཇམ་མགོན་ཀོང་སྤུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་སྐུ་དུས་སུ་བཀའ་སྲོལ་འདི་དག་ལུང་གི་  
 གཤམ་ལ་ཉེ་བར་གཟིགས་ནས་མཛོད་ལྷ་ཆེན་པོ་སྤྲི་དང་། བྲེ་བྲག་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་སྤྲུགས་  
 མཛོད་ཆེན་མོར་ སྤྲུགས་སྤྲུགས་རྒྱུན་བཞུགས་མཛོད་པ་མ་ཟད། དེ་སྐབས་ནས་བཟུང་  
 ཀྱི་འདི་རྩི་ཅ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཁྲིད་རྒྱུན་ཡང་ས་སྐུ་དང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཁྲིད་རྒྱུན་ཟུང་དུ་སྤྲེལ་ནས་  
 བཞུགས་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན།

མར་སྒྲོན་ཆོས་ཀྱི་སྒྲོ་བྲོས་ལ་མཁའ་འགྲོ་མས་ལུང་བསྟན་པ་བཞིན་ བདེ་མཆོག་  
 མཁའ་འགྲོའི་སྤྲན་བརྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཆོས་སྐོར་ལ་ལྷ་དུག་ཅུ་ཅུ་གཉིས་དང་། ལྷ་བཅུ་གསུམ། ལྷ་  
 ལྷ་། ལྷ་སྤྲེས་རྣམས་དུལ་མཆོན་གྱི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་ དབང་བསྐྱར་བར་  
 མཛོད་ཅིང་། བཀའ་མོ་ལྷ་བཙུ་ལྷ་དང་། ལྷ་བདུན་མ། ལྷ་ལྷ། ལྷ་ཅིག་སྤྲེས་མ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་  
 དབང་མི་རྒྱུ་རའི་ དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་བསྐྱར་བར་མཛོད། ལྷ་མའི་སྐུ་གསུང་  
 ཐུགས་ཀྱི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་བདེ་ཡི་དབང་དང་། གདམས་དག་དག་གནང་

བར་མཛད། དེ་དག་ལས་མཛད་པ་བདེ་མཆོག་རས་རྩུང་སྟན་བརྒྱད་དང་། དྲགས་པོ་  
 སྟན་བརྒྱད། དམ་རྩོད་སྟན་བརྒྱད་སོགས་བྱུང་། མར་ལུགས་རྒྱུད་སྡེའི་བདེ་དགུས་  
 སོགས་ཀྱི་བཤད་རྒྱུད་མཐུན་མོང་བ་སུམ་ཁྲི་ལས་གསུངས་པའི་ ཕ་བའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་  
 བདེ་མཆོག་ཞི་བ་རྩི་མེས་དཔལ་ལྷ་སོ་བདུན་པ་དང་། ཡུམ་བཀའ་མག་མོའི་རིགས་  
 ལས་བསྐྱེད་རིམ་ལྷ་ཅིག་སྐྱེས་མ། དེ་བཞིན་བདེ་མཆོག་བཤད་རྒྱུད་ཨ་མྱི་རྩ་ན་ལས་  
 གསུངས་པའི་ ཕ་བའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་བདེ་མཆོག་འཁོར་ལོས་སྦྱར་བྱས་ནམས་ བདེ་  
 མཆོག་གི་ཁོངས་སུ་གཏོགས་ཤིང་། སྟན་བརྒྱུད་རྒྱས་འབྱིང་བསྐྱེས་གསུམ་སོགས་  
 བཀའ་སློལ་མང་དུ་བྱོན་པ་རྣམས་ དེང་གི་བར་དུ་འབྲི་འབྲུག་བྱར་མང་སོགས་སུ་བརྒྱུད་  
 འཛིན་ཟམ་མི་ཆད་པར་བཞུགས་སོ།།

པ་རྒྱུད་གསང་བ་འདུས་པ་སོགས་ པ་རྒྱུད་འཇམ་དཔལ་གསང་ལྡན་ནི། འཇམ་  
 དཔལ་གྱི་མཚན་ཡང་དག་པར་བརྟེན་པའི་ཕ་བའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་རིགས་བསྐྱེས་ ལྷ་བཙུ་  
 གསུམ་འདི་མངའ་བདག་མི་ཁྱི་པའི་ལུགས་ མར་སྟོན་ཆེན་པོ་ནས་བརྒྱུད་པའི་སྤྲེལ་  
 ལུགས་དང་། པརྩི་ཏུ་སྤྲི་ཏི་རྩི་ན་སུ་ཤང་བ་ཤེས་རབ་རྩི་ནས་བརྒྱུད་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་  
 གྱི་ལུགས་གཉིས་ཡོད་པ་ལ། འདི་བར་སྐབས་ཀྱི་བརྒྱུད་པ་པལ་ཆེ་བར་སྤྲེལ་ལུགས་  
 ཀྱི་སྦྱོས་ཅམ་ཡང་ཆད་པ་མ་ཟད། རྩི་བཙུན་མར་པ་ནས་བརྒྱུད་ལའང་མ་ཤེས་འདུག་པས།  
 རོག་པའི་ཡིག་རྩིང་དུ་རོག་སྟོན་ཆེན་པོས་རྩི་བཙུན་མར་པ་ནས་ལུས་པ་གསལ་བ་མ་ཟད།  
 ལྷ་ལུ་བའི་རིས་ལན་ཞིག་ཏུ་འདྲ་། གསང་ལྡན་ལ་སྤྲི་ཏི་དང་། མར་པ་ནས་བརྒྱུད་པའི་  
 རྒྱུད་སྡེ་འོག་མ་དང་། གོང་མ་གཉིས་ཀའི་བཀའ་ཡོད་ཅེས་བྱུང་། དེས་ན་སྤྲེལ་ལུགས་  
 སུ་བཀའ་བའི་བརྒྱུད་པ་འདི་རྒྱ་གཞུང་དང་མཐུན་ལ། མཆོག་དབང་དང་ཐབས་ལམ་  
 སོགས་སྤྲེལ་མའི་མན་ངག་གིས་བརྒྱན་པ་འདི་ཡིད་ཆེས་པའི་གནས་སུ་གནང་ལ། མར་



སྟོན་ཚེས་ཀྱི་སློ་བྲོས་ཀྱིས་དཔལ་རྒྱ་རོ་པ་དང་། མངའ་བདག་མི་ཏི་པ་གཉིས་གཙོ་བོར་  
 རྒྱུར་པའི་ གསང་འདུས་ཀྱི་བཀའ་བབས་དག་གང་གི་ཐུགས་སྤྲུལ་ཀ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་ཡ་  
 བྱལ་དོལ་གྱི་ཚུར་སྟོན་དབང་རེ་ལ་བབས་པའི་ གསང་འདུས་ལུགས་གཉིས་དང་། ཡེ་  
 ཤེས་ཞབས་ལུགས་བཅས་བཤད་སྲོལ་གསུམ་མངའོ།།

མ་རྒྱུད་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཐོད་པ་ནི། སྤྲུགས་སྒྲ་མེད་འཇིག་རྟེན་དུ་དར་བ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་  
 གས་ཤིག་སྟེ། འདི་ལ་ཙ་རྒྱུད་སྟོང་ཕྱག་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཡོད་པ་དང་། དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་བཞི་  
 ཡོད། སངས་རྒྱུས་ཐོད་པའི་རྒྱུད་འདི་འདྲ་དཔལ་ས་ར་ཉ་ས་ཨོ་རྒྱན་ནས་སྤྱུར་བྲངས་པར་  
 གསུངས་ཤིང་། ཡུམ་སྤྱོད་ཚོགས་བདེ་མས་རྒྱུད་ལྷ་སྐབས་ཡབ་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་ཐོད་པ་  
 ལས་སྤྲུགས་སྤྱོད་བསྐྱུ་བྱས་ཏེ། མཐར་རྒྱུད་ཀྱང་ཐོད་པ་ལས་བྱུང་བས་ལྷ་དང་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་མིང་  
 ཡང་དེ་ལྟར་གྲགས་ཤིང་། དེ་ལ་བཀའ་འགྲེལ་ཡེ་ཤེས་ལྡན་དང་། ལྷ་ཉེར་ལཱ་ལྷུ་བ་  
 ཐབས། དཀྱིལ་ཆོག་རིམ་གསལ། གཏོར་ཆོག་དང་སྐབ་ཐབས་བསྐྱུས་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ས་  
 ར་ཉ་འི་ཆོས་ལྟར་གྲགས་ལ། གཞན་ཡང་བདེ་མཆོག་གི་བཤད་རྒྱུད་ཨ་མྱི་རྩ་ནི་ལེན་  
 ཉེར་བྱག་པ་ལས། ཐོད་པ་སེར་པོ་ཕྱག་གཉིས་པ་ལྷ་མོ་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ བསྐྱོར་བའི་  
 དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་སོགས་རྒྱུད་སྟེ་གཞན་ནས་ཀྱང་གསུངས། འདི་མར་སྟོན་ལོ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་  
 ཐུགས་སྤྲུལ་ཀ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་ཡ་བྱལ་ མེས་སྟོན་ཚོམ་པོ་བསོད་ནམས་རྒྱལ་མཆོན་དང་།  
 ཚུར་སྟོན་དབང་རེ་གཉིས་ལ་བཤད་བཀའ་བཅས་རྫོགས་པར་གནང་བ་ཡིན།

སྟིང་པོ་མ་རྒྱ་མ་ཡ་ནི། འདིའི་རྒྱུད་ལ་ཙ་རྒྱུད་སྟོང་ཕྱག་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཡོད་པར་གྲགས་ཀྱང་  
 བོད་དུ་རྟོགས་རྒྱུ་ལས་མ་བསྐྱུར། འདི་ལ་བཤད་རྒྱུད་རང་རྒྱ་ཚུགས་པ་འཕགས་བོད་  
 གཉིས་ཀར་མ་གྲགས་ཀྱང་། དཔལ་དོ་རྩེ་མཁའ་འགྲོའི་རྒྱུད་དུ་འདི་ཡི་རྒྱུད་ཆོག་རགས་  
 རིམ་འབྲེན་པར་མཛད་ཅིང་། མི་གསལ་བ་དག་གསལ་བར་མཛད་ལ། རྒྱ་གསང་ཐོག་

ལེ་དང་ཡང་ཅུང་ཟད་རྗེས་སུ་འབྲེལ་ཞིང་། རྒྱུད་དོན་ཅི་རིགས་ཤིག་སྟུང་ཁྱེ་ལས་ཀྱང་བཤད། སྤྱིར་སྟུང་འབྲེལ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐོར་ལ་སྟུང་ཆེན་པོ་དང་། རོ་རྗེ་སེམས་དཔལ་། ཉེ་ཅུ་ཀ་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་གཅིག་པ་སོགས་དང་། རྒྱུད་ལ་རྒྱ་འབྲེལ་ཉེར་བདུན་བཞུགས་པ་བོད་དུ་ཐོན་རྗེ་བཙུན་གྱི་རྒྱུད་འབྲེལ་དང་། རོག་ཐོགས་མེད་གྲགས་པས་མར་སྟོན་ཆེན་པོའི་གསུང་སྐོས་དང་མན་ངག་གི་གཞུང་བསྐང་བ་ནས་བརྩམས་པའི་རྒྱུད་འབྲེལ་སོགས་བཞུགས།

རོ་རྗེ་གདན་བཞིན། བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་ གནས་གཅོང་མ་ཡངས་པ་ཅན་ལ་སོགས་པར་གདན་བཞིན་ཅུ་རྒྱུད་སྟོང་ཕྲག་བཅུ་གཉིས་གསུངས་པ་ལས་ བསྐྱུས་རྒྱུད་འདི་ལ་བདག་གི་གདན་དང་། གཞན་གྱི་གདན། སྦྱོར་བའི་གདན། གསང་བའི་གདན་ཉེ་བཞི། དེ་རེ་རེ་ལ་འང་རབ་དབྱེ་བཞི་བཞིས་བཅུ་ལྷག་གི་བདག་ཉིད་དུ་གནས་ཤིང་། འདིའི་བཤད་པའི་རྒྱུད་མཚུངས་སྟེ། སྤྲགས་ཀྱི་ཆ་ལེའུ་བརྒྱད་པ་དང་། རྣལ་འབྱོར་མ་ཐམས་བཅད་ཀྱི་གསང་བ་ལེའུ་བརྒྱ་ལྷག་ཡོད་པ་བཞུགས། རྒྱ་གར་དུ་ཅུ་རྒྱུད་དང་སྤྱི་རྒྱུད་ལྷགས་གཉིས་དང་། རྒྱ་འབྲེལ་བཅོ་ལྔ་བཞུགས་པར་གྲགས། བོད་དུ་འགོས་ལོ་ལྔ་བ་དང་། རོ་བོ་སྤྱི་ཉི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རྒྱུད་དང་རྒྱ་གཞུང་འགངས་ཆེ་རྣམས་ལ་ རྒྱུད་བཤད་མཛད་ནའང་། འདིའི་དཔེ་རྒྱུན་ཅོམ་ལས་རྒྱུན་མི་བཞུགས་ཀྱང་། མར་ལུགས་ཀྱི་དབང་བཤད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུན་དང་། བསྐྱེད་རྫོགས་ཀྱི་མན་ངག་དག་རང་རྐང་རྩྱགས་ཤིང་ཟབ་རྒྱས་སུ་བཞུགས་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། མདོར་ན་མར་རྫོག་རྒྱུད་སྟེའི་ཆོས་སྐོར་འདི་དག་བར་སྐབས་ཞིག་ནས་ ཉམས་རྒྱུད་དང་ཡིག་ཆ་དག་ཀྱང་བཀའ་རྒྱའི་འོག་ཏུ་ཚུད་ནས་མཇལ་ཡུལ་དུ་འང་མ་གྱུར་ཡང་། དུས་ཕྱིས་སུ་འབྲས་སྤྱངས་དཔེ་མཛོད་ནང་མར་རྫོག་གི་ཡིག་ཆ་བོད་བཅུ་ཕྲག་གཅིག་བཞུགས་པ་པར་སྐྱེན་བྱུང་བའི་དཀར་ཆག་འདིར་ཟུར་འདོན་ཞུས་ཤིང་། དེ་བཞིན་ དཔལ་སྟག་ལུང་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་མར་ཐང་གི་མར་ལུགས་ཡིག་ཆ་འདའ་བོད་གཉིས་

དང་ལེ་ཚན་བརྒྱ་ཕྲག་ལས་བཀལ་བ་བཞུགས་པ་བཅས་མདོར་ན་ དཔལ་ཀྱའི་དོན་མེད་  
ཆོས་སྐོར་འདི་གངས་ཅན་ལྗོངས་སུ་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲགས་པ་དཔལ་ལྷན་ས་སྐྱ་བ་དང་། མར་  
པ་བཀའ་བརྒྱད་གཉིས་ཡིན་ཞིང་། བཀའ་བརྒྱད་དགེས་དོར་སྐོར་ལ་ ལམ་ཆ་ཆོང་བ་  
ཡོད་སྐོར་དཔལ་ས་སྐྱ་དོར་ཆེན་དོན་འཆང་ཀྱན་དགའ་བཟང་པོས། སྐབ་པ་བཞེས་པའི་  
སློབ་དཔོན་བརྒྱ་བཟོ་གྱི་བཤད་སྲོལ་དང་། སྐབ་ཆེན་མི་ཐུབ་སྐྱ་བའི་བཤད་སྲོལ། ཅོད་  
དུས་ཀྱི་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ་གཉིས་པ་ལྟ་བུ་སློབ་དཔོན་ལྷན་པའི་བཤད་སྲོལ། སློབ་  
དཔོན་དམ་ཚིག་དོན་མེད་དོས་སློབ་ནག་པོ་ལྷན་པའི་བཤད་སྲོལ། ལ་ཆེ་སྤྲན་གྲགས་  
བཟང་པོས་མཛད་པའི་རྒྱ་རོའི་འགྲེལ་ཆེན་དུ་གྲགས་པའི་བཤད་སྲོལ། མངའ་བདག་མི་  
ཉི་པའི་བཤད་སྲོལ་ཏེ། དེ་ལྟར་ལམ་གྱི་ལུས་ཡོངས་སུ་ཐོགས་པའི་བཤད་སྲོལ་ནི་དུག་  
པོ་དེ་ཅུམ་དུ་བྱུང་ལ། གཞན་དོན་མེད་སྤྱིང་འགྲེལ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་འགྲེལ་པ་བདུན་དང་། བྱང་  
ཆུབ་སྤྱིང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པས་མཛད་པའི་ སྐབ་ཐབས་དུག་ཅུམ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་། ལམ་སྲོལ་  
ཡོངས་སུ་ཐོགས་པ་ནི་མེད་པ་དང་། དཔལ་རྒྱ་རོའི་ལུགས་ལ་ལམ་སྲོལ་ཆ་ལག་ཆོང་  
བ་ཡོད་ལུགས་གསུངས་ཡོད་པ་ཞོར་འཕྲོས་སུ་གསོལ་བ་ལགས་སོ། བཀའ་བློན་ཆེ།

འབྲི་གུང་ཆེ་ཆོང་འཕྲིན་ལས་ལྷན་གྲུབ་ཀྱིས། རབ་གནས་ས་ཁྱི་ ༢༠༡༤ ལོའི་ཟླ་ ༣  
ཆོས་ ༢༤ བཟང་པོར། །

## གསང་སྒྲགས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་དང་ཚུལ།

དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲུག་པའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་འདི་ རྒྱལ་བསྟན་ཡོངས་ཚོགས་སྤྱི་དང་ ལྷག་  
པར་འབྲས་བུ་གསང་སྒྲགས་དོན་ཐེག་པའི་རིང་ལུགས་ཀྱིས་ མངའ་དབང་བསྐྱར་པའི་  
ཆོས་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་མི་དབང་མངའ་བདག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་བཀའ་སློབ་  
ཟབ་མོ་ལ་བརྟེན་ གཞུང་གྲུ་ཆོང་དང་དཔལ་ལྷག་ཞིབ་འཛུགས་ལྷེ་བ་མཉམ་ཅུབ་ཀྱི་ཐོག་  
ལས་གསང་སྒྲགས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པའི་བརྗོད་དོན་གྱི་ཐོག་ལུ་ཞིབ་འཇོལ་དང་བགྲོ་སྐྱེད་འགོ་  
འདྲན་འཐབ་གནང་མི་འདི་ནང་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཕྱི་ནང་ལས་འབྲོན་མི་སྐྱེ་མགྲོན་དང་བཅས་  
མར་གཏོགས་མི་གེ་ར་ལུ་ སྐྱ་གཞུགས་བཟང་པོ་དང་འབྲེལ་ འབྲོན་པ་ལེགས་སོ་ཡོད་  
ཟེར་བྱ་ནི་ཨིན།

ད་རེས་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཡར་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་འགྱུར་བ་དང་འཁྲིལ་ དུས་ཚོད་ཁག་ཆེ་ཏོག་ཏོ་  
གཅིག་ནང་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཕྱི་ནང་གི་མཁས་པ་རྒྱ་གཅིག་ཁར་འཛོམས་འདི་ གྲོས་བསྐྱར་  
གནང་ཚུགས་མི་འདི་ལུ་ ང་བཅས་གཞུང་གྲུ་ཆོང་དང་རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབུ་འཁྲིད་  
དམ་པ་སྐྱབས་ཆེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དགེ་འདུན་འཕགས་པའི་ཆོགས་དང་བཅས་ངལ་རངས་སྤྲོམ་  
བྱུང་ཡོད་ཟེར་བྱ་ནི་དང་། ང་གིས་རྒྱ་ལས་མར་ ང་རང་གི་གོ་ཚོད་དང་བསྟན་འབྲས་བུ་  
སྒྲགས་ཀྱི་ཐེག་པའི་བརྗོད་དོན་གྱི་ཐོག་ལུ་ལོ་རྒྱུས་དུམ་གྲ་ཅིག་བཤད་དེ་སྤུལ་ནི་ཨིན།

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་སྤྱིའི་བབ་ཚུལ། སྤྱིར་དམ་པའི་ཆོས་ཟེར་བ་དེ་ ཤིན་ཏུ་  
ནས་ཀྱང་ཆེད་པར་དཀའ་བ་ རིན་ཐང་དང་བྲལ་བ་ཞིག་ལགས། དེ་གང་ནས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་  
ན། ཚོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་འབྱུང་ཞིང་། སྤྱིར་ཆེ་བསྐྱེད་དཀའ་པོའི་མདོ་ལས་  
མི་མཐེད་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཞིང་བསྐལ་པ་བཟང་པོ་འདི་ལ་སངས་རྒྱས་སྟོང་ཙ་གཉིས་འབྲོན་  
རྒྱུར་གསུངས་ཡོད་པའི་ནང་གསེས་ རྣམ་འདྲན་བཞི་པ་ཤུག་ཐུབ་པའི་བསྟན་པ་འདི་ལ་

ཚོད་ལྷན་ཆེ་ལོ་བརྒྱ་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་ཡང་ གསང་སྒྲགས་དོན་ཐོག་པའི་བསྟན་པ་འདི་མ་  
ཉམས་པར་གནས་འདི་ཡ་མཚན་ཆེ་བའི་གཞི་གཅིག་ཡིན།

བདག་ཅག་གི་སྟོན་པ་ལྟ་བུ་བྱུང་བ་འདི་ཉིད་ ཐོག་པ་བྱམ་མོང་གི་འདོད་ཚུལ་ལ་  
གང་ཟག་དབང་པོ་རྣམ་པོ་ཞིག་ དང་པོ་བསྐལ་པ་བྱངས་མེད་གསུམ་གྱི་རིང་ལ་ཚོགས་  
བསགས་ སློབ་པ་སྦྱངས། མཐར་མཛོན་པར་རྫོགས་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་པ་དེ་འདྲ་ཞིག་ལ་  
འདོད་ཀྱང་། ཐོག་ཆེན་གསང་སྒྲགས་དོན་ཐོག་པའི་ལུགས་ལ་ སངས་རྒྱས་དེ་ཉིད་  
བསྐལ་པ་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པའི་གོང་ལོ་ནས་ རང་དོན་ཆོས་སྐྱེ་མཛོན་དུ་བྱུར་ནས་གཞན་  
དོན་གཟུགས་སྐྱེས་ གདུལ་བྱའི་ཁམས་དབང་བསམ་པ་དང་བསྟན་ནས་ སྤང་བ་ཞིག་  
ཡིན་པར་འདོད་ཅིང་།

ད་ལན་འཛམ་གླིང་མིའི་སྤང་དོར་ མཛོད་པ་བཅུ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་སློ་ནས་ མཛོན་པར་  
རྫོགས་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་པའི་ཚུལ་བསྟན། ཚངས་པ་དང་བརྒྱ་བྱིན་གྱིས་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་  
པའི་དོར་ དམ་པའི་ཆོས་གསུངས་བར་ཞལ་གྱིས་བཞེས་ཏེ་ཡུལ་མ་རྩ་མིར་བྱང་སྤང་  
ལྟར་བ་རི་དྲགས་ཀྱི་ནགས་སུ་ འཁོར་ལུ་སྤེ་གཙོ་བོར་བྱུར་པའི་ ལྷ་བརྒྱད་ཁྲི་དང་བཅས་  
པ་ལ། བཀའ་དང་པོ་བདེན་བཞིའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྟོར། ཡང་རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ་ཀྱི་བྱ་  
རྒྱུད་ཕྱང་པོའི་རི་ལ་ བྱམ་མོང་དང་བྱམ་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་འཁོར་རྣམས་ལ། བཀའ་བར་པ་  
མཚན་ཉིད་མེད་པའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྟོར།

ཡང་རི་མ་ལ་ཡ་སོགས་ མ་ངས་པའི་གནས་རྣམས་སུ་ བྱམ་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པའི་  
འཁོར་རྣམས་ལ། མཛོན་པའི་སྤེ་སྤྱོད་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་བསྐྱབ་པ་ལས་བརྩམས་ཏེ་ངས་དོན་  
སྤྱིང་པོའི་མདོ་སོགས་ཁམས་ཀྱི་རང་བཞིན་བསྟན་པ་རྣམས་དང་། མཐར་དཔལ་ལྷན་  
འབྲས་སྤངས་རྒྱལ་པོ་རྒྱ་བ་བཟང་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ལས་ཅན་གྱི་འཁོར་རྣམས་ལ། སྤེ་

སྟོན་བཞི་པ་གསང་སྤྲུགས་འབྲས་བུའི་ཆོས་བསྟན་པར་མཛད་པ་སྟེ་ བཀའ་མཐའ་མ་  
ལེགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་བྱེ་བའམ་ དོན་དམ་རྣམ་པར་ངེས་པའི་ཆོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་དཔག་ཏུ་  
མེད་པ་བསྐྱོར་བ་མཛད་དོ།

ཁྱད་པར་གསང་སྤྲུགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་སྤྱིའི་བྱང་ཚུལ་ནི། དེ་ཡང་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་  
ལྷ་རྩ་ཁྱིམ་བཞུགས་པའི་ཆོ་རུབ་ཕྱོགས་ཚུན་གྱི་ཡུལ་ན་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཨིནྱ་བྱུ་ཀྱི་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་  
དེས། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱི་མཆོན་ཐོས་པས་ཤིན་ཏུ་དད་དེ་ ཞལ་ཤར་དུ་གཟིགས་ཏེ་  
ཐལ་མོ་སྦྱར་ནས་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ་རྩུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་ཞབས་མངའ་བ་དང་བཅས་པ་ སང་  
གི་གདུགས་ཚོད་ལ་འདིར་གཤེགས་སུ་གསོལ་ཞེས་ གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་པས། སྟོན་པ་  
འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་ སང་དེར་བྱོན་ རྒྱལ་པོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པས་མཆོད་པ་དུ་མས་  
མཆོད་ནས། བདག་ཅག་རྣམས་ལ་སྲིད་པའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐལ་ལས་གྲོལ་བའི་ཐབས་བསྟན་  
དུ་གསོལ་ཞེས་ཞུས་པའི་ལོར་ སྐྱེ་ཆགས་བྲལ་གྱི་སྤང་བ་བསྐྱུས་ནས་ འཁོར་ལོས་སྦྱར་  
བའི་གཟུགས་ཀྱིས་ ས་བརྒྱུད་གསང་བ་འདུས་པ་ ལྷ་སྤྲུལ་ཅུ་ཙུག་ཉིས་ཀྱི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་  
སྦྱུལ་ཏེ་རྒྱལ་པོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་ལ་དབང་བསྐྱར་རྒྱུད་བཤད། རྒྱལ་པོས་དོན་ཁོང་དུ་  
རྒྱུད་པས་ འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པའི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་བསྐྱབས་ཏེ་ ཡུལ་དེར་སློག་ཆ་ཡན་ཆད་  
ཀྱིས་དངོས་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་ནས་འཇའ་ལུས་སུ་སོང་། དེས་ཚུན་གྱི་ཡུལ་སྟོངས་པར་བྱུར་ཏེ་  
སྤྲུལ་ཡོངས་སུ་བབྱུང་ནས་གང་བའི་ཆོ།

སྤྲུལ་ཡང་གསང་བའི་བདག་པོས་གསང་འདུས་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་ཕལ་ཆེར་  
སྤེལ་བམ་དུ་བཀོད་དེ་ སྐྱེ་རྣམས་སྤྲིན་པར་མཛད་ནས་ རྒྱུད་བཤད་ཅིང་སྤེལ་བམ་  
གཏད།དེ་ནས་ཕལ་ཆེར་མིར་བྱུར་ཏེ་མཆོའི་འགམ་དུ་ཡུལ་གྱུ་བཅས་ཏེ་རྒྱུད་དོན་ཉམས་  
སུ་སྤངས་པས་གྲུབ་པ་ཐོབ། དེ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བྱ་དང་བྱ་མོ་རྣམས་ཀྱང་ རྣལ་འབྱོར་པ་དང་

མ་ཁའ་འགྲོ་མར་གྱུར་པས་ རྩོན་མ་ཁའ་འགྲོའི་གླིང་ཞེས་ དེང་སང་གི་བར་དུ་གྲགས།  
སྤར་མཚོ་རིམ་གྱིས་བྱི་ནས་དཔལ་ཏེ་རུ་ཀའི་ལྷ་ཁང་རང་བྱུང་ཞིག་ཀྱང་བྱུང་། རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་  
གླེགས་བམ་རྣམས་དེར་དཀོར་མཛོད་དུ་བཞུགས་སུ་གསོལ་བ་ལས། བྱིས་སྤྱབ་ཐོབ་  
རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རྩོན་གྱི་ཡུལ་དུ་བརྟེན་ནས། གསང་སྤྲུག་རྒྱུད་སྡེ་གླངས་ནས་དར་བར་  
མཛད་པས་མཚོན་འཛིན་བྱ་གླིང་གི་ཡུལ་སྤྱོད་ཐ་དད་པ་རྣམས་ནས་ གསང་སྤྲུག་རྒྱུད་  
སྡེ་གཤམ་སྤྲུ་བཞུགས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྦྱོན་བྲངས་ཤིང་། སྤྱབ་རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་སྤྱི་མེས་ས་ར་ཏ་  
པ་སོགས་སྤྱབ་ཐོབ་བརྒྱད་ཅུ་ཅད་ཞི་སོགས་བཛོད་ཀྱིས་མི་ལང་བར་བྱོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་  
གཙོ་བོ་གསང་སྤྲུག་སྤྲོ་ཐོག་པའི་བསྟན་པ་གསལ་པར་མཛད་དོ།

### གསང་སྤྲུག་ཀྱི་ཟབ་དང་དེ་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པའི་ཐབས་བསྟན་པ་ནི།

གསང་སྤྲུག་ཞེས་པའི་ གསང་དགོས་པ་དེ་གདུལ་བྱ་སྒོ་རྒྱུང་བའམ་ སྤྲོད་དུ་མ་  
འགྱུར་པ་རྣམས་ལ་གསང་དགོས་པ་མ་གཏོགས། གསང་སྤྲུག་ཀྱི་ཆོས་དེ་ཟབ་ཆེ་བའི་  
དབང་གིས་གཞན་ལ་གཏན་ནས་མ་བསྟན་པར་བཞག་པ་མིན། གསང་སྤྲུག་ཟབ་མོའི་  
ཐོག་པའི་བྱུང་པར་གྱི་ ཆོས་ཁོ་རང་ལ་བགྱོད་པའི་ ལམ་བདེ་བ་དང་། དུས་སྤྱིར་བ།  
ཐབས་ལ་མཁས་པ། མ་སྒྲོངས་པ་སོགས་སྤྲོ་ཐོག་པའི་བྱུང་ཆོས་དེ་འདྲ་ཡོད། ལྷ་བ་མ་  
སྒྲོངས་པ་དང་། སྒྲོམ་པ་ཐབས་མང་བ་དང་། སྤྲོད་པ་དཀའ་བ་མེད་པ་དང་། གང་ཟག་  
དབང་པོ་རྣམས་ལྟེ་བྱུང་ཆོས་བཞི་ལྟན་གྱི་ཐོག་པའི་ཆོས་དེ་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་སྤྲངས་ཟབ་པ་  
ལ། ལམ་བདེ་བ་དང་དུས་སྤྱིར་བའི་སྒོ་ནས་འབྲས་བུ་སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱི་གོ་འཕང་སྤྱར་དུ་  
ཐོབ་པར་འགྱུར་བ་ཡིན།

དེ་ལ་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་སྤྲངས་ཀྱི་ཟབ་བྱུང་ ཇི་ལྟར་ཞེ་ན། དེ་ལ་མི་སྒོ་རྒྱུང་བ་དང་  
སེམས་སྤྲོད་སྤྲངས་རྒྱུང་བ་དག་གིས་དུག་ཤིང་གི་ལོ་མས་གཞོད་ཀྱིས་དོགས་ནས་ ཤིང་སྤྲོད་

རལ་གྲིས་གཅད་དེ་ཐག་རིང་དུ་གཡུག་པ་བཞིན། ཐེག་པ་འོག་མས་མ་རིག་པ་དེ་གཉིན་  
 བོ་བཞེན་ནས་སྤངས་ཀྱང་། དེའི་བག་ཉལ་སྤོང་མི་རྩས་པ་དང་། མི་སྤོང་སེམས་སྟོབས་  
 ཆེ་བ་དག་གིས་ ཀུན་ལ་གཞོན་པའི་དུག་ཤིང་དེ་ ཕྱིན་ཆད་གཏན་ནས་མི་སྐྱེ་བར་བྱ་བའི་  
 ཕྱིར་ཅུ་བ་སྤངས་ནས་བཀོག་སྟེ་ཅུ་མེད་བཏང་བ་ དེ་འདྲ་བྱེད་པ་བཞིན་ བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་  
 དཔའི་ཐེག་པ་ལ་འདོད་ཆགས་དང་། ཞེ་སྤང་དང་། གཏི་སྤྲུག་མགོ་ནོན་པའི་ཕྱིར་རིམ་  
 བཞིན་མི་སྤྲུག་པ་དང་ བྱམས་པ་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ལུགས་འབྱུང་ལུགས་ལྟོག་སྒོམ་པ་སྤྱི་དང་  
 བྱེ་བྲག་ཏུ་ ཆོས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེན་མེད་དུ་ངེས་པའི་གཉིན་པའི་སྒོས་བདག་འཛིན་ཅུ་བ་  
 སྤངས་ནས་འབྱིན་པ་ལྟ་བུ་ གཉིན་པོ་ལོགས་ཞིག་ཏུ་བཞེན་ནས་ སྤང་བྱ་མཐའ་དག་  
 སྤངས་པ་མདོ་ལུགས་དང་།

དུག་གི་སྤོང་བོ་དེའི་ཅུར་གསོ་དབྱད་ལ་མཁས་པའི་སྤྲན་པ་ཞིག་སྟེབས་ན་ དེས་  
 དུག་གི་སྤྲན་བཟོས་ནས་ལོངས་སུ་སྦྱོད་པ་བཞིན་ གསང་སྤྲགས་ཀྱི་ དེ་ཉིད་ཤེས་པའི་  
 སྤྲགས་པས་ཀྱང་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་དུག་ལྡ་བོ་མ་སྤངས་པར་ཡེ་ཤེས་སུ་བསྐྱར་རུས་ལ། དུག་  
 སྤོང་གི་ཅུར་མ་བྱ་ཞིག་སྟེབས་ན་ འདབ་ཆགས་དེས་དུག་ལོངས་སུ་སྦྱོད་པས་རང་གི་སྤོ་  
 མདོངས་ཀྱི་བྲག་མདངས་རྒྱས་པ་ལྟར་ བྲག་རྫོགས་ཀྱི་ཉམས་ལེན་ལ་རང་བྱུང་རྒྱུད་  
 པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ ཉོན་མོངས་པ་ཆེད་དུ་སྤངས་མི་དགོས་པར་ རྟོག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་རང་ངོ་  
 རང་ཤེས་ཀྱི་གྲོང་དུ་བྲོལ་བའི་རྩལ་གྱིས་ ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པས་ ཆོ་གཅིག་ལ་སྐྱུ་དང་ཡེ་  
 ཤེས་ཡོན་ཏན་གྱི་རྩལ་རྫོགས་ཏེ་བྲོལ་བ་ཐོབ་པའོ།

ཡིན་ནའང་ཐེག་པ་མཐོ་དམན་གཉིས་ཀས་ གདུལ་བྱ་གང་ཟག་གི་བསམ་ཚོད་  
 ཅས་བྱས་ན། རང་རང་སོ་སོའི་ཤེས་རྒྱུད་དང་བསྐྱར་པ་ཞིག་གིས་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་སྤངས་  
 ཟབ་ལ་མཁས་པ་ཞིག་མ་བྱུང་ན་དེ་ཡང་ཉེན་ཁ་ཆེ། ལར་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པ་ལ་ ཐོག་མར་



ལྟ་བུའི་ཕྱག་ཐག་ཚོད་པ་ཞིག་དགོས་ཤིང་། ལྟ་བུ་ཡང་དག་པ་ཞིག་བརྟེན་པ་ན་བསྐྱོམ་  
དགོས། མ་བསྐྱོམ་པ་འཕྲོམ་ཚུལ་ནི་ན་ལྟ་བུའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སྤྱོད་པ་ཤོར་ཏེ་ཕུང་ཉེ་ཆེ་  
བས། རྒྱུ་ཤོར་མ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ ལྟ་བུའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སྤྱོད་པ་མ་ཤོར་བ་ཞིག་དགོས་གསུངས།

དེ་ལ་རྒྱ་འབྲས་ཐེག་པའི་ལྟ་བུ་དེ་ཡང་ འཁོར་འདས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོང་ཉིད་  
སྒྲོས་བྲལ་དུ་གྱུར་ལ་ཕབ་ནས་བསྟན་གྱིན་ཡོད་ཅིང་། དེད་རང་ཚོས་སྟོང་ཉིད་མཛོད་དུ་  
མ་བྱུང་རིང་ལ་ ཕན་གནོད་དགེ་སྲིག་རྒྱ་འབྲས་ཟེར་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་བྱུང་སྟེ་ཡོད་པ་ཡིན་  
ནའང་ སྟོང་ཉིད་རིད་འདུག་ དགེ་བ་མིན་འདུག་སྲིག་པ་མིན་འདུག་ཅེས་གང་བྱུང་བྱེད་ན་  
ལྟ་བུའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སྤྱོད་པ་ཤོར་བེད་ཞིང་། དེ་ལྟར་དགེ་སྟོང་སྲིག་སྟོང་ལ་འབྱམས་ན་ནག་  
པོ་བདུད་ཀྱི་ལྟ་བུ་ལ་འགོ་བཅོ།

དེ་འདྲ་ཡིན་དུས་ ལྟ་བུ་ཁོ་རང་སྟོང་ཉིད་ཆེན་པོ་གཅིག་ཡིན་པར་ཤེས་པའི་གནས་  
ལུགས་དེ་ ཉ་གོ་ནས་སྐྱོམ་པའི་རང་ཡུན་རིང་དུ་སྦྱོང་བ་ དེས་གང་འཚམས་ནས་གཉིས་  
འཛིན་གྱི་སྤང་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་རང་བཞིན་གྱིས་ཞིག་སྟེ། དེ་ནས་ཕན་གནོད་བདེ་སྤྱད་གང་  
ཡང་མེད་པ་ཞིག་གི་དུས་ཚོད་ཅིག་ཤར་ན། དེ་དུས་དངོས་གནས་བྲངས་ནས་ལྟ་བུ་མཐར་  
བྱག་པའི་ཕྱོགས་ལ་སྤེལ་བ་པ་ལགས་ཤིང་། དེ་ཕྱིར་ཚུན་མཉམ་གུ་རུ་བསྐྱེད་འབྱུང་གནས་  
ཀྱིས། ལྟ་བུ་ནམ་མཁའ་བས་མཐོ་བ། སྤྱོད་པ་བག་བྱེད་བས་ཞིབ་པ་ཞིག་དགོས་གསུངས་  
པའང་དེ་ཡིན་ནོ།

དེ་ཕྱིར་ སྟོང་ཉིད་མཐར་བྱག་པའི་གནས་ལུགས་དེ། གོ་བའི་ཐོག་ནས་གོ་ཡང་  
སྤྱོད་པ་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱི་ཐོག་ནས་ ཁོ་རང་གཉིས་འཛིན་གྱི་སྤང་བ་མཐའ་དག་མ་ཞིག་གི་  
བར་དུ་གནས་ལུགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱན་སྦྱོང་བ་གལ་ཆེ། དེ་ཕྱིར་ཤེས་རབ་རྣམ་དག་གི་ལྟ་བུ་དང་  
ཐབས་སྤྱོད་པའི་ཆ་གཉིས་པོ་ཡ་མ་བྲལ་བ་ཞིག་གིས་ལྟ་བུའི་ངོས་ནས་ བྱ་ཚོད་པོ་ནམ་

འཕང་གཙོན་པ་འདྲ་པོ་ཞིག་གིས་ཐག་ཚད་པ་ཞིག་དང་། སྦྱོད་པའི་ངོས་ནས་རྒྱ་འབྲས་  
སྒྲུང་དོར་ཕྱ་ཞིང་ཕྱ་བ་ནས་གཞིག་སྟེ་བག་ཕྱེ་བས་ཞིབ་པ་ཞིག་གསང་སྤྲུགས་པས་ལག་  
ལེན་བསྟར་དགོས་པར་གསུངས་པ་དེ་རང་ཚོའི་བླགས་ལ་འཛིག་དགོས།

སྦྱར་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པའི་རྣམ་བཞག་ལ།གང་ཟག་གི་ཁམས་དབང་བསམ་  
པའི་བྱེ་བྲག་དང་མཐུན་པར་ཆོས་ལུང་བསམ་གྱིས་མི་བྱབ་པར་བཞུགས་ཀྱང་མདོར་  
ཉོལ་གྱིས་བསྐྱེལ་ན་སྦྱེས་བྱ་རྒྱུང་འབྲིང་ཆེན་པོ་དང་ཆེན་པོའི་མཆོག་སྟེ་བཞིར་བྱས། དེ་  
རེ་རེ་ལ་འང་ ལྟ་སྒྲོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་འཛིག་རྒྱུ་བཞི་བཞིར་ཡོད་པ་རྣམས་སྦྱིང་པོ་བཅུད་  
དོན་ཅིམ་ཞིག་བཤད་ན།

**བྱེ་བྲག་སྤྲུགས་སྒྲུབ་མེད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་ལྟ་སྒྲོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་བཞིའི་ལོ་དོན་སྦྱད་དེ་བཤད་པ་ནི།**

སྐབས་འདིར་ལྟ་བ་ཞེས་པ་གང་ལ་བལྟ་ན།རང་གི་སེམས་ཉིད་བདེ་སྟོང་ལྷན་ཅིག་  
སྦྱེས་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཡེ་ཤེས་འབྲུལ་མ་རྒྱུང་བའི་ངོ་བོ་དེ་ལ། གང་གིས་ལྟ་ན་མ་ཡེངས་པའི་  
བྲན་པ་ཡང་དག་པས་ཕྱིས་ཟིན་པའི་ཤེས་བཞིན་ནམ་ སོ་སོར་རྟོག་པའི་སྒོ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་  
མིག་གིས། ཇི་ལྟར་བལྟ་ན་བརྒྱུད་ལྷན་སྒྲུབ་མའི་མན་ངག་གི་ལུང་ཚད་མ་དང་ཆོས་ཉིད་  
འཇུག་བའི་དངོས་སྟོབས་ཀྱི་རིག་པས་བལྟ་བྱ་ལྟ་བྱེད་དང་བྲལ་བའི་ཡིན་ལུགས་གཏན་  
ལ་ཐབ་པའི་རྒྱུ་གྱིས་བལྟ་བ་སྟེ། དེ་ལྟར་སེམས་ཉིད་རང་ངོ་ཇི་ལྟ་བ་བཞིན་ངེས་པའི་  
ཤེས་པ་ཐེ་ཆོམ་དང་བྲལ་བ་བརྟེས་པའི་ཆོ་ལྟ་བ་བྱུག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་དོན་རྟོགས་པའི་ཚད་དུ་  
འཛིག་པ་ཡིན་ཏེ། ཀམ་པ་རང་བྱུང་དོ་རྗེས། གཞི་ལ་སྦྱོ་འདོགས་ཚད་པ་ལྟ་བའི་གདེང་།  
ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་རོ།

གཉིས་པ་སྒྲོམ་པ་ཞེས་པའི་དོན་ནི། ལར་སྒྲོམ་ཟེར་ན་ ཡང་ནས་ཡང་དུ་གོམས་  
ཤིང་འདྲིས་པར་བྱེད་པའི་དོན་ཏེ། ཐབས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རིམ་པ་དང་ ཤེས་རབ་རྫོགས་པའི་

ཟིམ་པ་གང་དང་གང་གི་སྐབས་ལ་ཡིན་ནའང་ སློམ་པ་པོ་ནལ་འབྱོར་པས་ངེས་འབྱུང་  
 དང་བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་ཀྱིས་ཅིས་ཟིན་ཏེ་བསྒྲོམ་པ་གལ་ཆེ་ལ། ལྷག་པར་རང་གི་སེམས་  
 ཉིད་འགྱུར་མེད་བདེ་སྟོང་ལྷན་ཅིག་སྐྱེས་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས་ རང་རིག་རང་གསལ་མ་བཅོས་  
 པའི་རང་ལ་མཉམ་པར་བཞག་པའི་ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན་ལས་ སྐད་ཅིག་ཀྱང་གཡོ་བ་མེད་པར་  
 གནས་པའི་རྒྱན་བསྐྱེད་བ་ལ་གོམས་ཤིང་འབད་དེ་སྐྱབ་པར་བྱེད་དགོས་པ་སྟེ། དེ་ལ་མ་  
 ཡོངས་སྐྱོང་བ་སྒྲོམ་པའི་གནད། ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་བཞིན་ནོ། དེ་ཡང་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱི་ཡོན་  
 ཏན་ ཉིན་ཟིམ་བཞིན་གོང་མཐོར་གཏོང་དགོས་པའི་དོན་ནོ།

གསུམ་པ་ སྟོད་པའི་སྐོར་ནི། ཐབས་དམིགས་པ་མེད་པའི་སྡིང་རྩེ་དང་ཤེས་རབ་  
 ཆོས་ཉིད་གཏོགས་པའི་ལྟ་བ་ཡང་དག་པས་ཅིས་ཟིན་པའི་ ཕྱིན་རྒྱལ་བ་སྤྱད་དོས་བཞི་  
 དང་ དོན་ཐོག་པའི་སྟོར་སྐོར་ཆོགས་འཁོར་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ སྟོད་པ་ཟབ་མོ་རྣམས་ནི།  
 ལྷུང་བར་མི་སྟོབ་པའི་ ཟུང་འཇུག་ཆེན་པོའི་གོ་འཕང་དུ་ ཕྱིན་པར་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ལགས།  
 ཆོས་ཉིད་གཏོགས་པའི་ལྟ་བས་ཅིས་ཟིན་བྱུང་ན་ འབྲུལ་ངོར་མི་དག་བར་སྤྱང་ཡང་དོན་  
 ལ་འབྲེལ་ཡུལ་གཞན་ལ་ཕན་ཐོགས་ཆེ་ཞིང་ རྣལ་འབྱོར་པ་རང་གི་ས་ལམ་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན་  
 སྐྱེ་བའི་གོགས་སུ་འགྱུར་ངེས་པས་ལྟ་སྒྲོམ་གྱིས་ ཅིས་ཟིན་པའི་སྟོད་པ་ལ་ཙལ་སྤྱང་སྟེ་  
 ཉམས་རྟོགས་ཀྱི་བོག་འདོན་པ་ནི་སྟོད་པའི་མཆོག་ཏུ་གསུངས་པ་ཏེ། སྒྲོམ་དོན་ཀུན་ལ་  
 ཙལ་སྟོང་སྟོད་པའི་མཆོག་ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་བཞིན་ནོ།

བཞི་པ་འབྲས་བུ་ནི། བརྒྱད་ལྷན་སྤྲེལ་འཛིན་ཞབས་ནས་དབང་ཐོབ་ཅིང་ དམ་ཆོག་  
 མིག་འབྲས་བཞིན་དུ་བསྤྱང་བའི་ རྣལ་འབྱོར་པས་འཆིབས་སྡིང་ཟུག་གི་དབེན་གནས་སུ་  
 ཆོ་འདིའི་བྱ་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་ སྒྲོས་བཏང་ནས་ ཟབ་མོའི་ཉམས་ལེན་ཉག་གཅིག་ལ་ཅེ་  
 གཅིག་ཏུ་ བཅོན་པའི་གྲུབ་འབྲས་སུ་ཆོ་ལུས་འདི་ལ་ཁ་འབྱོར་བདུན་ལྷན་དོན་ཐོག་པའི་

གོ་འཕང་དམ་པ་ མཛོན་དུ་གྱུར་པ་ལོ། ད་ལྟོ་ལས་མར་ནལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་དབང་ལྷག་མི་ལ་  
རས་པ་འི་མགུར་མ་ལ་གཞི་བཞག་སྟེ། ལྷ་སྒོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་ཀྱི་གནད་མཛོར་བསྐྱས་ཅིག་  
བཤད་འདི་ཕུལ་ནི་ཨིན།

ལྷ་སྒོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་བཞི་འི་དོ་སྦྱོད། ལྷ་བ་ཕྱོགས་རིས་མེད་པ། སྒོམ་པ་ཡེངས་པ་  
མེད་པ། སྦྱོད་པ་ཆོས་དང་མཐུན་པ། འབྲས་བུ་འཆི་ཁར་འབྱོད་མེད། ཅིག་དགོས། །

ལྷ་སྒོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་བཞི་འི་འབྲེལ། ལྷ་བ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་ཞིག་བྱུང་ན་ སྒོམ་པ་  
གོལ་འགྲིབ་ཀྱི་མཐར་ལྷུང་མི་སྲིད། སྒོམ་པ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་ཅིག་བྱུང་ན་སྦྱོད་པ་དེའི་  
རྩེས་སུ་འགྲོ་ངེས་པ་ཡིན་པས་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་ཅིག་འོང་བ་ཡིན། དེ་བྱུང་ན་རྒྱ་ཆོག་གས་  
གངས་ཆོང་བས་འབྲས་བུ་གང་བསྐྱབས་བར་ཆད་མེད་པར་འབྱུང་ངེས་པ་ཡིན་ནོ།

ལྷ་སྒོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་བཞིའི་སྦྱོན། ཡོངས་གཟུང་གཏད་ཡོད་ན་ལྷ་བ་མིན། བྱིང་  
ཁོད་ཡོད་ན་སྒོམ་པ་མིན། སྒྲུང་དོར་ཡོད་ན་སྦྱོད་པ་མིན། རྣམ་རྟོག་ཡོད་ན་ལྟོ་འབྱོར་  
མིན། ཤར་རུབ་ཡོད་ན་ཡེ་ཤེས་མིན། སྦྱེ་འཆི་ཡོད་ན་སངས་རྒྱས་མིན། དེ་ནི་གང་གི་  
སྦྱོན་རྒྱུག་ལགས།

ལྷ་སྒོམ་སྦྱོད་འབྲས་ཡང་དག། སྒྲུང་བའི་སེམས་ལ་སྟོང་ཉིད་ཤར། །བལྟ་རྒྱུ་འི་  
བོ་རྩལ་ཅམ་མེད། །བལྟ་བྱ་ལྷ་བྱེད་སྟོར་ནས་ཐལ། །ལྷ་བའི་རྟོགས་རྒྱལ་བཟང་ནས་  
བྱུང་། །ཞེས་སེམས་ལ་སྟོང་ཉིད་ཀྱི་ལྷ་བ་ཤར་ནས་ བལྟ་རྒྱུ་འི་བོ་རྩལ་ཅམ་ཡང་མེད་  
པར་ བལྟ་བྱ་ལྷ་བྱེད་སྟོར་བ་དེ་ལྷ་བ་ཡང་དག། སྒོམ་པ་འོད་གསལ་རྒྱ་བའི་རྒྱུ། བསྒོམ་  
རྒྱུ་འི་ཐུན་མཆོམས་གཟུང་རྒྱ་མེད། །བསྒོམ་བྱ་སྒོམ་བྱེད་སྟོར་ནས་ཐལ། །སྒོམ་པ་འི་སྦྱིང་  
རུས་བཟང་ནས་བྱུང་། །ཞེས་སྒོམ་པ་རྒྱ་བའི་རྒྱུ་བཞིན་འདིས་ནས་ཐུན་མཆོམས་གཟུང་  
རྒྱ་མེད་པར་བསྒོམ་བྱ་སྒོམ་བྱེད་སྟོར་བ་དེ་སྒོམ་པ་ཡང་དག།

སྤྱད་པའི་བྱ་བྱེད་འོད་གསལ་དང་། རྟེན་འབྲེལ་སྟོང་པར་ཐག་ཆོད་པས། སྤྱད་བྱ་  
 སྤྱད་བྱེད་སྟོར་ནས་ཐལ། སྤྱད་པའི་བྱེད་ཚུལ་བཟང་ནས་བྱུང་། ཞེས་སྤྱད་པའི་བྱ་བྱེད་  
 རྟེན་འབྲེལ་སྟོང་པར་ཐག་ཆོད་པས་སྤྱད་བྱ་སྤྱད་བྱེད་སྟོར་བ་དེ་སྤྱད་པ་ཡང་དག།

ཐོགས་ཆའི་རྟོག་པ་དབྱིངས་སུ་ཡལ། འདྲི་མེད་ཆོས་བརྒྱད་རེ་དོགས་མེད། །  
 བསྐྱུང་བྱ་སྐྱུང་བྱེད་སྟོར་ནས་ཐལ། འདྲི་མེད་ཆོག་བསྐྱུང་ཚུལ་བཟང་ནས་བྱུང་། འདྲི་མེད་སེམས་  
 ཆོས་སྐྱུར་ཐག་ཆོད་ཅིང་། འདྲི་མེད་ཆོག་དོན་གཉིས་སྐྱབ་པའི་ཕྱིར། བསྐྱུང་བྱ་སྐྱུང་བྱེད་  
 སྟོར་ནས་ཐལ། འབྲས་བུ་སྐྱབ་ཚུལ་བཟང་ནས་བྱུང་། ཞེས་འདྲི་མེད་སེམས་ཆོས་སྐྱུར་ཐག་  
 ཆོད་ཅིང་འདྲི་མེད་ཆོག་དོན་གཉིས་སྐྱབ་པའི་ཕྱིར། བསྐྱུང་བྱ་སྐྱུང་བྱེད་སྟོར་བ་དེ་འབྲས་བུ་  
 ཡང་དག།

ལྟ་སྟོན་སྤྱད་འབྲས་བུ་ཞིའི་གཟེར། ལྟ་བ་འདི་ལ་གཟེར་གསུམ་གདབ། ལྟ་བའི་  
 གཟེར་གསུམ་བཤད་ཅོ་ན། ལྟ་བ་སྤྱད་སེམས་སུ་འདུས་ཏེ་གདབ། སེམས་ཉིད་གསལ་  
 བའི་དང་ལ་གདབ། དེ་ལ་དོས་བཟུང་མེད་པར་གདབ། ཞེས་སྤྱད་བ་སེམས་སུ་འདུས་  
 ཤིང་། སེམས་ཉིད་གསལ་བའི་དང་དུ་བཞག་ནས། དེ་ལ་དོས་བཟུང་མེད་པར་གདབ་པ་  
 ཞི་ལྟ་བའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་མོ།

སྟོན་པ་འདི་ལ་གཟེར་གསུམ་གདབ། སྟོན་པའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་བཤད་ཅོ་ན། །  
 རྣམ་རྟོག་ཆོས་སྐྱུར་གྲོལ་བར་གདབ། རིག་གསལ་བའི་དང་དུ་གདབ། མ་བཅོས་  
 མཉམ་པར་བཞག་པར་གདབ། ཞེས་རྣམ་རྟོག་ཆོས་སྐྱུར་གྲོལ་བ། རིག་གསལ་བའི་  
 བའི་དང་དུ་སྐྱོང་བ། མ་བཅོས་མཉམ་པར་བཞག་པ་ནི་སྟོན་པའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་མོ།

སྤྱད་པའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་བཤད་ཅོ་ན། འདྲི་བཅུ་སྤྱད་པའི་ཤུགས་ལ་འཆར། ཤིག་  
 བཅུ་དང་བཞིན་གནས་སུ་དག གཉིན་པོས་གསལ་སྟོང་བཅོས་སུ་མེད། ཅེས་དག་བཅུ་

ཤུགས་ལ་འཆར། སྤྲིག་བཅུ་གནས་སུ་དག་གཉིན་པོས་གསལ་སྟོང་བཅོས་སུ་མེད་པ་  
ནི་སྟོད་པའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་མོ།

འབྲས་བུའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་བཤད་ཅི་ན། བྱང་འདས་གཞན་ནས་སྐྱབ་ཏུ་མེད། །  
འཁོར་བ་གཞན་དུ་སྤང་ཏུ་མེད། །རང་སེམས་སངས་རྒྱས་སུ་སྟོ་ཐག་ཆོད། །ཅེས་བྱང་  
འདས་སྐྱབ་ཏུ་མེད་ཅིང་། འཁོར་བ་སྤང་ཏུ་མེད་པ། རང་སེམས་སངས་རྒྱས་སུ་ཐག་ཆོད་  
པ་ནི་འབྲས་བུའི་གཟེར་གསུམ་མོ།

ལྷ་སྟོན་སྟོད་འབྲས་བཞིའི་བསྐྱུས་དོན། སྤང་དང་སྟོང་དང་དབྱེར་མེད་གསུམ། །  
འདི་གསུམ་ལྷ་བའི་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཡིན། །གསལ་དང་མི་རྟོག་མ་ཡེངས་གསུམ། །འདི་  
གསུམ་སྟོན་པའི་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཡིན། །ཆགས་མེད་ཞེན་མེད་མཐར་སྐྱོལ་གསུམ། །འདི་  
གསུམ་སྟོད་པའི་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཡིན། །རེ་མེད་དོགས་མེད་འབྲུལ་མེད་གསུམ། །འདི་  
གསུམ་འབྲས་བུའི་མདོར་བསྐྱུས་ཡིན། །

ལྷ་སྟོན་སྟོད་འབྲས་བཞིའི་གནད་ལྷ་བ་སྟོ་འདས་ཀྱི་དོན་ལ་ལྟོས། སྟོན་པ་ཡེངས་  
མེད་ཀྱི་རང་དུ་ཞོག། སྟོད་པ་ཤུགས་བྱང་འགག་མེད་སྟོངས། འབྲས་བུ་རེ་དོགས་ཐ་སྟོད་  
སྟོངས།

དེ་དག་ཆོད་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པའི་གདེངས། །ལྷ་མེད་འབྲེ་མེད་ལྷ་བའི་གདེངས། །དམིགས་  
མེད་ཡེངས་མེད་སྟོན་པའི་གདེངས། །གདེངས་དེ་གསུམ་དང་ལྷན་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་པ་  
ལགས། །

ད་མཇུག་རང་ད་རེས་ང་བཅས་ར་ནང་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་པའི་བསྐྱུན་པའི་སྟོར་ཞུགས་  
མི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་མང་རབས་ཀྱི་ མཁས་པ་ག་ར་གཅིག་ཁར་ འཛོམས་ཡོད་པ་ད་ལོ་རྒྱས་  
གཅིག་ཞུ་བ་ཅིན། འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་འདི་ནང་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱུན་པ་རྣམ་དག་ཅིག་ ལོ་

ངོ་མང་རབས་ཀྱི་རིང་ལུ་མ་ཉམས་པར་ཡོད་མི་འདི་ དང་པ་མི་དབང་མངའ་བདག་རིན་  
པོ་ཆེ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡབ་སྲས་འདི་ཚུ་གིས་ རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཆོས་བཞིན་དུ་བསྐྱེད་སྤྱོད་གནང་  
བའི་བཀའ་རྒྱ་དང་། གཉིས་པ་ དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲུག་པ་ཞབས་བྱུང་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་སྤྱགས་  
བསྐྱེད་སྤྱོད་ལམ་ལས་བརྟེན་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་འབྲུལ་འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་ཡོངས་ཆོས་  
ཀྱི་དབྱ་ཁྲིད་མཁན་ཆེན་གྱི་རབས་དང་པ་ནས་ བདུན་བཅུ་པ་ཚུན་ཆོད་ ཉམས་ཆག་མེད་  
པར་བྱོན་དང་འབྱོན་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཛད་པ་འཕྲིན་ལས་དང་། ལྷག་པར་ཆོས་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་  
ཁབ་འདི་ནང་ ཆོས་འབད་མི་ཚུ་ལུ་ མཐུན་ཁྱེན་གྲོགས་རམ་གཅེར་ རྟོང་པ་འབད་ གནང་  
བ་མ་ཚད། མི་དབང་མངའ་ཞབས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་མཆོག་གིས་ སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་མི་  
ཉམས་གོང་འཕེལ་དང་ཉམས་པ་མོར་ཚུད་ཀྱི་ བཀའ་སློབ་ཡང་ནས་ཡང་དུ་སྦྱུལ་གནང་  
བའི་བཀའ་རྒྱ་ལ་བརྟེན་ཏེ་ཡིན།

དེ་མ་ཚད་ ད་རེས་ཡང་ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་མི་དབང་མངའ་བདག་རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་བཀའ་  
སློབ་ལམ་སྟོན་དང་འབྲིལ་འདི་ གསང་སྤྱགས་ཟབ་མོ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་བཛྲོད་དོན་གྱི་ཐོག་ལུ་  
བགྲོ་སྐྱེད་དང་ཞིབ་འཛོལ་འབད་མི་འདི་གིས་ དང་པ་ མཁས་པ་འདི་ཚུ་གི་རིག་ཅུལ་  
ལས་བརྟེན་ཏེ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་རྣམ་དག་སྦྱབ་སྟེ་ བསྟན་པ་ཡུན་རིང་དུ་གནས་ནི་  
དང་། གཉིས་པ་ ཆོས་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ཚུ་གི་བར་ན་མཐུན་ལམ་བཞག་ནི། གསུམ་པ་  
ད་རེས་ཀྱི་བགྲོ་སྐྱེད་གི་བཛྲོད་དོན་གྱི་ བཅུད་དོན་བསྐྱབ་སྒྲིག་འབད་མི་འདི་གིས་ ཅུས་  
རབ་༢༡ པའི་ན་གཞོན་ཚུ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་ལ་དད་པ་དང་ཡིད་ཆེས་སྦྲོམ་བསྐྱེད་  
དེ་བཟུང་པའི་ལམ་ལུ་ཁ་བྱེད་སྤྱོད་ནི་ལུ་ བན་ཐོགས་སྦྲོམ་འབྱུང་བཅུག་ཟེར་བའི་རེ་བ་དང་  
སྟོན་ལམ་གྱི་མཚམས་སྤྱར་དང་གཅིག་ཁར་བཀྲ་ཤིས་བདེ་ལེགས་སུ་ཡིན་ཡིན།

ལས་ཆོགས་སློབ་དཔོན་སངས་རྒྱས་དོན།

## ཞི་གནས་དང་ལྷག་མཐོང་གི་སྒྲུབ།

དང་པོ་ཞི་གནས་དང་ལྷག་མཐོང་ངོས་བཟུང་བ་ནི། ཕྱི་རོལ་གྱི་ཡུལ་ལ་རྣམ་པར་གཤེད་བ་ཞི་གནས་ནང་དུ་དམིགས་པ་ རྒྱུན་དུ་རང་གི་རང་གིས་འཇུག་ལ་དགའ་བ་དང་ཤིན་ཏུ་སྦྱངས་པ་ལྷན་པའི་སེམས་ཉིད་ལ་གནས་པ་ནི་ཞི་གནས་ཞེས་བྱ། ཞི་གནས་དེ་ཉིད་ལ་དམིགས་པའི་ཚད་ཁོན་ཉིད་ལ་རྣམ་པར་དཔྱད་པ་གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ནི་ལྷག་མཐོང་ཡིན་ནོ། འཕགས་པ་དཀོན་མཆོག་སྤྱོད་ལས། ཞི་གནས་ནི་སེམས་ཅེ་གཅིག་པ་ཉིད་དོ། ལྷག་མཐོང་ནི་ཡང་དག་པ་སོ་སོར་རྟོག་པའོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།།

གཉིས་པ་ཞི་གནས་སྐྱབ་པའི་ཆ་རྒྱུན་ནམ་ཚོགས། ཞི་གནས་སྐྱབ་པའི་སྐབས་ཉེར་བ་མཁོ་བའི་ ཆ་རྒྱུན་ནམ་ཚོགས་རྣམས་ དེས་པར་དུ་ཆང་དགོས་ཏེ་ མ་ཆང་ན་ཞི་གནས་ཐུན་ཐུམ་ཚོགས་པར་མི་བྱུང་རོ། དེ་ཡང་ ༡༽ མཐུན་པའི་ཡུལ་ན་གནས་པ་དང་། ༢༽ འདོད་པ་རྒྱུང་བ་དང་། ༣༽ ཆོག་ཤེས་པ་དང་། ༤༽ བྱ་བ་མང་པོ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྦྱངས་པ་དང་། ༥༽ ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་དང་། ༦༽ འདོད་པ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྦྱངས་པའོ།

༡༽ དེ་ལ་ཡོན་ཏན་ལྡ་དག་དང་ལྷན་པ་ནི་མཐུན་པའི་ཡུལ་ཡིན་པར་ཤེས་པར་བྱ་སྟེ། གོས་དང་བསལ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཆོགས་མེད་པར་རྟོག་པའི་ཕྱིར་རྟོག་སྒྲུབ་དང་། རྒྱུ་བོ་མི་སྐྱུན་པ་དང་དགྲ་ལ་སོགས་པ་མི་གནས་པའི་ཕྱིར་གནས་བཟང་བ་དང་། ནད་མེད་པའི་ས་ཡིན་པས་ས་བཟང་བ་དང་། བློགས་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་དང་ལྷན་པ་ལྟ་བ་མཚུངས་པ་ཡིན་པས་བློགས་བཟང་བ་དང་། ཉིན་མོ་སྐྱེ་བོ་མང་པོ་དག་གིས་མ་གང་བའི་ཕྱིར་དང་། མཚན་མོ་སྐྱེ་རྒྱུང་བའི་ཕྱིར་ལེགས་པར་ལྷན་པའོ།



༢༽ འདོད་པ་རྒྱུད་བ་གང་ཞེ་ན། ཆོས་གོས་ལ་སོགས་པ་བཟང་པོ་འཇམ་མའ་པོ་  
ལ་ལྷག་པར་ཆགས་པ་མེད་པའོ།

༣༽ ཆོག་ཤེས་པ་གང་ཞེ་ན། ཆོས་གོས་སོགས་དན་དོན་ཅམ་རྟེན་པས་རྟག་ཏུ་  
ཆོག་ཤེས་པ་གང་ཡིན་པའོ།

༤༽ བྱ་བ་མང་པོ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་པ་གང་ཞེ་ན། ཉེ་ཆོང་ལ་སོགས་པ་ལས་དན་  
པ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་པ་དང་། བྱིས་པ་དང་རབ་ཏུ་བྱུང་བ་གང་དག་ཉ་ཅད་སྒྲོན་འཛིན་བྱེད་  
པ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་པ་དང་། སྤྲན་བྱེད་པ་སྐར་མ་ཅི་བ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤངས་པ་  
གང་ཡིན་པའོ།

༥༽ རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་གང་ཞེ་ན། སྤྲོམ་པ་གཉིས་ཀ་ལ་ཡང་ རང་  
བཞིན་དང་བཅས་པའི་ ཁ་ན་མ་ཐོབ་དང་བཅས་པའི་ བསྐྱབ་པའི་གཞི་མི་འདྲ་བ་དང་།  
བག་མེད་པར་རལ་ན་ཡང་སྦྱེན་པ་སྦྱེན་པར་འགྲོད་པས་ཆོས་བཞིན་དུ་བྱེད་པ་དང་། ཉན་  
ཐོས་ཀྱི་སྤྲོམ་པ་ལ་ བམ་པ་བཅོས་སུ་མི་རུང་བར་གསུངས་པ་ གང་ཡིན་པ་དེ་ལ་ཡང་  
འགྲོད་པ་དང་ལྷན་པ་དང་། ཕྱིས་མི་བྱ་བའི་སེམས་དང་ལྷན་པ་དང་། སེམས་གང་གིས་  
ལས་དེ་བྱས་པའི་ སེམས་དེ་ལ་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་སོ་སོར་རྟོག་པའི་ཕྱིར་རམ། ཆོས་  
ཐམས་ཅད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་མེད་པར་གོམས་པའི་ཕྱིར་དེའི་རྒྱལ་ཁྲིམས་རྣམ་པར་དག་པ་ཁོ་ན་  
ཡིན་པར་བརྟེན་པར་བྱའོ།

༦༽ འདོད་པ་རྣམས་ལ་ཡང་ ཆོ་འདི་དང་ཆོ་ཕྱི་མ་ལ་ཉེས་དམིགས་རྣམ་པ་མང་  
པོར་འབྱུང་བར་ ཡིད་ལ་བྱས་ལ་ དེ་དག་ལ་རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ་སྤང་བར་བྱའོ། རྣམ་པ་  
གཅིག་ཏུ་ན་འཁོར་བའི་དངོས་པོ་སྤྲུག་པ་འཇམ་ མི་སྤྲུག་པ་ཡང་རུང་སྟེ། དེ་དག་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ནི་རྣམ་པར་འཇིག་པའི་ཆོས་ཅན་མི་བརྟན་པ་སྟེ། གདོན་མི་བླ་བར་དེ་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་

དང་རང་ཉིད་ རིང་པོར་མི་ཐོགས་པར་ འབྲལ་བར་གྱུར་ན། ང་དེ་ལ་ཅི་ཞིག་ལྷག་པར་  
ཆགས་པ་ལ་སོགས་པར་འབྱུར་སྟེ་བསྐྱོམས་པས་རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤང་  
བར་བྱའོ། །

གསུམ་པ་ ལྷག་མཐོང་གི་ཚོགས་ནི། ༡༽ སྦྱིས་བྱ་དམ་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་པ་དང་།  
༢༽ མང་དུ་ཐོས་པ་ཡོངས་སུ་བཅའ་བ་དང་། ༣༽ ཚུལ་བཞིན་སེམས་པ་འོ།

༡༽ དེ་ལ་སྦྱིས་བྱ་དམ་པ་ཇི་ལྟ་བུ་ལ་བརྟེན་པ་བྱ་ཞེ་ན། གང་མང་དུ་ཐོས་པ་དང་།  
ཚོག་གསལ་བ་དང་། སྦྱིང་རྗེ་དང་ལྷན་པ་དང་། སྦྱོ་བ་བཟོད་པ་འོ།

༢༽ མང་དུ་ཐོས་པ་ཡོངས་སུ་བཅའ་བ་གང་ཞེ་ན། གང་བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་གྱི་  
གསུང་རབ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱ་གཉིས་པོ་ངེས་པའི་དོན་དང་ གང་བའི་དོན་ལ་གྲུས་པར་བྱས་  
ཤིང་ཤིན་ཏུ་ཉན་པ་སྟེ། འདི་ལྟར་འཕགས་པ་དགོངས་པ་ངེས་པ་འབྲེལ་པ་ལས།  
འཕགས་པའི་གཏམ་འདོད་པ་བཞིན་དུ་མ་ཐོས་པ་ནི་ལྷག་མཐོང་གི་གོགས་ཡིན་ནོ་  
ཞེས་བཀའ་སྩལ་ཏོ། དེ་ཉིད་ལས་ལྷག་མཐོང་ནི་ཐོས་པ་དང་བསམ་པ་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་ལྟ་  
བ་རྣམ་པར་དག་པའི་རྒྱ་ལས་བྱུང་བ་ཡིན་ནོ་ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ།

༣༽ ཚུལ་བཞིན་བསམ་པ་གང་ཞེ་ན། གང་ངེས་པའི་དོན་གྱི་མདོ་སྡེ་དང་དྲང་  
བའི་དོན་གྱི་མདོ་སྡེ་ལ་སོགས་པ་ལེགས་པར་གཏན་ལ་འབབས་པ་སྟེ། དེ་ལྟར་བྱང་ཆུབ་  
སེམས་དཔའ་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད་ན་བསྐྱོམ་པ་ལ་གཅིག་ཏུ་ངེས་པར་འབྱུར་རོ། །དེ་ལྟར་ཡིན་  
ན་ཐེ་ཚོམ་གྱི་འཕྲང་མོ་ཉུག་པའི་ཐག་ལ་འདུག་པ་ནི་ལམ་ཁ་བྲག་གི་མདོར་བྱིན་པའི་མི་  
ལྟར་གང་དུ་ཡང་གཅིག་ཏུ་ངེས་པར་མི་འབྱུར་རོ། མ་ཟད་དུས་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་ཉ་དང་ག་  
ལ་སོགས་པ་སྤང་ཞིང་མི་མཐུན་པ་མ་ཡིན་པ་དང་ཟས་ཚོད་ཟིན་པས་བཟའ་བ་བྱའོ། ། དེ་

ལྟར་ཞི་གནས་དང་ལྟག་མཐོང་གི་ཚོགས་སམ་ཆ་རྒྱུན་མཐའ་དག་བསགས་པས་  
བསྐྱོམ་པ་ལ་འཇུག་བར་བྱའོ།

### ཞི་ལྟག་བསྐྱོམ་ཚུལ།

ཞི་ལྟག་གཉིས་བསྐྱོམ་པའི་དུས་ན་ཐོག་མར་བྱ་བ་ཅི་ཡོད་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཡོངས་སུ་  
ཐོགས་པར་བྱས་ལ། བཤད་གཅི་བྱས་ནས་སྒྲིའི་ཆོར་མ་མེད་པ་ཡིད་དུ་འོང་བའི་ཕྱོགས་  
སུ་བདག་གིས་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་བྱང་ཚུབ་ཀྱི་སྡིང་པོ་ལ་ དགོད་པར་བྱའོ་སྟེ་དུ་  
བསམ་ཞིང་། འགྲོ་བ་མཐའ་དག་མདོན་པར་གདོན་པའི་བསམ་པ་ཅན་གྱིས་སྡིང་རྩེ་ཆེན་  
པོ་མདོན་དུ་བྱས་ལ། ཕྱོགས་བཅུ་ན་བཞུགས་པའི་ སངས་རྒྱལ་དང་བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་  
དཔའ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཡན་ལག་ལྡན་ཕྱག་བྱས་ནས། སངས་རྒྱལ་དང་བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་  
དཔའི་སྐྱེ་གཟུགས་རིས་མོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་མདུན་དུ་བཞག་གམ་གཞན་དུ་ཡང་རུང་སྟེ། དེ་  
དག་ལ་ཅི་ཅུས་གྱི་མཆོད་པ་དང་བསྟོད་པ་བྱས་ལ་རང་གི་སྤྲིག་པ་བཤགས་པས་འགྲོ་བ་  
མཐའ་དག་གི་བསོད་ནམས་ལ་རྩེས་སུ་ཡི་རང་བར་བྱས་ལ་སྟན་ཤིན་ཏུ་འཇམ་པོ་བདེ་བ་  
ལ་རྩེ་བཅུན་རྣམ་པར་སྤང་མཛད་ཀྱི་སྤྱིལ་མོ་ཁྱད་ལྟ་བུ་ལ། སྤྱིལ་མོ་ཁྱད་ཕྱེད་དུ་ཡང་  
རུང་སྟེ། མིག་ཏུ་ཅང་ཡང་མི་དགྱེ། ཏུ་ཅང་ཡང་མི་གཟུམ་པར་སྤྱིལ་མོ་མེར་གཏད་ཅིང་།  
ལུས་ཏུ་ཅང་ཡང་མི་སྐྱུག། ཏུ་ཅང་ཡང་མི་དགྱེ་བར་བྱང་པོར་བསྐྱངས་ལ་དྲན་པ་ནང་དུ་  
བཞག་སྟེ་འདུག་པར་བྱའོ། དེ་ནས་ཕྱག་པ་མཉམ་པར་བཞག་ལ་མགོ་མི་མཐོ་མི་དམའ་  
ཞིང་ཕྱོགས་གཅིག་ཏུ་མ་གཡོ་བར་བཞག་སྟེ་སྤྱོད་ནས་སྟེ་བའི་བར་བྱང་པོར་བཞག་གོ། སོ་  
དང་མཚུ་ཡང་ཐ་མལ་པར་བཞག་གོ། ལྗེ་ཡང་ཡ་སེའི་དུང་དུ་བཞག་གོ། དབུགས་ཕྱི་  
ནང་དུ་བྱུ་བ་ཡང་སྤྱོད་ཅན་དང་། རམས་པ་ཅན་དང་། དབུགས་མོད་པ་ཅན་དུ་མི་བཏང་གི་

ཅི་ནས་ཀྱང་མི་ཚོར་བར་དལ་བྱ་དལ་བྱས་ལྷན་གྱིས་སྐྱབ་པའི་རྩེ་ལ་གྱིས་དབྱགས་ནང་དུ་  
རྩབ་པ་དང་ ཕྱིར་འབྱུང་བ་ཏེ་དེ་ལྟར་བྱའོ།།

མཁན་ཆེན་ཀུན་བཟང་ཕྱིན་ལས།

# དགེ་སྤྲོད་མ་དཔལ་མའི་ལུགས་ཀྱི་སྤྱད་གནས།

༄༅། ། དུས་གསུམ་རྒྱལ་བ་ཀུན་གྱི་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཐུགས།

གཅིག་བསྟུས་སྤྱིང་ཐེའི་རང་གཟུགས་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

ཆེད་ལ་མ་བསྟེན་བྱང་རྒྱལ་མེད་པས་ན།

སྤྱིང་ནས་དད་པའི་མཆོད་སྤྱིན་འབུལ་ལ་སྟོ།

ཞེས་མཆོད་པར་བརྟེན་པའི་ལེགས་ཚིག་གི་མེ་ཏྲག་སྟོན་དུ་འཐོར་ནས་འདིར་གང་  
ཞིག་ལྷ་བ་ནི། བདག་ཅག་གི་སྟོན་པ་ཐབས་མཁས་ལ་ཐུགས་རྗེ་མཚུངས་པ་མེད་པ་དེ་  
ཉིད་ཀྱིས། དང་པོར་བྱང་རྒྱལ་མཆོག་ཏུ་ཐུགས་བསྐྱེད། བར་དུ་བསྐླལ་པ་གངས་མེད་  
གསུམ་དུ་ཚོགས་བསགས། མཐར་མཛོན་པར་རྫོགས་པར་སུས་ཏེ། སྤྱན་མེད་པའི་  
བདུད་རྩི་ལྷ་བུའི་ཚས་བརྟེས་པར་མཛད་ནས། རིམ་གྱིས་གདུལ་བྱ་རྟེན་ཅན་གསུམ་ལ་  
ཚས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་རིམ་པ་གསུམ་དུ་བསྐྱོར་བ་མཛད་པ་ དེ་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་མདོར་བསྟུ་  
ན། རྒྱ་པ་ལོ་ལྷ་ཕྱིན་པའི་ཐེག་པ་དང་། འབྲས་བུ་སྤྱགས་རྩོམ་ཐེག་པ་གཉིས་སུ་འདུལ།  
ད་ལན་སྐབས་སུ་བབས་པ་ནི། སྤྱགས་རྩོམ་ཐེག་པ་ཡིན་ཞིང་། དེ་ལ་འད་རྒྱུད་སྟེ་བཞི་སྟེ།  
བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད། སྟོད་པའི་རྒྱུད། རྣལ་འབྱོར་གྱི་རྒྱུད། རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྤྱན་མེད་པའི་རྒྱུད་དང་  
བཞི་ལས། སྐབས་སུ་བབས་པ་ནི། བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད་ཡིན་ལ། བྱ་བའི་རྒྱུད་ལ་འད་། སྤྱི་ལོ་རྟེན་  
དང་། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་རྟེན། རྩོམ་ཐེག་དང་གསུམ་ལས། སྐབས་འདིར་བྱ་བའི་  
རྒྱུད་སྤྱི་ལོ་རྟེན་ལས་བཙུངས་ཏེ།

འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་སྤྱད་ཐབས་དཔལ་མའི་ལུགས་ཀྱི་སྤྱད་གནས་  
ཀྱི་བསྟུང་བྱ་གསེ་སྤྱོད་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱུད་ཅེས་བྱ་བ་འདི་ ཇི་ལྟར་ཉམས་སུ་ལན་པའི་ཚུལ་  
མདོ་ཙམ་གྱི་བར་བྱ་སྟེ། དེ་འད་ཇི་སྟེད་དུ། རྒྱུད་པར་ཐེག་ཆེན་དགེ་བ་རྒྱབས་པོ་ཆེ། སྤྱོད་

བ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་དངོས་གཞི་དམིགས་པ་མིན།། རྗེས་ལ་བསྐྱོ་བས་ཡོངས་སུ་བློ་བ་ནི།།  
 ཐར་ལམ་སྐྱབ་པའི་གཅེས་པ་རྣམ་གསུམ་ཡིན།། ཞེས་དག་ཅུ་ཐབས་ཀྱིས་བློ་བ་སྐྱོར་  
 བ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་དམ་པ། དག་བ་རྒྱུན་གྱིས་མི་བཤིག་པ་དངོས་གཞི་དམིགས་མེད་དམ་  
 པ། དག་བ་གོང་དུ་སྤེལ་བར་བྱེད་པ་རྗེས་བསྐྱོ་བ་དམ་པ་སྟེ། དམ་པ་གསུམ་གྱི་ཅིས་བློ་  
 པའི་སྒོ་ནས་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་དགོས་པ་ཡིན་ལ། དེའང་ རྒྱལ་ཚབ་བྱམས་པ་མགོན་པོའི་  
 ཞལ་སྤྲ་ནས། སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པ་ནི་གཞན་དོན་ཕྱིར། ཡང་དག་ཏུ་གསུངས་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ་  
 འདོད།། ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། སྐྱབ་ཐབས་ཀྱི་གཞུང་ཆོག་གི་འགོར། སངས་ཆོས་དང་  
 ཆོགས་ཀྱི་མཆོག་རྣམས་ལ། བྱང་ཆུབ་བར་དུ་བདག་ནི་སྐྱབས་སུ་མཆི། བདག་གིས་  
 བསྐྱེན་སྐྱབ་བགྱིས་པའི་ཆོགས་རྣམས་ཀྱིས། འགོ་ལ་པན་ཕྱིར་སངས་འགྲུབ་པར་ཤོག།  
 ཅེས་ ལན་གསུམ་བརྗོད་པའི་སྐྱབས། མར་གྱུར་ནམ་མཁའི་མཐའ་དང་མཉམ་པའི་  
 སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་དོན་དུ། རྗོད་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་གོ་འཕང་འདི་ཐོབ་པར་བྱ།  
 དེའི་ཆེད་དུ་སྐྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱུང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པོ་ཚུལ་བཞིན་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པའི་  
 སྒོ་ནས་འཕགས་པ་བྱུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐྱབ་ཐབས་ཟབ་མོ་འདི་ལ་ བདག་འཛུགས་པར་  
 བགྱའོ་སྟུམ་པའི་ དོན་གཉིས་སམ་ཟུར་གཉིས་དང་ལྷན་པའི་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་སེམས་  
 བསྐྱེད་བཅོས་མ་མ་ཡིན་པ་ཞིག་སྒོམ་དགོས་པར་གལ་ཆེ། དེ་ལ་སྦྱར་བ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་  
 དམ་པ་ ཞེས་བཞག་པ་ཡིན་ལ།

སྐྱུང་གནས་སྐྱུང་བའི་གང་ཟག་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ཤོག་མར་སྒྲ་མ་དང་མཁན་པོ་སོགས་  
 ཀྱི་བྱང་ནས་སམ། ཡང་ན། རྟེན་གྱི་བྱང་གང་ཅུང་ཞིག་ནས་བསྐྱེན་གནས་ཀྱི་སྒྲིམ་པ་འམ།  
 གསོ་སྦྱང་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པའི་སྒྲིམ་པ་ཇི་ལྟར་སྒྲུང་བའི་ཚུལ་གཞུང་ཆོག་ནས་བཤད་པ་  
 ལྟར། རང་རྒྱུད་ལ་ལེན་ཞིང་མ་ཉམས་པར་བསྐྱུང་དགོས་པ་ཡིན་ལ། དེའང་ གསོ་སྦྱང་

དང་། བསྟེན་གནས་ཞེས་བཟོད་པའི་དོན་ཡང་། སློབ་དཔོན་དབྱིག་གཉེན་མཆོག་གིས།  
 དགེ་བ་མཐའ་དག་ཡང་དག་གསོ་ཕྱིར་དང་། སྤྲིག་པ་མཐའ་དག་ཡང་དག་སྦྱང་བ་སྟེ།  
 དགེ་གསོ་ཕྱིར་དང་སྤྲིག་པ་རྣམས་སྦྱང་ཕྱིར། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་གསོ་སྦྱང་ཞེས་  
 བཤད་དོ། ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། དགེ་བ་ལ་གསོ་ཞིང་སྤྲིག་སྤྱིབ་སྦྱང་བར་བྱེད་པས་ན་  
 གསོ་སྦྱང་དང་། བསྐྱང་བྱ་བྱངས་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་ཡོད་པས་ན་ གསོ་སྦྱང་ཡན་ལག་  
 བརྒྱད་པ་ཞེས་བཟོད་པ་དང་། དེ་བཞིན་དུ་བསྐྱང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་བསྐྱང་བའི་དགེ་བ་  
 ལ་བསྟེན་པའམ་བསྟེན་ཅིང་། རང་གིས་ཚུལ་བཞིན་ ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པའི་ཚུལ་གྱིས་  
 གནས་པས་ན་བསྟེན་གནས་ཞེས་བཞག་པ་ཡིན་ལ། བསྟེན་གནས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱང་བྱ་ཉམས་  
 སུ་ ལེན་པའི་གང་ཟག་རྣམས་ཀྱིས། ཐོག་མར་བསྟེན་གནས་ཀྱི་བསྐྱང་བྱ་གང་དང་གང་  
 ཡིན་ཤེས་དགོས་པར་གལ་ཆེ་སྟེ། སྒྲ་འབྱུར་རྩིང་མའི་སྒྲ་མ་དཔལ་སྤྱུལ་རིན་པོ་ཆའི་  
 ཞལ་ནས། བསྐྱང་བྱ་མི་ཤེས་སྤྱང་བར་རྫོམ་པ་མཚར། ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར།

བསྐྱང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་གང་དང་གང་ཡིན་ རང་གིས་མི་ཤེས་བཞིན་དུ་ སྤྱང་  
 གནས་བསྐྱང་བའི་མིང་ཅིམ་ཁྱེར་ན་ དེའང་མི་རུང་བས་ བསྐྱང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་ཀྱི་ངོ་  
 སྦྱོང་མདོ་ཅིམ་ཞུ་བར་བྱ་སྟེ། སློབ་དཔོན་ཁྱུ་སྤྱབ་མཆོག་གིས། འཆོ་དང་ཆོམ་རྒྱན་འཁྲིག་  
 པ་བརྟུན་དང་ནི། ཆང་དང་དུས་མིན་ཟས་ལ་ཆགས་པ་དང་། མལ་སྟན་མཐོ་ལ་དགའ་  
 དང་སྤྱད་གཤེད་དང་། གར་དང་ཐེང་བའི་ཁྱད་པར་རྣམས་སྦྱང་ཞིང་། དག་བཅོམ་ཚུལ་  
 ཁྲིམས་རྒྱུ་སྤྱེད་པ་ཡི། ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པོ་འདི་དག་དང་ལྡན་ན། གསོ་སྦྱང་འདོད་  
 སྦྱོང་ལྟ་ལུས་ཡིད་འོང་བ། སྤྲེལ་པ་བུད་མེད་དག་ལ་སྦྱུལ་བར་བགྱི། ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་  
 ལྟར། ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་བཞི་དང་། བག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གཅིག་བརྟུལ་  
 ཞུགས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གསུམ་སྟེ། དེའང་མིའི་འགོ་བ་ལྟ་བུ་ན་སྤྲོག་ཆགས་སུ་གཏོགས་

པའི་ཤིག་དང་སྒོ་མ་ཡན་ཆད་ཀྱི་ སྒོ་ག་མི་གཅོད་པ་དང་གཅིག་ གཞན་གྱིས་བདག་ཏུ་  
 བཟུང་བའི་རྒྱ་རྩལ་ཆེན་པོ་ལྟ་ཅི། ག་ན་ཁབ་སྐྱད་ཅོམ་དང་ཟས་ཁམ་གཅིག་ཀྱང་མ་བྱིན་  
 པ་མི་ལེན་པ་དང་གཉིས། ཐོ་མོ་གཉིས་ཕྱད་དེ་འཁྲིག་པའི་བདེ་བ་དོན་དུ་གཉེར་བ་ལྟ་ཅི།  
 ག་ན་ཆགས་སེམས་ཀྱིས་ཕན་ཚུན་བལྟ་བ་ཅོམ་ཡང་མི་བྱེད་པ་ མི་ཆོངས་པ་སྦྱོད་པ་སྦྱོང་  
 བ་དང་གསུམ། རང་ལ་ས་ལམ་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན་མེད་ཀྱང་ཡོད་པར་བརྟུན་པའི་མི་ཆོས་སྒྲ་  
 མའི་རྩན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྟ་ཅི། ག་ན་ཀྱ་རེ་དང་ཅེད་མོའི་ཕྱིར་ཡང་གཞན་ བསྐྱུ་བར་བྱེད་པའི་རྩན་  
 མི་སྦྱ་བ་སྟེ། བཞི་པོ་ལ་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་བཞི་འཕ། སྤྲིག་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་རྩ་བ་  
 ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན་རྩ་བ་བཞི་ཞེས་བྱའོ།། བག་ཡོད་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གཅིག་ནི་ཆང་སྤང་བ་  
 ཡིན་ཏེ། འདི་མ་སྤངས་ན་ རང་རྒྱུད་བག་མེད་པར་འབྱུང་ཞིང་ སྤང་དོར་གྱི་གནས་  
 ཐམས་ཅད་མི་ཤེས་ཤིང་རང་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་སྒོ་མ་པ་སྤངས་པ་ཡང་བརྟེན་ནས་ མི་དགོ་བ་ལ་  
 སྦྱོད་པས་སྒོ་མ་པ་བསྐྱུང་མི་རྣམས་ལ། དེས་ན་གོ་ནས་སོགས་འབྱུང་ཆང་དང་། ཤིང་  
 འབྲས་དང་མེ་ཏོག་སོགས་ གཞན་ཕབ་དང་སྐྱར་བ་བཅོས་པའི་ཆང་གི་རིགས་རྩ་ཅེ་ཅོམ་  
 ཡང་མི་བཏུང་བ་དང་། བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གསུམ་ནི། རང་ཉིད་སྒོ་མ་ལྟན་ཡིན་  
 པའི་བྲན་པ་གསོ་བའི་ཆེད་དུ་ཁྲིམ་ནང་གནས་པའི་སྦྱོད་པ་དེ་དག་བརྟུལ་ནས། རྒྱལ་  
 སྤུས་ཀྱི་མཛད་སྦྱོད་བཟང་པོའི་རྩལ་སུ་ཞུགས་པས་ན་བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་ཏེ། དེ་འདྲ་ག་བྱར་  
 དང་ཅོནྩན་སོགས་དྲི་ཞིམ་པོ་ལུས་ལ་བསྐྱབ། མེ་ཏོག་དང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་སྤང་  
 བས་བརྒྱན་པ། དེ་མ་ཡིན་པའི་རྩ་ཆ་དང་གདུག་བྱ་ལ་སོར་པ་སྦྱོང་བ་ནི་སྤང་སོགས་རྒྱན་  
 གྱི་རིཌ་གསུམ། ཅེད་མོ་དང་བཞད་གད་ཀྱི་ཆེད་དུ་ལུས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གཡོ་བའི་གར་བྱེད་  
 པ་དང་། དག་གི་གཏམ་སྒྲ་ཆོགས་སྦྱ་བ་དང་སྒྲ་ལེན་པ། བི་ཁང་སྤྱིང་བུ་དང་འབྱད་  
 དྲོལ་བྱེད་པ་རྣམས་སྦྱོང་བ་ནི་ གར་སོགས་ཅེད་མོའི་རིགས་གསུམ། དུས་མ་ཡིན་པ་



ཉི་མ་ཡོལ་ཕན་ཆད་སྒྲིམ་པའི་གདུང་བ་སེལ་བའི་ཚུ་དང་ཇ་སོགས་བདུང་བ་ལས།  
 གཞན་བཀྲས་པ་སེལ་བར་བྱེད་པའི་ཟན་དང་འབྲས་ཆན་ཤིང་ཏྲོག་ལ་སོགས་པའི་བཟང་  
 བཅའ་རྣམས་ འོངས་སྤྱོད་པར་མི་བྱ་བ་དང་། ལྷ་གང་ལས་ལྷ་གའི་ཁྱི་སྟན་མཐོན་པོ་  
 དང་ རིན་ཐང་ཆེན་པོ་ལ་མི་འདུག་པ་དང་། གར་སོགས་གསུམ་དང་བྱེད་སོགས་གསུམ་  
 གཅིག་ཏུ་བཅིས་པའི་བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག་གསུམ་སྟེ། མདོར་ན། སློབ་དཔོན་  
 དབྱིག་གཉེན་མཆོག་གིས། མདོན་པར་མཛོད་ལས། ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཡན་ལག་བག་ཡོད་  
 པའི། ཡན་ལག་བརྟུལ་ཞུགས་ཡན་ལག་སྟེ། བཞི་གཅིག་དེ་བཞིན་གསུམ་རིམ་  
 བཞིན། ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། ཅུ་བཞི་ཆད་དང་བཅས་པ་ལྟ་སྟོང་བ། དྲི་བྲི་ལ་བས་  
 སྟོང་བ། མལ་ཆེ་མཐོ་སྟོང་བ། གར་བྱེད་སྟོང་བ་སྟེ། ཐམས་ཅད་བསྟོམས་པས་སྦྱང་  
 གནས་ཀྱི་བསྟུང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྟུད་ཅེས་བྱའོ།

གོང་དུ་བསྟན་པའི་ བསྟུང་བྱ་ཡན་ལག་བརྟུད་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་དེ་ ཚུལ་བཞིན་  
 ཉམས་སུ་སྤངས་པའི་ཐོག་ནས་ དཔལ་མེད་ལུགས་ཀྱི་བྱགས་རྩེ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐུ་ཐབས་  
 དངོས་གཞི་ལ་འཇུག་པའི་སྐབས། སྤྱིར་སྒྲགས་གསར་མ་དང་རྩིང་མ་གང་གི་ལུགས་  
 ལྟར་ཡང་ ཡི་དམ་གྱི་ལྷ་སྐུ་པའི་སྐབས། བདག་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྐུ་ཚུལ། མདུན་  
 བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྐུ་ཚུལ། བདག་མདུན་དབྱེར་མེད་ཀྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྐུ་ཚུལ་བཤད་ཡོད་  
 ཅིང་། ལྷ་གའི་རྒྱུད་སྤེ་གོང་མ་རྣམས་སུ་ལྷ་ཅི། རྒྱུད་སྤེ་འོག་མ་བྱ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་སྐབས་  
 སུའང་། བདག་མདུན་དབྱེར་མེད་ཀྱི་སྐུ་ཚུལ་བཤད་ཡོད་དེ། དཔེར་ན། ཞབས་རྩུང་རིན་  
 པོ་ཆེ་མཆོག་གིས། སློལ་དཀར་ཡིད་བཞིན་འཁོར་ཁོའི་སྐུ་ཐབས་གསུངས་པའི་སྐབས།  
 བདག་མདུན་དབྱེར་མེད་ཀྱི་སྒོ་ནས་སྐུ་ཚུལ་རྒྱས་པར་བཤད་ཡོད་པ་བཞིན་ཡིན་པའི་  
 ཕྱིར།





གཟུངས་སྤྲུགས་བགྲངས་པའི་སྐབས་ཀྱི་བཞུས་དམིགས་ནི། རྒྱུང་གནས་རང་གི་  
གཞུང་ཚོག་ལས། སྟོ་བསྐྱའི་དམིགས་པ་འདི་ཉིད་གཙོ་བོར་བྱ། ཞེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར།  
འོད་ཟེར་སྟོ་བསྐྱའི་དམིགས་པ་དེ་གཙོ་བོར་བྱ་དགོས་ཏེ། དེའང་རང་ཉིད་ངོ་བོ་ ཏུས་  
གསུམ་སངས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་དམིགས་མེད་སྟིང་མེད་རང་གཟུགས་ཡིན་པ་ལ། རྣམ་པ་  
ལྷགས་མེ་ཆེན་པོ་ བཅུ་གཅིག་ཞལ་གྱི་སྐྱུར་གསལ་བའི་སྟིང་ཁར་ པད་ཁྲ་ལ་ཡེ་ཤེས་  
སེམས་དཔའ་མེ་བའི་སྐྱ་ཚོན་གང་བ་གཅིག་གི་ལྷགས་ཁར་པད་ཁྲ་འི་སྟིང་ཏུ་ཏྲིང་འཛིན་  
སེམས་དཔའ་ སྤྱི་ ཡིག་དཀར་པོ་ཞིག་གསལ། དེ་ལས་འོད་ཟེར་གྱི་སྐྱ་ལ་ལྷགས་མེ་  
ཆེན་པོའི་སྐྱ་བཞུགས་པ་དཔག་ཏུ་མེད་པ་འཕྲོས། ཁམས་གསུམ་གྱི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་  
ཅད་ཀྱི་སྤྲིག་སྤྲིབ་སྐྱུངས་སྟེ་སྐྱུན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་གོ་འཕང་ལ་བཀོད། འོད་ཟེར་ཚུར་  
འདུས་ཏེ་ལྷགས་ཀའི་ སྤྱི་ ཡིག་ལ་ཐིམ་པས་སྐྱ་གསུང་ལྷགས་ཀྱི་དངོས་སྤྱབ་ཐོབ་པར་  
བསམ།

ཡང་ན། སྐྱབ་ཐབས་ནོར་བུའི་སྟེང་བ་ལས། གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། རང་གི་སྟིང་ཁར་  
ཏྲིང་འཛིན་སེམས་དཔའ་ལ་སྤྲུགས་སྟེང་གཡོན་ཏུ་བཀོད་ལ་ གཟུངས་སྤྲུགས་གཡས་སུ་  
སྟོར་བ་ལས་འོད་ཟེར་འཕྲོས་ཏེ་དོན་གཉིས་བྱས་པར་བསམ་ཏེ་བསྒྲ། ཡང་ན། འཕགས་  
མཚོག་སྐྱུན་རས་གཟིགས་ དངོས་མིའི་གཟུགས་སུ་བྱོན་པ། སྤྱབ་ཆེན་ཐང་སྟོང་རྒྱལ་  
པོའི་གསུང་འགྲོ་དོན་མཁའ་ཁྲབ་མ་ལས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་བྱ་སྟེ། རང་འཕགས་པར་  
གསལ་བའི་སྐྱ་ལས་འོད་ཟེར་འཕྲོས་ཏེ། ཕྱིའི་སྟོང་གྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལ་ཐོག་པས་མ་དག་  
ལས་སྤང་གི་འབྲུལ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྐྱུངས་ཏེ། བདེ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་ཞིང་ཁམས་སུ་གྱུར། རང་  
བཅུད་ཀྱི་ སེམས་ཅན་ལ་ཐོག་པས་ སྐྱེ་འགྲོའི་ལུས་དག་ཡིད་གསུམ་ ཐམས་ཅད་  
འཕགས་པའི་སྐྱ་གསུང་ལྷགས་དང་དབྱེར་མེད་ཏུ་གྱུར་ནས། འཕགས་པའི་སྐྱ་སྤྱང་སྟོང་

འཇའ་ཚེན་ལྟ་བུའི་རོ་བོ། སྤྱི་ལུ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ འཕགས་པའི་གསུང་གྲགས་སྟོང་དབྱེར་  
མེད་ཀྱི་བདག་ཉིད། ཡིད་བློ་རྟོག་སེམས་ཀྱི་འབྲུལ་པ་དག་ནས་འཕགས་པའི་ཐུགས་  
རིག་སྟོང་དབྱེར་མེད་ཀྱི་དགོངས་པ་མཛོན་དུ་གྱུར་ནས། འཛིན་པ་དང་བྲལ་བའི་སྒོ་འདས་  
ཁྱབ་གདལ་ཆེན་པོའི་དང་ལ་འཛོག་བཞིན་བསྐྱེད་གོས་པ་ལགས་ཏེ་ཇི་སྐད་དུ། འཕགས་  
པའི་སྐྱེལ་ས་འོད་ཟེར་འཕྱོས།། མ་དག་ལས་སྤང་འབྲུལ་ཤེས་སྤངས།། ཕྱི་སྟོད་བདེ་བ་  
ཅན་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།། ནང་བཅུད་སྦྱེ་འགྲོའི་ལུས་དག་སེམས།། སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་སྐྱེ་  
གསུང་ཐུགས།། སྤང་གྲགས་རིག་སྟོང་དབྱེར་མེད་གྱུར།། ཞེས་གསལ་ལོར་གསུངས་  
ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར། མདོར་བསྟན་ན། མཉམ་མེད་སྤྲུལ་པོ་པ་མཚོག་གིས། མ་ཡེངས་པ་ནི་  
སངས་རྒྱུས་ཀྱན་གྱི་ལམ།། མ་ཡེངས་པ་ནི་དགེ་བའི་བཤེས་དང་གཉེན།། ཞེས་གསུངས་  
པ་བཞིན་གནད་དགོས་པར་གལ་ཆེད།། དེ་རྣམས་ནི་དམ་པ་གསུམ་ལས་དགེ་བ་རྒྱུན་  
གྲིས་མི་གཤིག་པ་དངོས་གཞི་དམིགས་མེད་དམ་པའི་རྩལ་མདོ་ཅམ་མོ།།

གསུམ་པ་དགེ་རྩ་མི་ཟད་ཅིང་གོང་ནས་གོང་དུ་སྤེལ་བར་བྱེད་པ་རྗེས་བསྟོར་དམ་  
པའི་རྩལ་ནི། སྤྱང་གནས་ཀྱི་གཞུང་ཚོག་གི་སྐབས། དགེ་བ་འདི་ཡིས་ལྷུང་དུ་བདག་  
ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ་འབྱུང་གྱུར་ནས། འགོ་བ་གཅིག་ཀྱང་མ་ལུས་པ།། དེ་ཡི་ས་ལ་འགོད་  
པར་ཤོག། ཅེས་ཇི་སྐད་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། བསྐྱེད་བས་ཟིན་པའི་དགེ་རྩ་ཐམས་ཅད་བསྟོར་  
བས་ཟིན་པར་བྱ་དགོས་སོ།། སྤྱིར་བསྟོར་བ་གལ་ཆེ་བའི་རྩལ་ནི། འབྲི་གུང་སྐྱོབ་པ་རིན་པོ་  
ཆེའི་ཞལ་སྤྲུ་ནས། ཚོགས་གཉིས་ཀྱི་ཡིད་བཞིན་མོར་བུ་ལ།། སྤྱོད་ལམ་གྲིས་བྱི་དོར་མ་  
བྱས་ན།། དགོས་འདོད་ཀྱི་འབྲས་བུ་མི་འབྱུང་བས།། རྒྱ་བསྟོར་བ་འདི་ལ་ནན་ཏན་མཛོད།།  
ཅེས་དང་། རྗེ་མི་ལའི་ཞལ་ནས། སངས་མཉམ་པར་རྒྱ་བའི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ཡོད།། རྟེན་  
འབྲེལ་གྱི་སྦྱིང་པོ་བསྟོར་བ་ཡིན། ཞེས་གསལ་ལོར་གསུངས་ཡོད། དགེ་རྩ་མ་བསྟོར་ན་སྐྱོན་

ཡོད་དེ། མ་བསྐྱེས་པ་དང་ལོག་པར་བསྐྱེས། གཞན་ལ་བསྐྱེས་དང་འབྱོར་པ་བསྐྱེད།  
 དགོ་བ་འཛིན་པའི་རྒྱ་བཞི་ཡིན། ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཕྱིར། དགོ་ཙ་གཞན་དོན་དུ་བསྐྱེས་  
 ན་པན་ཡོན་ཡོད་དེ། སྒྲོ་བློས་མི་ཟད་པའི་མདོ་ལས། ཇི་ལྟར་ཆུ་ཐིམ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེ་ནང་  
 ལྷུང་། རྒྱ་མཚོ་མ་སྐྱེས་བར་དུ་དེ་མི་ཟད། དེ་བཞིན་བྱང་ཆུབ་ ཡོངས་བསྐྱེས་དགོ་བ་  
 ཡང་། བྱང་ཆུབ་མ་ཐོབ་བར་དུ་དེ་མི་ཟད། ཅེས་གསུངས་ཡོད་པའི་ཕྱིར། དགོ་ཙ་གཞན་  
 དོན་དུ་ བསྐྱེ་བའི་ཚུལ་ཡང་ བསྐྱེ་བྱ། བསྐྱེ་བྱེད། བསྐྱེ་བ་སྟེ། གསུམ་ཀ་སྤང་ལ་རང་  
 བཞིན་གྱིས་མ་སྐྱབ་པར་འཁོར་གསུམ་ དམིགས་པ་མེད་པའི་ཚུལ་གྱིས་བསྐྱེ་དགོས་པ་  
 དང་། ཡང་ན་ འཇམ་དཔལ་དཔལ་འབོས་ཇི་ལྟར་མཆེན་པ་དང་། ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ་དེ་ཡང་  
 དེ་བཞིན་ཏེ། དེ་དག་ཀུན་གྱི་རྩེས་སུ་བདག་སྟོབ་ཅིང་། དགོ་བ་དེ་དག་ཐམས་ཅད་རབ་  
 ཏུ་བསྐྱོ། ཞེས་བཟང་སྟོད་སྟོན་ལས་ལས་བྱུང་བ་ལྟར། བསྐྱེ་བ་རྩེས་མཐུན་པ་བྱ་དགོས་  
 སོ། ། གང་ལྟར་ཡང་རང་གིས་དགོ་ཙ་ཆེ་འབྲིང་ཆུང་གསུམ་གང་བསྐྱབས་ཀྱང་བསྐྱེ་ཚུལ་  
 གཉིས་ལས་གང་རུང་ཞིག་གིས་རྩིས་ཟིན་དགོས་པ་ནི་ཤིན་ཏུ་གཤེད་ཆེ་བ་ལགས་སོ། ། དེ་  
 ལྟར་ བོད་དུ་བསྐྱེན་པའི་ འཕགས་པ་སྐྱེན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱབ་ཐབས་ དཔལ་མོའི་  
 ལུགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེད་གནས་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པོ་ དམ་པ་གསུམ་གྱི་རྩིས་ཟིན་པའི་ཐོག་ནས་  
 རང་གི་ཆེ་ལུས་གཅིག་ལ་ཉམས་ལེན་གྱི་གནད་དུ་འབྲིལ་ཏེ། རང་གི་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་ཐུབ་  
 ན་པན་ཡོན་བསམ་གྱིས་མི་ཐུབ་པར་ཡོད་པ་ནི་སྟོས་ཅི་དགོས། ཐན་ཉིན་ཞག་སྐྱག་ཅིག་  
 གི་རིང་ལ་སྐྱེད་གནས་ཆ་གཅིག་ཅུམ་སྤང་ནའང་ རན་འགྲོའི་སྒྲོ་སྟོང་ཅིང་། གནས་  
 སྐབས་མཐོ་རིས་ལྟ་དང་མིའི་ལུས་ཉིན་ ལྟོན་བདུན་ལྟན་གྱི་དཔལ་ཕུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པའི་  
 བདེ་བ་ཉམས་སུ་སྦྱང་ཞིང་། མཐར་ཐུག་ནས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་མཆེན་པའི་གོ་འཕང་ཐོབ་སྟེ།  
 བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ང་དང་ང་འདྲ་བ་ཞིག་འོང་བར་འགྱུར་རོ། ། ཞེས་བརྒྱ་བྱིན་གྱིས་ཁྱས་



སྒྲིང་སྒྲོབས་དང་བཙོན་འགྲུས། དཀའ་ཐུབ་དྲག་པོའི་སྒྲོ་ནས་སྐྱ་བ་བདུན་གྱི་རིང་སྐྱབ་པ་  
མཛད་པས་ ཡི་དམ་སྤྲུགས་མེ་ཆེན་པོ་བཅུ་གཅིག་ཞལ་གྱིས་ཞལ་གཟིགས། ལིང་ཁར་  
ཤིའི་གཙུག་ལག་ ཁང་འདིའང་ ཞལ་དགེ་སྤྲོད་མ་དཔལ་མོའི་ཕྱོགས་སུ་བསྐྱར་བས་  
སྤར་ལྷ་ཁང་གི་མཚན་ལིང་ཁར་ཤིའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་དང་། བཅུ་གཅིག་ཞལ་གྱི་ལྷ་  
ཁང་ཟེར་བྱ་བ་ཡིན་ཀྱང་། དུས་དེ་ནས་བཟུང་རྒྱབ་མདུན་བཟེས་པའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་  
ཟེར་མཚན་ཡོངས་གྲགས་སོང་འདུག དེར་མ་ཟད་འཕགས་པའི་སྤྲུགས་མེ་དང་། དགེ་  
སྤྲོད་མ་རང་གི་སྒྲིང་སྒྲོབས་དང་བཙོན་འགྲུས། བསྐྱས་བཟོད་སྤྱད་བར་གནས་པའི་བྱིན་  
རྒྱལས་བཅས། རྒྱ་རྒྱུན་ཕུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པའི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་ལས་དགེ་སྤྲོད་མ་དཔལ་མོའང་  
ཕུང་པོ་འཇའ་ལུས་གྲུབ་སྟེ་ རྒྱ་ཚོ་འདི་ཉིད་ལ་དག་པ་མཁའ་སྤྱོད་གྱི་ཞིང་ཁམས་སུ་བྱོན་  
པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་དང་བཅས་པ་ནི་ གཙོ་བོ་སྤྱད་གནས་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པའི་ཕན་ཡོན་ལགས་  
སོ།།

སྤར་སྒྲོན་པ། དེ་ལྟར་ཅུང་ཟད་བྱིས་པའི་རྣམ་དཀར་གྱིས། །བདག་དང་མཐའ་  
ཡས་སེམས་ཅན་མ་ལུས་པ། །རིགས་རྩྭག་འཁོར་བའི་འཆིང་བ་ཀྱན་བཅད་ནས། །སྤྱན་  
རས་གཟིགས་མགོན་དེ་དང་མཚུངས་པར་ཤོག། དགེ་ལོ། །

བཙུན་མ་ ཡེ་ཤེས་དཔལ་སྒྲོན།



## **Authors**

### **Dasho Tshering Tobgay**

Dasho Tshering Tobgay was the Prime Minister of Bhutan from July 2013 to August 2018 and the leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He was the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly from March 2008 to April 2013. He attended secondary schooling at Dr. Graham's Homes School in Kalimpong, India, and received his bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh's Swanson School of Engineering in 1990. He completed his master's degree in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2004. His Excellency was a civil servant before joining politics, starting his career with the Technical and Vocational Education Section (TVES) of the Education Division in Bhutan in 1991. After working with the TVES from 1991 to 1999, His Excellency established and led the National Technical Training Authority (NTTA) from 1999 to 2003. His Excellency also served from 2003 to 2007 in the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources as the director of the Human Resources Department.

### **Jaideep Sarkar**

Jaideep Sarkar is the current Ambassador of India to Bhutan with effect from 2016. Before taking over as Ambassador of India to Bhutan, Mr. Sarkar was India's Ambassador to Israel from October 2012 to January 2016. He joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1987 soon after completing a Bachelors in Engineering from the prestigious

Indian Institute of Technology and a Masters in Business Administration from the Indian Institute of Management. He served in Indian Missions in Tokyo, Seoul and Bangladesh and held both political and economic portfolios. He worked in the Ministry of Finance from 1992-1996 dealing with economic relations with EU member states. He also served as a Director in the Ministry of External Affairs where his work involved managing India's relations with some of its neighbours including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. In 2004, Mr. Sarkar joined the Prime Minister's Office as a Director and dealt with a number of Ministries including those of External Affairs, Finance and Planning, among others. In 2006, he was selected to serve as Private Secretary to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. In 2012, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur.

### **Leytsog Lopen Sangay Dorji**

H.E. Sangay Dorji joined the Central Monastic Body at Tashichodzong at the age of twelve. He studied Buddhist Philosophy under the Late H.E. Dralop Kinley Gyeltshen, H.H. the 68<sup>th</sup> Je Khenpo, Tenzin Dendup Rinpoche, and the 70<sup>th</sup> Je Khenpo, Trulku Jigme Choedra. He was appointed as the principal of Dodedra Buddhist college (Shedra), the Principal of Tango Buddhist University and, on 13 November 2014, H.H. the Je Khenpo appointed Lopen Sangay Dorji as the Leytshog Lopen (Karma Ācārya).

### **Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche**

Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche is the Chairman of the Drikung Kagyu Institute, and the Supreme Head of the Drikung Kagyu Lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He is the 37<sup>th</sup> throne holder and the 7<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of the Chetsang Rinpoche. His Holiness resides in Jangchub Ling monastery in Dehradun, North India, where he established the Drikung

Kagyu Institute in the year 1985. Under His Holiness are Jangchubling Monastery, Samtenling Nunnery, Songtsen Library, Kagyu College and over hundred of monasteries in Tibet, India, and Nepal. There are over 150 Drikung Kagyu lineage centers around the world.

### **Khenchen Kuenzang Thinley**

Khenchhen Kunzang Thrinley joined the Central Monastic Body at the age of eight and completed the primary level studies of Gar thik Yang sum and other requisite studies at the age of sixteen. He then studied at Chagri and later at Phajoding monastery under Late Dralop Kheywang Legshed Gyatsho, Vajra Acharya Nawang Tenzin, Yanglop Kuenley and Dralop Sangay Dorji. He then joined Tago Buddhist College and studied under Kheywang Legshed Gyatsho, Yonten Lopen Tandin Tshewang and Khenpo Khadro and graduated with Acharya Degree. From the age of twenty five till thirty one, he was appointed as a faculty member at Tago, and later joined the three years retreat at Chagri Meditation Center under the guidance of H.H. Kyabje Thrizur Rinpoche Tenzin Dondup. Upon completion, he was the retreat master at Tago Yoedselgang for a year and later from the age of 36-38 was appointed as the principal of Sangkhor Thorim Shedra for three years. After that he was again appointed as the Acting Principal of Legjung Shedra for two more years and then was appointed as the Khenpo of Sangchen Dorji Lhundup nunnery for four years. Later at the age of 45, was appointed as the Khenchhen of Tago Dorden Tashithang Buddhist University and is still the presiding Khenchhen.

### **Yeshey Pelden**

Ani Yeshey Pelden is a nun at Sangchen Dorji Lhendup Nunnery, Punakha, Bhutan.

## Ian Baker

Ian Baker is an anthropologist, art curator, and cultural historian and the author of seven books on Tibetan art history, traditional medicine, sacred geography, and Buddhist practice, including *The Heart of the World: A Journey to the Last Secret Place* (Penguin Press 2004) and *Tibetan Yoga: Secrets from the Source* (Thames & Hudson, forthcoming 2019). His published academic articles include 'Embodying Enlightenment: Physical Culture in Dzogchen as revealed in Tibet's Lukhang Murals' (*Asian Medicine* 7 (2012): 225–264). His current research interests concern bodymind disciplines in Tantric Buddhism and their adaptations across cultures and traditions. He was the lead curator of the Wellcome Trust's 2015-2016 exhibition 'Tibet's Secret Temple: Body, Mind and Meditation in Tantric Buddhism,' and is currently affiliated with the Centre for the Social History of Health and Health Care (CSHHH) at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland.

## Seiji Kumagai

Seiji Kumagai studied Buddhist philosophy and has received his Ph.D. in 2009 from Kyoto University. He became an assistant professor at Hakubi Center of Kyoto University in 2011, an associate professor at Kokoro Research Center of Kyoto University in 2012, and the divisional director of Uehiro Research Division of the research center in 2017. His field of research is Buddhist philosophy (Madhyamaka and Abhidharma) in India, Tibet and Bhutan, and also that of Bon religion. He is author of *The Two Truths in Bon* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2011) and several articles on the philosophy of Indian and Himalayan Buddhism and that of Bon religion. He edited several books such as *Bhutanese Buddhism and Its Culture*

(Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2014) and *Buddhism, Culture and Society in Bhutan* (Vajra Publications, 2017).

### **Khin Zaw**

Khin Zaw is a medical doctor and pathologist, and the published author of 41 books in the Burmese language, including novels, short stories, biographies, poetry and essays, as well as works on folklore, history, ethics, with the nom de plume Naing Zaw. In 1995, he established his own Srivatsa (Thiriwitsa) Publications in Yangon. He currently holds a position in the Faculty of International Medical School, Management & Science University, Shah Alam, Malaysia. His research interests encompass painting and other creative arts as well as history and archeology connected to Vajrayāna Buddhism.

### **Sonam Wangmo & Karma Tashi Choedron**

Tenzin Dadon (Sonam Wangmo), is a Bhutanese nun from Zhemgang. She received her śrāmaṇerikā (Tib. getsulma) ordination from H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama in Dharamsala in 1999. Tenzin spent 13 years (1993-2006) at Jamyang Choling Institute for Buddhist Dialectics (a non-sectarian nunnery institute) in Gharoh, Himachal Pradesh, India. She holds M.A. in Buddhist Studies from Delhi University in 2009 and the International Buddhist College (IBC), Thailand in 2016. In 2017, She completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Gender and Religion at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur focusing her anthropological thesis on nuns in Bhutan. Tsunma Tenzin is currently a Sangha Advisor to the Vajrayāna Buddhist Council of Malaysia (VBCM) since 2017.

Karma Tashi Choedron is a śrāmaṇerikā (Tib: getsulma), ordained by Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche in 2009. She is trained as a civil engineer and holds a Ph.D. in Environment and Resource Studies from Mahidol

University, Thailand. She did M.A. in Buddhist Studies from the International Buddhist College (IBC) in 2016. Tsunma is now pursuing a systematic Buddhist philosophy course in the Nalanda tradition under the auspices of Tibet House, Delhi, on a part-time basis. Tsunma served as a part-time lecturer in Development Studies at the University of Nottingham, Kuala Lumpur, and she is currently a Sangha advisor to the Vajrayāna Buddhist Council of Malaysia (VBCM) since 2013 and Religious Advisor to the Malaysian Buddhist Consultative Council (MBCC) since 2016.

Both authors have received the Outstanding Woman in Buddhism Award in recognition of their contributions to Buddhism and women by the Association for the Promotion of Status of Women in Thailand. They have co-authored two books titled, 'I Can Be Enlightened Too' and 'Two Gurus One Message' pending publication in the near future.

### **Georgios T. Halkias**

Georgios T. Halkias is Assistant Professor of Buddhist Studies and Undergraduate Programme Director at the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong. He obtained his D.Phil in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies in 2006 at the University of Oxford. His research focuses on Vajrayāna Buddhism in Tibet, Nepal and India, in particular Pure Land Buddhism, the encounters between Hellenism and Buddhism in North-West India, and the dissemination of Buddhist literature. He has published several articles on these topics, including a book on Tibetan Pure Land Buddhism entitled *Luminous Bliss: a Religious History of Pure Land Literature in Tibet*.

### **William C. Bushell**

William C. Bushell has for decades been researching advanced meditational and yogic practices, and their cultural variations, around the world as a biophysical

anthropologist affiliated with Columbia, Harvard, and MIT, including as a Fulbright Scholar. His approach integrates contemporary “Western” (actually, better termed “Cosmopolitan”) scientific disciplines, including biology, neuroscience, physics, and mathematics, and he collaborates with leading scientists in these fields, including Nobel Prize winners. Over the past two decades one of his major focuses has been on Vajrayāna practice, especially in advanced, *adept* practitioners. He has co-directed several integrative science conferences on these subjects with HH the Dalai Lama and leading scientists, including an historic one which led to the publication of *Longevity, Regeneration, and Optimal Health: Integrating Eastern and Western Perspectives* (Bushell et al., 2009). An earlier version of his model of Vajrayāna yogic perception was presented in the last chapter of this volume, and the enhanced version presented at the present Summit will provide part of the basis for an upcoming, international conference and exhibition.

### **Suzanne Cochrane**

Suzanne Cochrane is an adjunct fellow at the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, Western Sydney University, and a sessional teacher and Master’s student in Buddhist Studies at Nan Tien Institute, in Wollongong, Australia. Sue is a practitioner of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

### **Tamara Ditrich**

Tamara Ditrich is Head of Applied Buddhist Studies at Nan Tien Institute and researcher at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her disciplinary background is in Buddhist Studies, Sanskrit language and Vedic philology. She has had over thirty years of teaching and research experiences at various universities in Europe and Australia and over forty years of experience in Buddhist meditation. Her

current research interests are primarily in Buddhist philosophy (Abhidharma texts) and meditation (especially applied mindfulness in contemporary education). She has a wide publication record; her recent publications include *Mindfulness and Education: research and practice* (2017); “The Conceptualisation and Practice of Mindfulness: Buddhist and Secular Perspectives” (2017); “Interpretations of the Terms *ajjhāṭṭam* and *bhaddha*: from the Pali *Nikayas* to the *Abhidhamma*” (2016); “Buddhism between Asia and Europe” (2016).

### **Asa Hershoff**

Asa Hershoff (Lama Jinpa) completed a traditional three-year retreat in 1989 under the auspices of His Eminence Kalu Rinpoche, later obtaining ordination as a Ngakpa with Kunzang Dechen Lingpa in Arunachal Pradesh. Specializing in the practice of Chod, he has taught and translated many rare Tibetan texts related to this lineage. As a Naturopathic Physician and practicing Homeopath for over 40 years, he has applied and integrated the Five Element system into a deeply transformative methodology for therapy, self-healing, and spiritual growth. He is the author of three books published by Penguin/Random House with two additional forthcoming books on Five Element Healing and the Pentad Mind. He lectures on related topics throughout the United States, Canada, and Asia.

### **Borut Škodlar**

Borut Škodlar is Head of the Center for Mental Health and Unity for Psychotherapy at the University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana and Associate Professor of psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. His clinical and academic interests center on phenomenological psychopathology and psychotherapy of psychotic states and



disorders (schizophrenia), phenomenological analyses of emotional and existential processes, and interconnections between spiritual activities – such as meditation, mindfulness, yoga – and mental disorders, particularly in regard to interconnections between psychotic and mystical states. His recent publications include: *Phenomenological Analysis of Reasons for Suicide in Schizophrenia Patients* (Ph.D thesis, University of Ljubljana, 2008); 'Self-Disorder and Subjective Dimensions of Suicidality in Schizophrenia' (*Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 2010); 'Applications of Mindfulness in Psychotherapy – Contemporary Dilemmas' (*Asian Studies*, 2016); 'EAW: Examination of Anomalous World Experience' (*Psychopathology*, 2017) and 'Multiple Orientations within the Worldviews in Psychosis and Mysticism: Relevance for Psychotherapy' (*Discipline filosofiche*, 2017).

### **Barbara Morrison & Kaiji Yamamoto**

Barbara Morrison holds a Master's Degree in Japanese Literature from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of North Dakota. She currently teaches Gender and Culture Studies as an Associate Professor in the International Department at Utsunomiya University in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. She received tokudo (ordination) in Shingon Buddhism in 2002 at Yochi-in temple on Mt. Koya and continues to explore the ways in which writing, thinking, art and Shingon/Vajrayāna practice can combine to support a life of joy and purpose.

Kaiji Yamamoto is a Shingon priest at the Yochi-in Temple, Mt. Koya, Japan.

### **Maria Sharapan**

Maria Sharapan is a doctoral student in Intercultural Communication at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her interdisciplinary dissertation deals with the adoption of

Tibetan Buddhism among Westerners. Maria's research interests include digital religion, teacher-student relations in Vajrayāna, and Buddhist postmodernism. Being a researcher as well as a practitioner, she also facilitates a Tibetan Buddhist meditation group in Finland

### **Loka Ng Sai Kai**

Loka Ng Sai Kai has been an advocate for research on the development and contributions of Buddhism in Malaysia. He has been encouraging the study and understanding of the beginning of Buddhism in Bujang Valley, Peninsular Malaysia, since the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. He is currently the president of Selangor Buddhist Development Council, which represents the needs of the Buddhist community in a multi-religious state. He also chairs the Malaysia Buddhist Festival, a platform for unity that links the various Buddhist traditions in Malaysia.

### **Maria Kozhevnikov & Elizabeth McDougal**

Maria Kozhevnikov's research focuses on examining neural and cognitive mechanisms underlying individual differences in visual imagery and the ways in which individual differences in visual-spatial imagery affect more complex activities, such as learning and problem solving in mathematics, science and art. In particular, her current research examines neurocognitive processes underlying Vajrayāna meditative practices and how these differ from other meditative traditions (e.g., Theravada). This research has involved more than ten years of traveling and conducting field studies in Nepal, India, and Tibet. She received her Ph.D from Technion (Israel) jointly with University of California Santa Barbara. In 2005-2007, she served as a Program Director for the Science of Learning Centers Program at the U.S. National Science Foundation. Her current primary appointment is as an Associate

Professor of Psychology at the National University of Singapore. Since 2007, she also holds an appointment as a Visiting Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School.

Elizabeth McDougal (Ani Tenzin Chozom) lived as a Tibetan Buddhist nun in India for fifteen years at Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery, Tsogyal Shedrub Ling Nunnery, and at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. Since 2006 she has been working for Gebchak Gonpa in Nangchen, Eastern Tibet, as the Nunnery's English secretary and translator. Fascinated by the Nunnery's position as a vestige of traditional yogic culture in a region where the ancient has quickly transformed into the modern, Elizabeth is currently pursuing research on the topic at the University of Sydney.