



NALANDA INSTITUTE Contemplative Psychotherapy

THE VICTORS' HIGHWAY: A ROOT TEXT ON THE GREAT SEAL IN THE GEM-LIKE GANDEN/KAGYU TRADITION

by the "First" Panchen Lama, Lozang Chokyi Gyaltsan (1570-1662),
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Invocation

NAMO MAHAMUDRAYA! HAIL THE GREAT SEAL!

With gratitude I honor my peerless mentor,
A paragon of masters who nakedly revealed
Ineffable mind's diamond realm, inseparable
From the great seal, pervasive nature of all!
I write this to introduce the great seal lineage
Of master Dharmavajra and his heirs,
The Ganden/Kagyu tradition of instruction,
Quintessence of all teachings, public and private.
My comments cover three (aspects of practice):
Preliminary (points), actual (practice), and concluding (points).

Preliminaries

Preparing for Practice

First, you must take refuge and conceive the spirit
In earnest, not by mere rote or lip-service,
Since these are the entryway and mainstay
Of the teaching and universal vehicle.
Next, since seeing the reality of the mind
Requires amassing virtues and purifying obscurations,
You must prepare with at least a hundred thousand
Repetitions of the hero altruist's purifying formula,
And as many hundreds of salutations as possible
[Following] The Confession of Downfalls.
Then, pray from the heart to your root mentor,
[Viewed as] inseparable from the enlightened of all ages.

Public and Private Practice

Although there are many ways of explaining
The actuality of the great seal,
They are of two sorts, public and private.
In the latter, the great bliss and clear light

Born of arts like tapping the vital points
Within the diamond body itself
Is the great seal of masters Saraha and Nagarjuna,
Quintessence of the optimal integral process
Taught in the (Seven) Adepts' (Texts) and (Three) Essence Commentaries.
The former is the method of voidness meditation
Openly taught by the three Transcendent Wisdom Scriptures;
"There is no path of liberation other than this,"
So proclaimed the most noble Nagarjuna.
Here, I will present the (public) great seal
According to (noble Nagarjuna's) intention,
And the methods of confronting the mind
Formulated by lineage masters (of India and Tibet).

Combining Meditation and View
Although there are many different technical terms
By which (the great seal) is taught, including "natural communion,"
"The amulet," "fivefold endowment," "one taste,"
"Four syllables," "pacification," "cutting,"
"Great perfection sphere" and "central view,"
The spiritually experienced practitioner
Who masters the definitive meaning of philosophies and texts,
Critically determines that they have one intent.
Therefore, of the two procedures,
Pursuit of meditation grounded in insight,
And pursuit of insight grounded in meditation,
Here, we will follow the latter.

Actual Practice

Meditation-Based Practice

On a comfortable meditation seat,
Body in the seven-pointed posture,
Purge the breath in nine-round cycles.
Thoroughly clear your primal awareness,
And with a purely positive state of mind,
First take refuge and conceive the spirit,
Then practice the deep path of mentor-bonding,
Making hundreds of urgent prayers,
And dissolve the mentor into yourself.

Quiescence Focused on Mind

In that altered state of perception,
Stay absorbed a while without vacillation,
Not making any kind of production
Out of constructs like hope and fear.
Let nothing block your attention
As when falling asleep or into trance;

Tether your mind with unwavering mindfulness,
And keep vigil with rational awareness.
Finely focused, look nakedly
At the actual translucency of consciousness;
Whatever constructs arise
Should be recognized just as they are.
Or else, like your opponent in a duel,
Instantly shred whatever constructs arise,
And with the last cut, when you rest,
Gently relax without losing mindfulness.
“Gently relax your tight focus,
The settled state of mind is there!”
So Saraha said, and likewise, elsewhere,
“The same mind that is caught in a tangle,
Once relaxed, without doubt frees itself!”
So, as he said, relax without wavering.

The Conventional Nature of Mind
Once you see the essence of constructs that arise
They automatically vanish and clear void dawns;
Likewise, when you analyze that settled mind,
Its unobstructed void is crystal clear.
In what is known as “seeing motion merge with rest,”
Whatever constructs arise are recognized
As unobstructed (mind) waves, then settle in their actuality
Analogous to a bird on a vessel at sea:
“Just as a bird that flies from a ship
After circling all points must return...”
Though precisely such cultivation,
One is absorbed in the nature (of mind),
An unobscured lucid clarity,
Not given with any material form at all—
A space-like sheer void
Letting anything whatever vividly dawn.
While a special insight directly perceives
The true nature of mind as such,
Nothing can be shown or grasped as “this,”
Whatever dawns, it rests naturally, without grasping.
The great Himalayan meditators of today
Proclaim more or less in unison
That this is the prime directive which grants
Attainment of the Buddha’s illumination.
Be that as it may, I, Chokyi Gyalsten,
Pronounce this method as (no more than)
A technique of remarkable effectiveness
For diligent beginners to gain mental stability
And to recognize the superficial mind.

Discerning the Ultimate Nature of Mind

As for the method of precisely identifying
 The ultimate reality of mind,
 I offer the personal advice of my root mentor,
 Who cleared the deluded gloom from my mind,
 And who, in the guise of a patch-robed monk,
 Embodied all the intuitions of the enlightened!
 From within the prior state of equipoise,
 Like a minnow darting within still, clear waters,
 The subtle consciousness critically examines
 The nature of the person of the meditator.
 You should investigate it following the formulation
 Of the protector, noble Nagarjuna,
 “Since the person is not solid, not liquid,
 Not gas, not energy, not space,
 Nor consciousness, nor their sum,
 Nor apart from them, what person is there?
 As the person has no ultimate reality,
 Because it is composed of sixfold elements,
 So each of its elements has no ultimate reality,
 Because each in turn is also composite.”
 Spacious Equipoise Wisdom
 When you cannot discover even a subatomic particle
 Of equipoise or someone equipoised,
 Then cultivate space-like equipoise,
 With unwavering single-pointedness.
 Or, in an equipoised state, (examine) the mind:
 Pure openness with no static material,
 (Where) diversity dawns and evolves unobscured;
 An incessant stream of clarifying awareness
 That engages (objects) without interruption.
 Though it seems independent as an object
 Of (mental) perception, (when examined)
 By reasons and references like Santideva’s,
 “So-called ‘masses,’ ‘continua’ and such
 Are as artificial as garlands and armies,”
 The way it appears is unfounded [on analysis];
 So rest single-pointedly in its [true] nature.

Magical Aftermath Wisdom
 In short, my spiritual guide,
 Whose omniscience agrees with reality,
 Sangyay Yeshe proclaimed, “When, whatever comes,
 You are fully aware of objects as mental constructs,
 The sphere of ultimate truth dawns without relying on anything else,
 So focus single-pointedly poised
 To live the dawn of natural awareness—aha!”
 And likewise, (Pa) Dampa (Sangyay) said,
 “Whirl the lance of natural awareness in the void,
 And see without block or limit, you of Dingri!”

Such statements have one intention.

Concluding Points

Dedication

In conclusion, whatever virtues come
From practicing the great seal,
Along with the ocean of worth amassed throughout time,
Dedicate to unexcelled perfect enlightenment!

Prayer for Realizing Voidness

Through such practice, may whatever appearances
Dawn as objects of the six sense fields
Be exquisitely realized the way they appear
Yet dawn with naked clarity the way they are.
Recognizing what dawns (thus) is key to the view.
In brief, never grasp any appearance,
Including your own mind, as objectively there,
But take constant care to ascertain
Its (ultimate) mode of being.
Knowing (one thing) thus, (you know)
All things, mundane and transcendent,
As joined in a singular nature.
Hence Aryadeva's statement,
"Whoever is a seer of one thing,
Should be known as a seer of all;
For the voidness of one thing
Is the voidness of all."

Prayer for Non-Dual Realization

In the immediacy of this mode of equipoise
(Knowing mind's) reality just as it is,
You are free indeed from extreme fabrications,
Mundane and transcendent, like being and nothing;
Once you emerge from it and examine
The undeniable workings of relativity,
They exist as mere designations of language.
Like a dream, a mirage, moon in water,
Like illusion, they naturally dawn—
Their appearance not obscuring their voidness,
Their voidness not negating appearance—
When voidness and relativity are synonymous,
The excellent path (to enlightenment) is directly realized.

Request for Composition

This text was composed by the scholar-meditator
Known as Losang Chokyi Gyalstan.

By virtue of (writing this)

May all beings triumph quickly via this path,

Aside from which there is no way to peace.

[I have recorded] these methods of recognizing the great seal

At the repeated request of Gedun Gyalstan,

A master of the ten sciences, and Sherab Senge of Hatong

A master of the ten treatises, both of whom

Have seen worldly life with its eight states as a mad drama

And live a corrective way of life in solitary hermitage,

Having made this path their heart practice.

Many other students of mine have made (similar) requests,

Wishing to practice the great seal's definitive meaning.

Author's Reason for Composition

In particular, (I have composed this text now)

Since the great victor Ensapa, omniscient master adept,

In one of his enlightenment songs written to edify

Himself and others said, "I have written explanations

Of the gradual path from the Kadam (tradition)

From the art of relying on a spiritual guide to insight and quiescence,

But have not reached the instructions on the great seal,

Which are not included in paths explained thus far

And not well known to our Tibetan contemporaries."

Thus what was not necessary at that time

Due to restriction, was reserved for a later time.

This is supported by scriptural references

Like this statement from the Lotus Scripture,

"Since a Buddha's intuition must be fully realized,

You would never announce 'I have attained enlightenment,'

To those who would write about this art on their own.

Why is that? Because protectors look after the times."

Author's Right of Transmission

Having upheld the noble precepts, public and private,

And properly clarified and observed without breach

The commitments of the unfailing lineage of inspiration

Of those who have taken to heart the direct experience of this path—

From the peerless teacher, the victor Shakyamuni,

To the living presence of my dear root mentor,

The omniscient seer Sangyay Yeshe,

I, the meditator Losang Chokyi Gyaltsan,

Composed this at Ganden Monastery.

Colophon: This Introduction to the Great Seal by bLo-bzang Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan (1570-1662) was written at the request of Rab-'byam mGyal-msthan and Hlag-mthong sKabs-cu-pa Shes-rab Seng-ge at Ganden Monastery, to explain the dGa'-ldan bKa-rgyud oral tradition he received from rJe Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) through Chos-kyi rDo-rje (late 15th), rGyal-ba dbEn-sa-ba (1505-1566) and Sangs-rgyas Ye-shes (1525-1662). It was translated from the Tibetan for the 1995 Jewel Heart Winter Retreat at the request of Khyab-rje Nga-dbang dGe-legs bDe-mo Rin-po-che by Joseph Loizzo, revised with consultation of the autocommentary translated by Alexander Berzin, revised again in consultation with dGe-legs Rin-po-che and Ari-dge-bsnyen bsTan-'dzin Chos-drags (Robert A.F.Thurman) at the 1996 (Fire Rat) Jewel Heart Winter Retreat, and completed consulting a manuscript draft kindly furnished by Professor Thurman.