

Exploring Meditation in Tibet: Insights from Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide to Tranquil Abiding

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1. Introduction

This paper investigates the significance and roles of meditation in Tibet as understood by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713–1793). The study is divided into three main sections. The first section, “Meditation in the Context of Tripartite Learning,” elucidates the integrated approach to tripartite learning proposed by the Indian scholar Kamalāsīla, later emphasized by the Tibetan scholar Tsongkhapa. This approach contrasts with the exclusive approach adopted by the Chinese scholar Hwashang.

The second section, “Understanding the Concept, Purpose, and Process of Meditation,” provides a comprehensive understanding of meditation, emphasizing the importance of mind regulation during both meditative and non-meditative periods. This is followed by the section “Types of Meditation,” which explores various forms of meditation and introduces Yeshe Gyaltsen’s Guide to Tranquil Abiding.¹

The third section provides the topical outlines of the work, *dGa’ ldan phyag rgya chen po’i khrid yig snyan brgyud lam bzang gsal ba’i gron me*, authored by the Tibetan scholar Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713–1793), hereafter referred to abbreviated Tibetan title as *GPLG (Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of Oral Transmission: An Instruction Guide of Ganden Great Seal)*.

Finally, this paper presents the first English translation of the Tranquil Abiding section of the *GPLG* text. The original Tibetan text is found in the twenty-second volume of Yeshe Gyaltsen’s works in the Derge edition, catalogued as text number D 6217, spanning folios 49b–69b.

¹ Tib. *zhi gnas*; Skt. *Samatha*. Hereafter I will use Tranquil Abiding as English translation of *śamatha*. Tranquil abiding is an advanced meditative state in which the meditator has attained a physical and mental pliancy derived from focusing the mind. It is characterized by stable single-pointed attention to a chosen object with all mental distractions calmed (Jinpa 2006, p. 663).

Throughout the translation section, various numbered references are enclosed in brackets. For instance, (D1a.1) indicates that 'D' corresponds to the Derge (*sDe dge*) edition, '1' indicates folio one, 'a' represents the front side of the folio, and '1' denotes line one. Similarly, (2b.5) indicates folio two, the reverse side, and line five. To facilitate readers' comprehension, topical outlines are provided in square brackets, such as [2. The Prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding].

2. Meditation in the Context of Tripartite Learning: Listening, Contemplation and Meditation

In the following, we will explore the various elements of meditation from the perspective of Tsongkhapa incorporating insight from Indian masters. Within the framework of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, it is widely acknowledged that a spiritual trainee must engage in a tripartite learning² process : listening, (*thos pa*), contemplation (*bsam pa*),³ and meditative practice (*sgom pa*). In Tibet, there are diverse perspectives regarding tripartite learning facets. To contextualize, the role of these facets in Kamalaśīla's work (c. 740–795), which is believed to have been composed in Tibet, covers various topics. One of these topics includes the author's critique of Hwashang's view on tripartite learning facets. Hwashang, argued that these facets are distinct and separate. While listening and contemplating involve discursive thinking, meditative practice necessitates the dissolution of discursive thoughts to prevent the formation of fixated views that perpetuate suffering. Consequently, Hwashang viewed the initial two stages as separate from the third. Tsongkhapa, in the 14th century, draws from Kamalaśīla's critique of Hwashang's perspective and presents his own critiques of Hwashang's tripartite learning process. Tsongkhapa states:

For those who are not familiar with study of profound scriptural treatises, including the canonical teachings and their commentaries as practical guidance asserts, when a trainee engages in meditation on a spiritual path, they should exclusively apply the placement meditation ('jog sgom) without frequent analysis of its object. Discursive intellect [thinking], characterized by a repeated analysis of an object, is only relevant during

² Tripartite learning is sometime classified as follows: Learning through (1) Hearing, (2) Reflection, (3) Meditation or Cultivation.

³ Some modern scholars opt to translate the Tibetan term 'bsam pa' as 'reflection'. However, since the Tibetan term 'bsam pa' conveys the meaning of 'thinking,' I prefer translating it as 'contemplation'. This choice aligns with the modern usage of 'contemplation,' which also encompasses the concept of 'thinking,' as indicated by the Oxford dictionary.

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*the learning process through listening and contemplation. [However, during the learning process of meditative practice, application of] discursive thoughts hinder the trainee in achieving spiritual awakening because they involve fixating on objects.*⁴ (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 78).

[Furthermore, the assertion that] *all discursive thoughts fixate on their objects, leading to the view that analytic meditation obstructs the path to awakening, represents a misconception. This perspective aligns with the thought of the Chinese abbot Hwashang. However, it will be refuted in the sections on Tranquil Abiding and 'special insight'*.⁵

Tsongkhapa, like Hwashang acknowledges tripartite learning facets but difference lies in his perspective to listening, contemplation, and meditative practice. Tsongkhapa asserts these facets are progressive and essential for achieving spiritual awakening. In this process, trainees to learn a chosen topic, one should begin actively listening to others' knowledge. Subsequently, they delve deeper into their understanding by relying on their own capacities. To contemplate the topic thoroughly, they utilize proper sources and engage in critical reasoning. Finally, repeated familiarity with the subject matter after resolving doubts and acquiring accurate knowledge through listening and contemplation, is referred to as 'sgom pa' or meditative practice. Tsongkhapa asserts that meditative practice can take two forms: analytic or discursive meditation (*dpyad sgom*) and placement meditation (*'jog sgom*) without analysis. Tsongkhapa classifies these two kinds of meditative practice based on the approach to familiarizing oneself with the listened and contemplated topic. One approach involves analyzing the topic, while the other does not. Thus, he further contends that treating all types of meditation as equivalent to placement meditation is like holding a single grain in one's hand and declaring all grain should be of the same kind. This suggests that meditation should not be narrowly confined, as Tsongkhapa emphasized.⁶ He criticizes the view that such a perspective on meditative practice fails to grasp the key points of meditation. He

⁴ *gsung rab dgongs 'grel dang bcas pa'i gzhung chen mo rnams man ngag tu 'char ba la blo kha ma phyogs pa rnams na re / lam bsgom pa'i tshe ni / yul la yang yang mi dpyod par / 'jog sgom kho na bya ste / so sor rtog pa'i shes rab kyis yang dang yang du dpyod pa ni / thos bsam gyi skabs yin pa'i phyir dang / rtog pa rnams ni mtshan mar 'dzin pa yin pas 'tshang rgya ba la gegs byed pa'i phyir ro zhes zer ro //.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82 : *gzhan yang rtog pa thams cad / mtshan 'dzin yin pas / tshang rgya ba'i gegs su bzung nas so sor rtog pa'i sgom thams cad / 'dor ba'i log rtog gi tha cad 'di ni / rgya nag gi mkhan po hwa shang gi lugs yin la / de dgag pa ni/ zhi gnas dang / lthag mthong gi skabs su / bshad par bya'o //.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81 *sgom zhes pa de / rgya chung chung zhig la mi bzung ngo /.*

quotes the following verse lines from *The Ornaments of Sūtras*:

Initially, correct thinking is developed through listening, and then wisdom⁷ arises from familiarizing oneself with correct thinking, leading to a proper understanding of reality⁸

Therefore, Tsongkhapa summarizes that wisdom arising from meditative practice, which leads to an understanding of reality, depends on prior wisdom that involves contemplating the correct thinking about the listened topic. This indicates how aforementioned tripartite learning facets are progressive for achieving spiritual awakening. He further emphasizes the importance of listening and contemplation for meditative practice. As one engages extensively in listening, wisdom emerges in abundance. With this abundant wisdom, numerous thoughts for contemplation also arise. As these contemplative thoughts multiply, a multitude of wisdom emerges from them. Subsequently, from this accumulated wisdom, meditative wisdom arises. Through this process, trainees can adopt a multi-faceted approach to abandoning faults and cultivating virtuous qualities. Tsongkhapa also highlights the importance of both listening and contemplation for meditation being presented in the sūtras of the Buddha and their corresponding treatises.⁹ Thus, Tsongkhapa's perspective challenges Hwashang's claim that meditation exclusively emphasizes single-pointed practice, while discursive meditation, based on listening and contemplation, is limited to the outer scope of understanding.

⁷ There are two Tibetan source words that are translated into English term, 'wisdom'. (a) 'Wisdom' is a translation of the Tibetan term 'ye shes' (Skt. *jñāna*), which refers to primordial cognition cultivated by supra-mundane beings. (b) The same English term is also used to translate the Tibetan term 'shes rab'. In this context, it conveys the meaning of intelligence or discriminative awareness (Skt. *prajñā*). Consequently, *prajñā* is translated as 'wisdom' in English, a common choice for rendering the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* as *Sūtras of Wisdom Perfection*. 'Gnosis,' derived from the Greek is etymologically linked to the Sanskrit word 'jñāna,' which means 'knowledge.' Because of this shared origin, 'gnosis' is sometimes used as a translation for 'ye shes.'

⁸ 'di na dang por thos la brten nas tshul bzhin yid la byed pa 'byung // tshul bzhin yid la byed pa goms las yang dag don yul ye shes 'byung // Quoted by Tsongkhapa in LRC, p. 78).

⁹ des na thos pa / ji tsam mang ba tsam du / de las byung ba'i shes rab mang la / de mang ba tsam du bsam pa mang ba dang / de mang ba tsam du / de las byung ba'i shes rab mang ba dang / de ji tsam mang ba bzhin du / bsgom pas nyams su len pa mang la // de mang na / skyon 'gog pa dang / yon tan bsgrub pa'i tshul mang bas / sgom byed pa la thos bsam gal che bar gsung rab dang dgongs 'grel dang bcas pa nas gsungs pa yin //.

3. Understanding the Concept, Purpose and Process of Meditation

Now the divergence between Hwashang and Tsongkhapa's perspective is particularly evident in their understanding of meditation, what is the concept of meditation for Tsongkhapa? He describes meditation as a cognitive discipline or process where the mind consistently engages with a positive focal target.¹⁰ According to Tsongkhapa, meditation serves a significant purpose, which is to engage the mind with a positive target, aligning it in a manner that promotes interaction with the chosen focal point. This engagement is not arbitrary; it is a deliberate effort to manage the mind. The mind, often perceived as the source of all mental distress, can be a formidable challenge to control. In the past, throughout time, the mind has controlled the trainee and not the other way. It has a tendency to pursue afflicted thoughts, which act as obstacles to mental liberation.¹¹ Thus, achieving control over the mind is not merely beneficial, but crucial. Consequently, the act of meditation becomes a compelling reason for the mind to seek control over itself.

Next, in the practical process of meditation, as outlined by Tsongkhapa, the trainee initially identifies the focal targets, their quantities, and their order. Subsequently, they cultivate a strong attitude to avoid forgetting the focal content previously ascertained. During the actual meditation session, Tsongkhapa advises regulating the focal targets with mindfulness and meta-awareness, ensuring neither addition to nor omission from the initial recollection of focal target. To cultivate a focused mind during meditation, it is essential to avoid getting distracted by random focal objects or thoughts. If the trainee fails to maintain this restraint, their ability to regulate their attention on the intended focal target will be compromised. Starting from the outset, it is crucial for the trainee to develop correct mind-regulation practices. Otherwise, their pursuit of positive endeavors through such practice may be hindered throughout life.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 67: *sgom zhes grags pa sems dge ba'i dmigs pa la yang dang yang du gtod pa'i dmigs nam skyong ba /*

¹¹ Ibid., p. 67: *tog ma med pa nas / rang sems kyi dbang du gyur cing / sems rang gi dbang du ma gyur la / sems kyang nyon mongs pa la sogs pa'i sgrib ba rnam la / rjes su phyogs pas / nyes skyon thams cad skyed par byed pa'i sems 'di / rang gi dbang du 'gyur bar byas nas / dge ba'i dmigs pa la / ji ltar 'dod 'dod du bkol du rung bar byed pa'i ched du yin no /*

¹² Ibid., p. 67: *de yang / gang zin zin nas / dmigs pa la bskyangs na / rang ji ltar 'dod pa ltar gyi dge ba'i dmigs pa / grang 'di tsam dang / go rim 'di bzhiñ btang snyam nas / btang yang 'gror mi nyan pas / ji ltar 'dod pa bzhiñ du dge ba'i dmigs pa la / bkol du rung pa'i gegs chen por 'gyur zhiñ / dang po nas / lang du song bas / tshe hril po'i dge sbyong skyong can du 'gro ' /*

4. Types of Meditation

In exploration of meditation, we first delved into tripartite learning facets and then discussed Tsongkhapa's perspective regarding two distinct meditation types: (1) placement meditation and (2) analytic meditation. Placement meditation is a meditative practice that involves concentrating the mind on a positive focal target, maintaining single-pointed attention. Analytic meditation is a meditative practice, in which the trainee directs their attention to either a conventional or ultimate focal object, examining it through intellectual analysis. According to Tsongkhapa, all types of mental concentrations¹³ (Skt. *samādhi* Tib. *ting nge 'dzin*) in placement meditation fall under the category of Tranquil Abiding, whereas all types of positive intellect in analytic meditation belongs to the category of 'special insight'.¹⁴

Furthermore, Tsongkhapa outlines how to regulate the mind during a meditation session (Tib. *thun*) and in the interval between meditation sessions (Tib. *thun mtshams*), which can be referred to as the interval session. When introducing the meditation session, the aforementioned aspects of focusing the mind are presented in formal way. During the interval session, Tsongkhapa advises trainees to read texts that teach about the precepts of meditation, which are practiced during the meditation session. He says, without recalling the contents of the meditation or allowing the mind to wander during the interval session, progress in [later] meditation [session] may be limited.¹⁵ This implies that the retentive aspect of the mind plays essential role in both meditation and interval sessions. The act of practicing mindfulness and meta-awareness during interval sessions enhances the meditation session.

¹³ Yeshe Gyaltsen explains that the Tibetan term '*ting nge 'dzin*' refers to a mental factor that maintains its single pointedness by directing its focus toward an object: *sems dang sems byung gi tshul gsal bar ston pa blo gsal mgul rgyan* (Necklace of Fortunate One: Exposition on Mind and Mental Factors) folio.15a: *btags pa'i dngos po la dmigs nas rgyud ldan du 'jog pa'i sems rtse gcig pa'o* // Thupten Jinpa in *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way*, published in 2021 p. 654 writes that the English term 'concentration', which corresponds to '*ting nge 'dzin*' in Tibetan describes "a meditative state in which ones' mind abides in deep equipoise." It is "often used interchangeably with meditative absorption (*bsam gtan, dhyāna*)." He further says "the term need not always connote a meditative state. In Abhidharma taxonomy of mental factors it is described as the mind's natural capacity for single-pointedness and focus."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 534: *dge ba'i dmigs pa la / sems rtse gcig pa / yan chad kyi ting nge 'dzin rnams / zhi gnas kyi phyogs su 'du la / ji lta ba'am / ji snyed pa'i don / so sor 'byed pa'i shes rab dge ba rnams / lhaq mthong gi phyogs su 'du .../*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69: *thun gyi ngo bo la 'bad nas thun btang pa'i mtshams su / bskyang rgyu'i dmigs rnam la dran shes ma bsten par rgya yan du btang na / skyed shin tu chung bas / thun mtshams su'ang / de ston pa'i chos rnams blta ba dang / yang yang dran par bya /*

5. Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide to Tranquil Abiding: Cultivating Mental Clarity, Stability and Balance

In Yeshe Gyaltsen's "Guide to Tranquil Abiding Meditation," readers are taken through a detailed exploration of Tranquil Abiding meditation. Beginning with the prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding, the guide lays the groundwork for a successful meditation practice.

It identifies and addresses common obstacles, such as the Five Mental Faults, and provides effective remedies with the Eight Antidotes.

Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasizes the importance of overcoming laziness and highlights the essential qualities of mental concentration. Readers are encouraged to cultivate a strong aspiration toward concentration by exploring various objects of meditation, including the benefit of choosing the mind as an object.

The guide meticulously instructs on engaging in meditation after recognizing the object, and how to identify the criteria for this recognition. It cautions against a perfectionist attitude, which can hinder progress, and promotes a balanced approach.

Valuable insights from Mañjuśrī's advice to Tsongkhapa are shared, detailing the threefold characteristics of mindfulness and the cultivation of meta-awareness. Techniques on focusing and maintaining the object of concentration, avoiding potential mistakes, and regulating distractions are thoroughly discussed.

Furthermore, pith instructions for mental placement¹⁶ (*sems gnas*) and unique methods for handling distractive thoughts are provided, along with guidance on how to tighten or relax focus on the object of meditation.

The guide uses six metaphors to illustrate settling the mind in meditation and distinguishes between laxity, mental dullness, mental excitement, and discursiveness or scattering. It concludes with an overview of the nine levels of mental placement and their connection to the four mental applications, offering a comprehensive framework for cultivating Tranquility Abiding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has delved into the multifaceted roles and significance of meditation in Tibetan Buddhism through the lenses of Indian and Tibetan scholars, such as Kamalaśīla, Tsongkhapa and

¹⁶ Mental placement is a technique that involves concentrating the mind on the meditation object, mainly by enhancing the stability and clarity of the mind. In the context of the Great Seal practice, mental placement means directing the mind to the mind itself (Gnon Na 2024).

Yeshe Gyaltsen. By examining their integrative approach to tripartite learning, listening, contemplation, and meditation, this study has highlighted his progressive vision for spiritual awakening, which challenges the more segmented view of meditation proposed by Hvasang. Tsongkhapa's emphasis on the interdependence of analytic and placement meditation reveals a nuanced understanding of meditative practice as both a means of intellectual engagement and a vehicle for experiential insight.

Yeshe Gyaltsen's *Guide to Tranquil Abiding*, presented here in its first English translation, offers a practical framework that details the stages, obstacles, and remedies associated with the meditation. By systematically outlining the stages of mental placement, Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasizes the importance of balancing tight and relaxed concentration while highlighting mindfulness and meta-awareness as essential tools for practitioners.

Together, the teachings of Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen provide a comprehensive roadmap for cultivating *Tranquil Abiding*, contributing a profound legacy of meditation practice to Tibetan Buddhism. This approach to contemplative study not only deepens the understanding of Tibetan contemplative philosophy but also highlights the enduring relevance of the ancient Indian practices of listening, contemplation, and meditation in the modern era.

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***Outlines of Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path: Mahāmudrā
Instructions of the Ganden Oral Transmission***

*dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud
lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me las sa bcad kyi rim pa*

by Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713-1793)

[Praising and Going for Refuge to the Exalted Object] (D1a.1)
[I] pay homage and take refuge at the feet of the Venerable Spiritual Master who is inseparable from Śākyamuni Buddha and Buddha Vajradhara.

[Supplication] (1a.1)

May [you] guide [me] at all times with great compassion!

[Verse 1. Praising the objects of refuge through paying homage to them individually] (1a.2)

Never wavering from great bliss clear light mind
endowed with two purities, yet by force of compassion,

Filling all the infinite realms with emanations,
[I] pay homage to Buddha Śākyamuni Vajradhara¹⁷!

[Verse 2-9 is not available here]¹⁸

[Verse 10. The author's expression of humility in composing the text]
(2b.5)

How could the wings of a poor tiny fly
take the measure of boundless space?
Likewise, a poor ignorant person like me
lacks the ability to explain profound topics.

[Verse 11. The author's pledge to compose the text] (3a.1)

Still, since I have been urged to do so by holy beings¹⁹,
I shall write down some of the instructions of the Oral Transmission
from Spiritual Masters who have attained the state
accomplished by this very same supreme path.

The Profound Path: Instruction of the Great Seal has three headings:

1. Source of the Instructions (3a.4)
2. Great Qualities of the Instructions (16a.1)
3. How to Practice the Actual Instructions (23b.2)
 - 3.1.1. How to practice during the meditation session (23b.2)
 - 3.1.1.1. Preliminary [session] (23b.2)
 - 3.1.1.1.1. Mode of going for refuge and generating
bodhicitta, the altruistic wish for Buddhahood (23b.3)
 - 3.1.1.1.1.1. Mode of taking refuge (28a3)
 - 3.1.1.1.1.2. Mode of generating bodhicitta, the
altruistic wish for Buddhahood (33a2)
 - 3.1.1.1.2. How to practice meditation and recitation of
Vajrasattva in order to purify non-virtuous actions and
obscurations (35b5)
 - 3.1.1.1.3. How to meditate on Guru Yoga, make offerings,
maṅḍala, and supplication in order to receive blessings
(40a2)
 - 3.1.1.1.3.1. Meditating upon the Spiritual Master in the
merit field (40a2)
 - 3.1.1.1.3.2. How to supplicate the Spiritual Master,
having made offerings and *maṅḍala* offering (42b3)
 - 3.1.1.2. In actual [session] (23b3)

¹⁷ Vajradhara, an esoteric manifestation of the Buddha, who is regarded here [and in Vajrayana Buddhism] inseparable from the historical Buddha.

¹⁸ From verse 2-9 is not available because from verse one starting, rest of the verses were about paying homage to individual object of refuge.

¹⁹ *lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me* (1717-1786).

- 3.1.1.2.1. Mode of meditating on Tranquil Abiding (49b2)
 - 3.1.1.2.1.1. Reliance upon prerequisites [conducive conditions] of Tranquil Abiding (49b4)
 - 3.1.1.2.1.2. Stages of cultivating mental stability (51b4)
 - 3.1.1.2.1.3. How Tranquil Abiding is accomplished (66b2)
- 3.1.1.2. 2. How to find the profound view and meditate on 'special insight' (69b3)
 - 3.1.1.2.2.1. How to seek the view (69b4)
 - 3.1.1.2.2.2. How to meditate on the view once it has been found (113b2)
 - 3.1.1.2.2.3. How 'special insight' is accomplished through meditation (116b4)
- 3.1.1.3. Mode of practicing in the end [session] (119a6)
- 3.1.2. How to practice between meditation sessions (120b2)

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Meditation Guide for Tranquil Abiding (*Śamatha*) Cultivation in the *Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path: Mahāmudrā Instructions of the Ganden Oral Transmission*

*dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud
lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me las zhi gnas kyi skor*

Authored by Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713-1793)

and

Translated by Lobsang Tshultrim Gnon Na

(49b.2) Secondly, the main exposition is in two parts: How to do Tranquil Abiding meditation and how, having investigated the profound view, to do 'special insight' meditation. How to do Tranquil Abiding meditation is sub-divided into three parts: The prerequisites for tranquil abiding, stages of mental placement [stages of Tranquil Abiding meditation], and how Tranquil Abiding meditation is cultivated.

[2. The Prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding]

As for the first, *Root Mahāmudrā* [*Highway of Victorious Ones: Root Text of dGe ldan Mahāmudrā*]²⁰ says,

²⁰ Tib. *dGe ldan phyag rgya chen rtsa ba rgyal ba'i gzhung lam* by Paṅ chen Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan. Yeshe Gyaltsen uses the term, *Root Mahāmudrā* which refers to the main text of *Mahāmudrā* of Gelug tradition, which is titled: *Highway of Victorious*

Therefore, for this there are two ways: seeking meditation on the basis of the view and seeking the view on the basis of the meditation. Here will be explained the latter. This assertion that there are two ways, seeking meditation on basis of the view, and seeking the view on the basis of meditation. In the first, having sought an understanding of the view, when that is found, practicing Tranquil Abiding focused on it. The second involves first stilling the mind, practicing mental abiding, and then seeking the view. Although it says there are two ways, practicing Tranquil Abiding and then 'special insight', or 'special insight' and then tranquil abiding, (50a.1) that is totally unsuitable. Why? Because it is impossible to develop special insight without prior development of tranquil abiding. Furthermore, having developed the factor of meditative stability by accomplishment of tranquil abiding, when analytical wisdom is brought to bear it can induce a special pliancy. Such pliancy cannot be induced without prior development of Tranquil Abiding no matter how much analysis is done on its own. As Tsongkhapa said [in *Condensed Meaning of Stages of Path to Awakening*]²¹

*I do not see that the root of cyclic existence can be severed
by engaging in single-pointed meditation alone.
Neither will wisdom, without realization of tranquil abiding,
eliminate delusion, no matter how much analysis is applied.
Yet, wisdom that has thoroughly cognized the nature of existence,
mounted upon the horse of unmoving tranquil abiding,
with the sharp weapon of Middle Way reasoning, free from extremes,
destroys all fixations conceiving of extreme views.
By examining properly with expansive wisdom,
May intelligence cognizing reality grow and flourish!*

Thus, it was taught. I just mention this as an aid to eliminate doubt about these words of the root text. For details, such as the respective natures of Tranquil Abiding and 'special insight'; their sequential order, how they are cultivated and so forth, these should be learned from *Great Treatise on the Stages to Awakening*, which is an only lamp for the three worlds.

Ones: Root Text of dGe ldan Great Seal. From this point onward, I request readers to remember this clarification whenever encountering the term 'Root Mahāmudrā' in this translation section.

²¹ This text: *Condensed Meaning of Stages of Path to Awakening* (Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i bsdus don*) is often called the Small Treatise, and *the Small Treatise on the Stages of Path to Awakening* is called the Medium Treatise; therefore, there is a classification of Great, Medium and Small Treatises on the Stages of Path to Awakening.

Regarding prerequisites for tranquil abiding, Ārya Asaṅga in his *Grounds of Hearers*²² extensively summarized the meanings presented in the scriptures into thirteen prerequisites. Kamalaśīla further summarized them in his *Middle Treatise on the Stages of Meditation*²³ into six prerequisites. I shall present them here accordingly. The six prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding are: 1. Dwelling in an isolated place that is endowed with five qualities; 2. Having few desires; 3. Being content; 4. Abandoning much socializing, excessive activities and so forth; 5. Abandoning negative intentions such as aspiration towards worldly aims and so forth. One who sincerely wishes to cultivate Tranquil Abiding should gather the causes for success. If the collective causes are not complete, no matter how much effort is applied, Tranquil Abiding will not be attained. In that regard, Atiśa [in *Lamp for the Path to Awakening*]²⁴ stated:

*With the limb of Tranquil Abiding in decline
even if you meditate with great effort
for many thousands of years
Mental concentration*²⁵ *will not be achieved.*

Thus, it was taught. 'Brom Rin po che²⁶ said:

We think it is just the fault of the instructions! (51a.1) Having merely received the instructions yet not having progressed in the cultivation of mental concentration is the fault of not abiding by the prerequisites.

It is like that. Reliance upon the prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding is indispensable for tantric practice as well. In the tantric scriptures such as glorious Guhyasamāja it is said that one must abandon all distractions while practicing in isolated places. The requirement to practice while abiding by pure vows and commitments is mentioned not once but numerous times. Learn about this from the lives of the mahāsiddhas²⁷.

Among these six prerequisites, staying in isolation, keeping pure morality, and having few desires are said to be primary. Keeping pure

²² Skt. *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*; Tib. *Nyan thos kyi sa*.

²³ Kamalaśīla. 2006, p. 88 *Madhyamaka Bhāvanākrama*; Tib. *sGom rim bar pa*.

²⁴ Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñāna's excerpts from *Bodhipathapradīpa*. The title of text in Tib. *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*.

²⁵ Skt. *Samādhi*; Tib. *Ting nge 'dzin*. *Ting nge 'dzin* refers to the state where the mind is totally focused with single-pointed concentration on a chosen object. (Thupten Jinpa, *Mind Training*, 2006 p. 660).

²⁶ 'Brom ston pa, (1005-1064) heart disciple of Atiśa, founder of the *bKa' gdams*.

²⁷ Tib. *grub chen*, (hereafter use), Eng. great adept.

morality is the chief of these. With pure morality Tranquil Abiding can be swiftly achieved. Without pure morality, no matter how much mental effort is applied, one will be unable to delight in mastery of a fully qualified Tranquil Abiding. Furthermore, if ethical discipline is kept, by the blessings and merit of that, not by just intending to practice, but by actually practicing, one may achieve an extraordinary state of mental quiescence; you should understand this.

This is the case because, with the motivation of renunciation, an intense aspiration for liberation, (51b.1) when one blocks the four doors of transgression by guarding them with the five branched method, as said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,²⁸

*One practicing this conduct should be just as wary
to avoid committing bad karma as someone carrying
a vessel filled with mustard oil while another standing by
with a sword threatens to kill them if they spill a drop.*

Accordingly, being mindful of one's actions of body, speech, and mind, and undistracted by such things as the mundane activities of this life, one who is constantly mindful and alert to abandon misdeeds and accomplish virtue will swiftly accomplish mental concentration of single-pointed mental focus. It is very important to personally understand the definite need for the other prerequisites as well, not just by mimicking what others say.

[3. Aligning with either Common Preparation or Uncommon Preparation]

Secondly, as for the cultivation of mental placement, one should begin with either the common preparation of six precepts, or the uncommon preparation of the guide to the four preliminaries. In either case one must meditate from reliance upon the master up to engaging in the bodhicitta practices according to the general way of training so as to bring out the experiences of actual mental transformation. In particular one must meditate on renunciation and bodhicitta until one's mind is definitely deeply moved by experience of them. (52a.1) If one does not begin with these two roots of the path, although the practitioner puts great mental effort into Tranquil Abiding, the view, and so forth, influenced by attachment to this life and a self-seeking attitude, it will in no way become a cause for liberation or omniscience; it will only be a cause for continued saṃsāric migration. The importance of first planting these two roots of the path was

²⁸ Tib. *Byang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*, *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva.

emphasized in the mystical teachings that Je Tsongkhapa received from Mañjuśrī.

Having begun with the preliminaries mentioned above, with regard to the actual meditation²⁹ of developing pure meditative concentration, Protector Maitreya [In *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*]³⁰ said:

*It arises from the causes: abandoning the five faults,
and relying upon the eight applications.*

[4. The Five Mental Faults]

Accordingly, one must practice the eight applications as antidotes to the five faults. The five faults are laziness³¹, forgetting the instructions, the two: laxity and mental excitation, application, and non-application.

[5. The Eight Antidotes]

The antidotes to laziness are four: faith³², aspiration³³, enthusiastic effort³⁴, and pliancy³⁵. The antidote to forgetting the instructions is mindfulness³⁶. The antidote to laxity and excitation is meta-awareness³⁷. The antidote to non-application³⁸ is application which involves making an effort, whereas the antidote to [unnecessary]

²⁹ In actual session, how to cultivate the proper mental concentration consist of six parts:

- a. Identifying the five faults
- b. Identifying the eight antidotes
- c. Reason for cultivating eight antidotes
- d. Identifying the qualities of mental concentration
- e. Identifying types of objects of mental concentration
- f. Identifying the object of mental concentration of this (textual) context and purpose of cultivating this concentration, and
- g. How to seek the object of this mental concentration.

³⁰ Tib. *dbus dang mtha' rnam par 'byed pa*, Skt. *Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā*.

³¹ Skt. *kausidyā*; Tib. *le lo*

³² Skt. *sraddhā*; Tib. *dad pa*.

³³ Skt. *chanda*; Tib. *'dun pa*.

³⁴ Skt. *vīrya (vyayama)*; Tib. *brtson 'grus*.

³⁵ Skt. *praśrabdhi*; Tib. *shin sbyangs*.

³⁶ Skt. *smṛti*; Tib. *dran pa*.

³⁷ Skt. *saṃprajanya*; Tib. *shes bzhin* Eng. meta-awareness, introspection, vigilance.

³⁸ Skt. *anabhisaṃskāra*; Tib. *'du mi byed pa*.

application³⁹ is non-application, leaving it alone with equanimity⁴⁰.

[6. Reason for Cultivating the Eight Antidotes]

When beginning to develop mental concentration by means of these, laziness is an obstacle. Therefore, laziness is said to be an obstacle at the preliminary stage. (52b.1) Furthermore, under the influence of laziness one will not begin mental concentration meditation; or begin but not be able to sustain it continuously; or develop it somewhat and then fall back, not developing it all the way to completion. Therefore, if one truly desires to develop pure mental concentration, one definitely needs methods to reverse laziness.

[7. The Complete Cessation of Laziness]

If one attains the bliss-endowed mental and physical pliancy, and a workability of controllable to do whatever wished with the mind, laziness is reversed from the root. To attain this one must be able to take joy in making continuous effort. For this to happen one must have great delight in mental concentration without any hesitation. For that to happen one must develop a strong aspiration seeking to attain mental concentration. For that to happen one must develop a stable faith captivated by seeing the qualities of mental concentration. Therefore, one should first train in faith by contemplating the good qualities of mental concentration.

[8. The Qualities of Mental Concentration]

If Tranquil Abiding is accomplished one's body and mind will be pervaded by bliss of pliancy. Thus, one will abide in bliss in this lifetime. One will have control of one's own mind; if placed on an object it remains like a mountain. (53a.1) When used it can engage any desired virtuous object at will. In particular, by analyzing ultimate reality from a state of stable Tranquil Abiding one will attain special insight and be able to swiftly abandon delusion. And by meditating on suchness with skillful means, even the predisposition for dualistic appearances can be eliminated; and so on, the qualities are inconceivable. Je Tsong kha pa in (*Lam rim nyams mgur ma*, hereafter LRG) states:

Mental stabilization is the king that rules the mind;

³⁹ Skt. *abhisamṣkāra*; Tib. 'du byed pa.

⁴⁰ Skt. *upekṣa*; Tib. *btang snyoms*.

*When settled (left) it is like the king of mountains, unmoving;
When relaxed (loosed) it engages all objects of virtue;
inducing great bliss of pliability of body and mind.*

*Knowing this the powerful yogis always
destroy the enemy, distraction, and remain in mental concentration.
I, a yogi, have practiced like that.
You who seek liberation, please do likewise!*

Thus, it was taught. Furthermore, to attain the state of awakening, one needs to complete accumulation, transformation, and purification. In order to swiftly complete powerful collections and in order to ripen limitless sentient beings one must attain the higher perceptions.⁴¹ As said in *Lamp for the Path to Awakening*:⁴²

*The cause for completing the accumulations
with the natures of merit and wisdom,
is said by all buddhas
to be having the higher perception.*

*(53b.1) Just as a bird without wings
cannot fly through the sky
one without power of the higher perception
cannot accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.*

*With higher perception, the merit created
in a single day and a night
cannot be matched without higher perception
even in a hundred lifetimes.*

*One who wishes to swiftly complete
The collections for full enlightenment
will accomplish the higher perceptions
through effort, not laziness.*

*One not accomplished in Tranquil Abiding
will not attain the higher perception
therefore, Tranquil Abiding must be developed;
put forth the effort again and again.*

⁴¹ Skt. *Abhijñā*; Tib. *mngon shes*; Eng. knowledge of others' minds, past and future, heightened aural and visual faculties, etc.

⁴² Composed by Skt. Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñāna; Tib. *Jo bo rje dpal ldan A ti sha dpal mar me mdzad*.

Thus, for higher perceptions to arise Tranquil Abiding must be achieved. If Tranquil Abiding is attained the collections are swiftly completed by means of the higher perceptions. One will be able to ripen countless beings, and so forth. Without attaining Tranquil Abiding one will be unable to accomplish completion, ripening, and purification.

Furthermore, all Ārya paths of the three vehicles are attained in dependence upon tranquil abiding; Tranquil Abiding is indispensable to progress in the paths. Furthermore, if Tranquil Abiding is attained, the mind may be applied to any desired meditation from reliance on the spiritual guide onwards, (54a.1) as easily as water flows through a canal, so that any virtuous practice undertaken will become very powerful. If one lacks single-pointed concentration, practice will be prey to distraction and probably not penetrate the essential point. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,

*A person whose mind is distracted
lives in the fangs of delusion.*

Also:

*Although mantra recitation and austerities
are performed for a long time
doing it with a distracted mind
is meaningless, say the wise.*

It is like that.

[9. Urging Aspiration to Cultivate Mental Concentration: Varied Objects of Mental Concentration]

Thus, by repeatedly thinking about the qualities of mental concentration, if one develops a strong aspiration to attain it, one will feel an urge to practice mental concentration arising from within oneself, and so swiftly attain it; and that attainment will not degenerate and will be perfected. These stages leading up to mental concentration come from the instructions of Buddha Maitreya, so we should not deviate from those instructions.

One who has developed a strong aspiration to attain mental concentration must then select a focal object for the concentration because, if a focal object is not found, there will be no basis upon which to meditate. Buddha taught many categories of objects for mental concentration.

[10. Identifying the Objects of Meditation: Objects of Mental Concentration]

(54b.1) Four of these are (1) pervasive objects, (2) objects of observation for purifying behavior, (3) objects of expertise, and (4) objects of observation for purifying mental afflictions. There are four kinds of pervasive objects. They are (1a) objects of placement without analysis⁴³ (1b) objects of analysis⁴⁴ (1c) limits of things and (1d) all-accomplishing. These four pervade all objects of mental concentration. There is no object not included within these four, so they are called pervasive objects. The other three, objects for purifying behavior, and so forth, are specific types of objects. I will not discuss their identification here because it will become too lengthy.

The objects for mental concentration we will consider here are objects of placement without analysis and objects which are limits of things. With regard to limits of things, there are relative and ultimate levels, how things appear and how they exist; this category of objects are limits of things as they appear, on the relative level. Out of that infinite, limitless category we will focus on mind.

[11. Benefit of Choosing Mind as an Object of Mental Concentration]

Thus, the object we shall meditate upon here is our own mind. We can practice mental concentration and it has a special purpose. Furthermore, we must seek an object that is not just for stilling the mind. Not understanding this essential point, focusing on a stone or piece of wood, clearly illustrates that one is ignorant of the instructions in the scriptures of Buddha or the great trail blazers of the Mahāyāna⁴⁵. Putting a piece of wood in front of you and meditating on it shows a lack of understanding of what mental concentration is. Mental concentration is one of the five types of ascertaining mental factors; not generated in sense consciousness. (55a.1) There is an extremely important reason to take our mind as our object of meditation. We have been controlled by our mind since beginningless time. Not being able to control our own mind, it leads us everywhere wandering without choice in the three realms of *samsāra*⁴⁶, controlled by mental afflictions and experiencing ceaseless suffering. If we want to free ourselves from this sea of suffering, we must get control of our own

⁴³ In *Great Treatise* the term is used 'non-conceptual images'.

⁴⁴ In *Great Treatise* the term is used 'conceptual images'.

⁴⁵ Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna.

⁴⁶ Cycle of life existence that is influenced by contaminated action and affliction.

mind. Therefore, it is very important to identify the entity of our mind, focus on it, and meditate on it with single-pointed focus.

As Nāgārjuna said, [in *Letter to a Good Friend*]:⁴⁷

*Subdue your mind! Buddha has proclaimed:
Mind is the root of Dharma.
(55b.1) As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct
Letting loose the elephant of mind
harms us like the deepest hell.
No enemy in this world could harm us
Like this mad, untamed elephant!*

*If the elephant of mind is firmly bound
On all sides by the rope of mindfulness,
All fear will cease to exist
And all virtue will come to hand.*

*Tigers, lions, elephants, bears,
Snakes and all types of enemies,
Guardians of the hells,
Evil spirits and cannibals,*

*This mind, alone, imputes them all;
Therefore, all is mentally imputed.
By subduing mind alone
All of those will be subdued.*

*Similarly, all fear and danger
and all the immeasurable suffering
Arise from the mind;
This was taught by the Right Speaker Buddha.*

Also:

*If I don't comprehend this secret of mind,
Though wanting happiness and to overcome misery,
I will wander aimlessly, without meaning.
Therefore, I shall well hold and protect my mind.*

In particular one who has received tantric initiation and keeps the vows and commitments should, at first, identify the nature of this gross mind, focus on it single-pointedly and bring it under control. Having done that, once it is serviceable to focus on any desired object, one should seek the profound view and get some experience of

⁴⁷ Skt. *Suhṛllekha*; Tib. *bShes pa'i spring yig*.

suchness. Once one has this experience, within a state of stable Deity yoga, one should penetrate the vital points of the subtle body and strive in the methods to bring the extremely subtle wind-mind under control. When the extremely subtle wind-mind manifests and is controlled, the subtle concepts and their moving winds automatically stop and the transcendent wisdom of innate clear light dawns. That [timeless] wisdom is the cause of omniscience, like a fertile seed. Without having to gather accumulations over countless eons of lifetimes, on the basis of this single clear light mind the accumulations can be quickly completed. This is the ultimate swift path to awakening; you should understand the ultimate meaning of these profound instructions. Thinking of this, Saraha [in *Treasury of Adamantine Songs*⁴⁸] said:

*Mind itself is the seed of all
It emanates saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.⁴⁹
It grants fruition to one's wishes;
I bow to wish-fulfilling jewel-like Mind!*

*By mind's clinging one is bound,
and by its release, doubt is no more.
[56b.1] That which binds the foolish
swiftly liberates the wise!*

Thus, he spoke, and great adept Tilopa [in the pith-instruction called, *Mahāmudrā Upadeśa*]⁵⁰ said:

*Cut mind's root and settle in naked awareness!
Let the thought-polluted water clear!*

Also, Āryadeva [in the chapter called "Utterly purifying the obscuration of mind"]⁵¹ says:

*With their practice of Deity yoga
the wise stabilize their mind.
Clouds of bad views are released*

⁴⁸ Skt. *Dohākośa*; Tib. *Dohā* is translated *rdo rje'i glu*; *kośa* is translated *mdzod*; Eng. *Dohā* is translated *adamantine song*; *kośa* is translated *treasury*. See also Braitstein's preface in *The Adamantine Songs* (2014, p. xiii).

⁴⁹ Worldly existence and liberation.

⁵⁰ Tib. *Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag*; also, in Tibetan known as *phyag chen gang ga ma'i man ngag*.

⁵¹ Skt. *cittāvaranāvisodhanamaprakāraṇa*; Tib. *sems kyi sgrib pa rnam par sbyong ba zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa*.

and the sun of mind becomes clear.

Thus, the tantras and scriptures of the great adepts speak about meditation focused on the extremely subtle mind and wind as that which gives rise to all the higher realizations.

[12. Engaging in Meditation After Recognizing the Object of Meditation]

When you have identified the focal object and begin to meditate on it, adjust your physical posture well. Make prayers to your master with faith and devotion so strong that tears come to your eyes and you get goosebumps, as explained above. After that the Master dissolves into you. Firmly feeling that the Master's mind and your mind have mixed together inseparably, meditate on your mind's clear and knowing nature, totally empty like space, without any form at all. With sharp awareness identifying whatever appearance is arising, with strong aspiration, think, "I shall mentally hold this object, and hold it single-pointedly."

At this time mentally hold just that focal object; (57a1) no activities of the past, present, or future, no hopes or fears. Not letting yourself be carried away by any thought whatsoever, focus on your mind's clear and knowing nature, holding it single-pointedly. Not making it very long at first, still your mind for a little while.

[13. Identifying the Criterion of Recognizing Object of Mental Concentration]

Even if your object does not appear very clearly and precisely as the Master has introduced it, if it is only partial or general, be satisfied with that and, thinking, "This is the object, you must hold it." Otherwise, striving to meditate and visualize, hoping for the object to immediately appear very clearly, just as the Master introduced it, is the completely wrong approach; it shows a lack of understanding the instructions on mental concentration.

[14. Perfectionist Attitude Identified as Hindrance to the Progress of Meditation]

Such intensive effort can clear the mind slightly but does not help to develop mental concentration; moreover, it causes scattering and big obstacles in developing mental concentration. In that case the mind quickly becomes hardened and irritated, and apprehensive to meditate again. It is said that you can even become nauseous and

ready to vomit just from seeing the meditation cushion! With these points in mind, the *Root Mahāmudrā text* [*Highway of Victorious Ones: Root Text of the dGe ldan Great Seal*] states:

One should settle in mental concentration for short durations.

At this time, (57b1) when the mind fastens on to its object, the first mental placement is reached. With regard to this meaning, the *Root Mahāmudrā text* states,

*With the object vaguely appearing
without altering it at all
with thoughts, such as of hope or fear,
briefly settle in equipoise, unmoving.*

When thus mentally holding the object, you do not stop paying attention as if going unconscious or falling asleep. Instead, you must employ [1.] special mindfulness, not forgetting the object, and [2.] Meta-awareness occasionally checks whether the mind has wandered or not. Focusing single-pointedly on the object and settling on it with continuous mindfulness is the root, the foundation. Meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness, so there is no way to have meta-awareness without knowing the essential points of how to practice mindfulness. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that cultivating proper mental concentration is achieved through the practice of sustaining mindfulness.

In this regard, when focusing on the object, it is not a sitting where you cease your mental engagement like when you are sleeping and falling unconscious. After focusing on the object, without forgetting it, sustain the meditation through extraordinary mindfulness and meta-awareness that looks at whether the focus is being wandered from its object or not. For that, it is the foundation, that a person focuses on the object single pointedly and then settle [the mind] with continuous mindfulness. Since meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness, there is no means to sustaining meta-awareness without knowing the key points of sustaining mindfulness. Thus, it is extremely important to understand that sustaining the proper training of mental concentration is the way of sustaining mindfulness. As for mindfulness the *Abhidharma*⁵² states:

What is mindfulness? A non-forgetfulness of an object with which the mind is familiar, which functions to prevent wandering.

⁵² *Abhidharmasamuccaya.*

As taught, there are three required characteristics:

1. the object characteristic. It must be a familiar object. Seeing that very object pointed out by the teacher's instructions, (58a1) familiarize yourself with it again and again.
2. the mode of apprehension [cognitive] characteristic. It is cultivating just that object without forgetting it. As for this non-forgettingness, it is not sufficient just to be able to remember it when you ask someone about it or when you think about it. It must focus single-pointedly on the object without losing it even slightly, remembering it uninterruptedly.
3. the characteristic function. Once there is such cognitive characteristic, there will be no distraction to something other than the object.

Seeing mindfulness with these three characteristics as important for mental concentration meditation, the precious lord Maitreya said that forgetting the instructions is a fault when seeking to develop mental concentration, so mindfulness is needed to serve as its antidote. Proper mental concentration depends on how you cultivate mindfulness.

[15. Threefold Characteristics of Mindfulness in Mañjuśrī's Advice to Tsongkhapa]

The importance of mindfulness endowed with the three characteristics was taught in the root words of a brief instruction that Mañjuśrī gave to Je Tsongkhapa. That same text⁵³ states:

*Having meditated on renunciation and bodhicitta
in presence of the unceasing great flame of mindfulness
kindling of the six objects is definitely burned up.*

Thus, whether mental concentration is common or uncommon (58b1) is dependent solely on the force of mindfulness.

As for meta-awareness, within a state of not losing the mode of apprehension of mindfulness holding its object single-pointedly, it checks whether the mind is remaining on its object or not, whether obstacles such as mental excitation and laxity are occurring or not. Furthermore, while mentally holding the object, if a new watchful mind is generated, this is the fault of not knowing how to meditate. [A fault arising from excessively applying alert and watchful mind.]

⁵³ Tib. *'Jam dbyangs chos skor*; Eng. *Cycle of teachings of Mañjuśrī*.

Checking like that will not only not help development of mental concentration; it will harm it greatly.

[16. How Meta-awareness is Cultivated with Mindfulness]

Therefore, without losing mental hold on the object, you have to know how to check with subtle awareness. For example, it is said to be like when two people are walking down a path; while looking at the path they can check their companion's movement out of the corner of their eye. As said in *Lobsang's Melodious Laughter*:⁵⁴

*Within a state of equipoise, meta-awareness is
to see whether mental excitation or laxity has arisen or not.
It is mental factor that checks from a corner of the mind,
It is like a detective agent
Non-distraction is the fruit of mindfulness.*

Without losing the mode of apprehension of mindfulness single-pointedly holding the focal object, checking from time to time to see whether or not the mind has wandered from its object; whether or not mindfulness is abiding with a single focus. (59a.1) This hones mindfulness' mode of apprehension, makes it more powerful, prevents wandering from the object; awareness will arise when distraction is about to occur, it is taught.

[17. How to focus on the object of mental concentration]

Therefore, the object of meditation to visualize or know is the clear and cognizing state of one's own mind. Binding the mind to the object generates a strong aspiration wishing to hold it single-pointedly without moving from it. Not thinking of any other object, just continually remembering the object and cultivating the continuum of that mind is the sacred method for a beginner to accomplish the first mental placement.

[18. Potential mistake in the cultivation of mindfulness]

Otherwise, just stopping paying attention, and meditating without mindfulness, it is impossible for pure meta-awareness to develop from that. The practice of mental concentration is the practice of mindfulness; it is impossible for a result to arise without a cause.

Some scriptures speak of not paying attention to anything, not

⁵⁴ Tib. *Blo bzang bzhad pa'i sgra dbyangs* /.

thinking of anything, being non-conceptual; the scriptures of the great adepts, in particular, have many words to that effect. Some who are deceived by this, teach that you must cease all mental activity and go unconscious; they are making a huge mistake and do not understand Tranquil Abiding practice even partially; those with intelligence should not trust such advice. (59b1)

[19. Do not change the object of meditation]

What these scriptures are saying is that when practicing Tranquil Abiding ones mind must not move to anything other than the focal object. This is extremely important. Furthermore, when one is meditating single-pointedly on one's own mind as the focal object, if anything else appears, forms of deities, seed syllable letters, one must not follow them but continue to hold only the original focal object. Otherwise, shifting to various objects will become a big obstacle to developing mental concentration. As Aśvaghōṣa said,

*Relying on one object
stabilize your thoughts
Moving to many objects
will stir up mental afflictions.*

And Lord Atiśa as well:⁵⁵

*Rest your mind in virtue
on whatever single focal object.*

Thus, it is taught that to cultivate mental concentration one must mentally hold one focal object only.

Since this practice of mindfulness is very difficult, accomplishment of proper mental concentration is rare. If one relaxes this mode of mindfulness focusing on the object, and just remains in a thoughtless state, a slight factor of stability may be generated, but subtle laxity is not prevented. (60a1) Since there were many mistaking this subtle laxity for Tranquil Abiding, unable to bear it, Tsongkhapa said, at the end of his composition, *Queries from a Sincere Heart*⁵⁶, written about view and meditation:

If darkness of extremes of permanence and nihilism is not cleared away,

⁵⁵ In *Bodhipathapradīpa*. Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*.

⁵⁶ Tib. *Dri ba lhag bsam rab dkar*. *Miscellaneous Writings*, Vol. kha. 85b3-100a3, bKra shis lhun po par nying. (BDRC bdr: W29193).

*one will not see the sun of clear light reality.
 If one does not seek a wish-fulfilling jewel-like spiritual guide
 who is well versed in learning, contemplation, and meditation,
 the result will not emerge. Instead, this could be a cause
 for rebirth as a perception-less god⁵⁷, or worse, an animal.
 I can't bear this for great meditators who are striving day and night!
 If it is a mistake to mention this in an aside, be patient.*

About this, it is said in the *Root Mahāmudrā* Text:

*Like mental engagement ceases during sleep and unconsciousness,
 Do not cease mental engagement during meditation.
 Keep a watchful eye from afar with mindfulness that does not stray!
 And when thought movements are noticed, apply meta-awareness.
 At the nature of clarity and cognition
 Look nakedly, with sharp concentration*

That is the meaning taught.

[20. Four uncommon pith instructions on cultivating mental placements]

(60b.1) Thus, when practicing the mental 'placements' there are four uncommon essential precepts: looking at the entity of thoughts, letting them disappear on their own; (61a1) trampling and flattening thoughts; looking at how thoughts manifest and abandoning them; and uncommon precepts in regard to these. As for the first, the *Root Mahāmudrā* text states:

*Whatever thoughts arise.
 Identify them as just that.*

Thus, when focusing on the clarity and cognition which is the nature of one's own mind and holding it single-pointedly, if another thought arises, while remembering the original object, by nakedly looking 'from a side of the mind' at the entity of whatever thought has arisen, it cannot remain and dissolves like a bubble in water; suddenly, naturally disappearing, leaving one abiding in the clarity-cognition of one's mind. This was repeatedly said by great adepts such as Saraha, Śavaripa, and Tilopa, and is highly praised as an instruction for beginners to still the mind and accomplish the mental placements.

⁵⁷ Tib. 'du shes med pa'i lha.

As for trampling and flattening thoughts, the root text states:

*Or, like a swordsman
immediately cut down whatever thought arises.*

Like the story of the battle between an archer and swordsman told in the Vinaya Scripture, while (61a.1) abiding single-pointedly in holding the clarity-cognition of one's own mind, when any other thought arises, not allowing it to remain for even an instant, immediately severing its continuum.

The story of taming elephants is similar. Like an elephant driver advises the elephant to remain subdued. If the elephant misbehaves, the driver promptly uses a sharp hook to subdue it through the process of subjugation. Like that, we tell the mind it is good if it remains single-pointedly on the clarity-cognition [aspect of the mind] pointed out by the master's instructions. If it moves, we immediately sever the movement and allow ourselves to remain singly focused on the object. As [Bhāviveka] said in *Essence of the Middle Way*,⁵⁸

*Bind the mad elephant of the mind
to the stable pillar of the object;
tying it with the rope of mindfulness,
and gradually controlling it with the hook of meta-awareness.*

Saraha also taught to train the mind like the example of the elephant tamer.

[Thirdly,] as for looking at how thoughts manifest and abandoning them, the *Root Mahāmudrā* text states:

*When looking at the entity of thoughts which arise
they naturally disappear and clear emptiness appears.
Likewise, checking when mind is still
there is no obscuration, but vivid clear emptiness.*

*Seeing is said to mix stillness and movement.
Whatever thought arises
recognize the movement without stopping it
(61b1) settling on the entity of that,
it is like the example of a bird
flying from a cage on a ship.*

Thus, while holding the object single-pointedly, if one is unable to stop

⁵⁸ Its auto-commentary is *Blaze of Reason* (Skt. *Tarkajvāla*, Tib. *rTog ge 'bar ba*).

the repeated proliferation of thought, without wandering from singly focused memory of the root object, look nakedly at the entity of whatever thought has arisen; look where it goes and how it goes. When looking like that, when a bird is kept in a cage on a ship, just wanting to get out and fly, when it is let out in the middle of the ocean it flies and flies. But when it finds no place to land it has to come back to the very same ship, and then stays there with no more wish to fly. Likewise, thoughts have nowhere to go but land back to the very same singly focused mind and remain as if invisible.

[21. The uncommon way of regulating the distractive thoughts]

[Fourthly,] as for the uncommon precepts in regard to these practices, it is said in the *Root Mahāmudrā* text:

*While abiding at the end of cutting
without losing mindfulness, gently relax.
sharply concentrating, gently relax
That is where the mind is placed.*

Furthermore, as it is said,

*The very mind, which is bound by compulsion,
if relaxed, is liberated, without doubt.*

*(62a.1) Thus, relax without distraction.
When looking at the entity of thoughts that arise
they naturally disappear and clear emptiness appears.
Likewise, checking when mind is still
there is no obscuration, but vivid clear emptiness.
Seeing is said to mix stillness and movement, it is proclaimed.*

When practicing focusing single pointedly on the focal object pointed out by the master's instructions and stop the proliferation of thought as explained in the instructions above.

[22. Having understood the teacher's instruction of the object of meditation, how to eliminate the distractive thoughts should be implemented as mentioned earlier]

When the mind is slightly stilled and not moving to another object, you must master the way to sustain the continuation of this. With regard to that, you must learn the important precept of finding the suitable balance between tightness and looseness of concentration. If

you are way too tight the mind will be disturbed, issuing thoughts will arise, and the mind will wander. If you are too loose, although the mind will be somewhat stilled it will be influenced by laxity; this will obstruct attainment of pure mental concentration. To find the right balance is extremely difficult, so attainment of proper mental concentration is extremely rare, it is said. Master Candragomin said in the *Confession Praise*:⁵⁹

*If you rely on effort, mental excitation will occur.
If you abandon it, laxity will arise.
The right equipoise is difficult to find.
My mind is disturbed, so what should I do?*

Again, the *Confession Praise*:

*If effort is applied excitation will occur.
Loosening effort gives rise to laxity.
The midpoint between these is difficult to find.
My mind is disturbed, so what should I do? (62b1)*

[23. How to tighten and relax the object of meditation]

So what balance should we employ? It is said we should tight the concentration and relax the immediate desire for meditation. [Two-fold mindfulness:] To illustrate, when settling single-pointedly on the focal object, one should not be too tight in one's immediate desire to meditate, but relaxed; and, deep within, while focused continually on the object, not wandering to any other object with tightly concentrated mindfulness: these two together. It is with this thought in mind that statements are made such as 'undistracted, relax,' or 'vividly concentrate and loosely relax.' There are many who fail to comprehend a key point in the scriptures of the great masters. They interpret such statements in the teachings of these accomplished adepts, assuming that 'if you relax, realization will dawn' or [in some cases] 'settling without cognitive mode of the mindfulness might result in some stability', but misunderstandings these teachings often lead to the belief that 'the best relaxation is the best meditation'. Those who subscribe to these beliefs may find themselves habituating to laxity. Mistaking it for pure meditation, all their hard effort is fruitless. As the great dBen sa pa⁶⁰ states:

⁵⁹ Tib. *bshags bstod*; skt. Deśanātava. Candragomin and Aśvagoṣa are perhaps one same person.

⁶⁰ *Blo bzang don 'grub* (1505-56/66).

*When awareness is placed in non-conceptuality
with heightened tight concentration,
one cannot sustain the continuity of stability;
and if it is relaxed it is apparent that some stability quickly develops.*

*(63a.1) Yet, mistaking the development of laxity for meditation
they proclaim that the deepest point about meditation
is that the best meditation is the best relaxation.
Abandoning such foolish talk, may I develop faultless tranquil abiding!*

*If too tight, mental excitation makes it difficult to develop stability.
If too loose, laxity develops, and it is difficult to have expansion and
clarity.*

*Finding the balance is difficult; when relaxed, laxity develops.
If the best relaxation is the best meditation there is no reason for it to be
difficult!*

*Therefore, for it to become a cause of mastering the full measure of
meditation,
this must be purified and restrained. May I be protected from this!*

[24. Six Metaphors of Settling the Mind in Meditation]

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that without the essential instructions of a master, cultivating mental concentration can cause significant difficulties. This [challenge, along with the importance of guidance,] is also exemplified in the ancient story of Cūḍapanthaka.⁶¹

And on a further note, present day trainees more easily attain the mental abidings if they practice by means of six modes of settling:

1. Settling like the sun free from clouds
2. Settling like a great condor sailing through the sky
3. Settling like an ocean free of waves
4. Settling like a young child looking at the temple
5. Settling like the tracks of a bird in space
6. Settling like soft wool spreading out

These come from the scriptures of many great adepts such as Saraha. Settling like a young child looking at the temple (63b.1) is an especially good precept for beginners, repeatedly praised by the great adepts of

⁶¹ Tib. *'Phags pa lam phran bstan*, is one of the *gnas brtan bcu drug*. Skt. Cūḍapanthaka is one of the sixteen elders (Skt. *ṣoḍaśasthavirā*).

India. Lord Milarepa (rJe Mi la ras pa) also highly praised these instructions for practice. Their individual meanings have already been explained in the *Extended Bright Lamp*⁶² so they will not be set forth here. On the basis of their practice the nine mental placements are attained in succession. The way they are attained in the perception and experience of individual disciples, the way that obstacles are cleared, how the practice is advanced, and so forth, should be pointed out in detail by the master. (63b.3)

To summarize, once you are single-pointedly focused on the object, check your experience. If you find that the tightness of your concentration is causing mental excitation, loosen it slightly. If you find that the looseness of your concentration is causing laxity, tighten it slightly. Concentrated to a suitable degree between these two, again seek the factor of stability, free from discursive thought or scattering. Once you have stability, be wary of laxity by emphasizing the factor of clarity with intensity of your awareness. By alternating between emphasizing the factors of stability and clarity you will develop faultless mental concentration. On the contrary, do *not* stabilize the mind in mere clarity without intensity in its mode of ascertainment.

Some might wonder laxity and mental excitation are the principal obstacles of mental concentration that are emphasized in the scriptures, as well as their means of abandonment; (64 a1) so why are means of severing discursiveness emphasized in this instruction? That is a very important point to question, and we must settle the matter. Mental excitation is included in discursiveness, and there is a great deal of discursiveness that is not mental excitation; so, stopping discursiveness is simply a bigger category. Furthermore, when developing meditative stability by means of these instructions, the focal object itself is automatically very clear. [so, laxity which prevents clarity is not such a problem.] Also, for beginners, the primary obstacle to meditation is said to be the proliferation of discursive thoughts. Therefore, [this instruction] primarily focuses on methods to eliminate such thoughts.

In addition, this instruction is to be paired in union with the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment teachings. In the extensive and shorter Stages of the Path treatises, gross and subtle forms of both laxity and mental excitation have been identified, and how to rely on their antidotes has already been taught in detail. Keeping those instructions as the basis, we should understand that the tradition of these pith instructions are a skillful means for beginners to develop meditative stability more easily. Furthermore, when taught in connection with the

⁶² Auto-commentary to *The Highway of Victorious One: Root Text of dGe' ldan Mahāmudrā*, by Paṅ chen Blo bzang Chos kyi rgyal mtshan.

uncommon mode of instructions of tantra, in the root scriptures of these instructions, those of Guhyasamāja, and in many scriptures of the mahāsiddhas such as their songs of spiritual realization, the means of drawing in discursive thought is emphasized. (64 b1) When the eighty subtle concepts and their movement collect inward this includes all perceptions and objects, so it brings them all to a cease. Then, when the primordial mind manifests, Great Seal wisdom quickly dawns; this appears to be the ultimate intention behind this mode of instruction.

So, what is the means of abandoning laxity and excitation according to these instructions? The absorption to be accomplished here is one endowed with clarity and non-conceptuality. Clarity is hindered by laxity and non-conceptuality is hindered by excitation. Laxity is the mind laxity inwards and, although various levels of subtlety of laxity are identified, the scriptures describe it as unclear and more deceived. To identify a meditative experience free from both gross and subtle laxity, we depend on the scriptures of Je Tsongkhapa, alone. They include clear instructions on identifying gross and subtle laxity in the oral lineage, as set down in *The Melody of Lobsang's Laughter*:

*When cultivating unmoving mental concentration,
if intensity of focus slackens slightly
subtle laxity has taken hold.
When there is clarity without intensity,
middling laxity has arrived.
If clarity is also missing, then laxity is gross. (65 a1)*

[25. Differentiating Laxity from Mental Dullness and Mental Excitation from Discursiveness or Scattering]

Laxity (*bying ba*) and mental dullness (*rmugs pa*) are not the same. Laxity is taught to derive from mental dullness; under the influence of mental dullness, the body and mind feel heavy and unserviceable. Mental dullness is said to be a facet of ignorance. Mental excitation (*rgod pa*) is an outward discursiveness or scattering (*'phro ba*). There are multiple types of scattering: through attachment, through aversion, scattering to unspecified neutral objects, scattering to virtuous objects, and so forth. Mental excitation, however, is a scattering and running of the mind towards a pleasing object out of attachment. Protector Maitreya teaches that meta-awareness must be utilized as the antidote to laxity and excitation. Within undistracted mindfulness, meta-awareness must be set to check whether laxity or excitation are arising or not. There are two methods of generating meta-awareness. As for one, while in a state of undistracted mindfulness, maintaining that

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continuous state of mindfulness is itself the principal cause for developing meta-awareness. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,

*It is when mindfulness is present
then meta-awareness, that which exists
to protect it, will arrive.*

As for the uncommon method of generating meta-awareness, while in a state of undistracted mindfulness, it is that which checks whether laxity or excitation is arising or not. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*: (65 b1)

*That which checks from time to time
on the situation of body and mind;
just that, in short, is the protective
defining characteristic of meta-awareness.*

As for how to rely on the antidote to laxity and excitation, antidotes to laxity include contemplating the beneficial qualities taught in the *Stages of the Path* such as the qualities of the spiritual guide, the great meaning of human life with leisure and endowments, positive karmic cause and effect, qualities of the Three Jewels, and so on. Once you have induced certainty about these, the mere thought of them uplifts the mind, making it very easy to stop laxity. Furthermore, attending to these characteristics is extremely important. When laxity is dense, and when mental dullness and drowsiness develop, these antidotes should definitely be contemplated. If the laxity is light and only occasional, without scattering, tighten your concentration and continue to meditate. If the laxity is extremely dense and occurs repeatedly; if you are oppressed by sleepiness; if the meditation is lost to scattering; then rely upon the aforementioned antidotes; stand up and go for a walk; recite teachings on the drawbacks of mental dullness and sleepiness; look at the moon and stars and directions; wash your face with water, and so forth, as taught in *Vinaya, Hearer Grounds* and elsewhere. (66 a1) By putting effort into meditation that is mixed with sleepiness, your whole life could be spent in faulty practice, and all your efforts would become fruitless; so it is very important to be skilled in the points of these instructions. As for instructions to forcefully stop laxity: when laxity is very strong, say PHAT loudly and eject your mind into space. Mix your mind inseparably with the empty sphere of space and rest it in a space-like state of very clear and bright total emptiness. This clears the laxity; then continue meditating.

As for antidotes to mental excitation, this includes contemplating

impermanence, contemplating the suffering of saṃsāra, and so forth. If the excitation is weak, without losing the meditation to scattering, use any of the above instructions which sever excitation and scattering, and again focus on the object. As for instructions to forcefully stop excitation, if you are troubled by strong excitation, leave the focal object aside for some time and focus on the coming and going of your breath. Then press the upper energy winds of the body, white in color, downwards; and draw the lower energy winds of the body, yellow in color, upwards, (66 b1) joining them together at the level of the navel. Hold the mind unmoving there in vase breath meditation. Once the fault of scattering and mental excitation is pacified, meditate on the original focal object as before. You should learn more detail about the causes of laxity and excitation, individually and in common, how to rely upon their antidotes, and so forth, from the long and shorter *Stages of the Path to Awakening* treatises.

Third is how, in dependence on this, the stages of mental placement are generated. As said in the root text of Great Seal:

*The nature of such an equipoise
is unobscured, clear and bright,
not made of any form,
completely empty like space,
and vividly appearing as anything.*

Having arranged all the above-mentioned prerequisites for stabilizing the mind, by focusing single-pointedly on the object by means of mindfulness and meta-awareness and extending the duration of your meditation, your mental placement will gradually improve until you can effortlessly remain as long as you wish, even months or years. Unobscured by any laxity or scattering whatsoever, very clear and bright, like an untarnished mirror, able to reflect any of the animate or inanimate worlds; able to count even the smallest particles in a pillar or any form that appears; (67 a1) it will rest in the state of space-like emptiness which lacks any form whatsoever. If such absorption is not sustained by bliss of physical and mental pliancy it is called a 'single-pointed mind of the desire realm;' and when it is sustained by bliss of physical and mental pliancy it becomes Tranquil Abiding.

[26. The Nine Levels of Mental Placement and Their Relation to the Four Applications]

Such Tranquil Abiding is taught to be the indispensable foundation for the path of all three vehicles; and definitely necessary in order to

progress by way of any of the paths of the four classes of tantra, as well. Here, according to the Great Seal Commentary, when practicing such mental concentration, it is accomplished by applying eight antidotes to eliminate five faults; and attaining nine mental placements by way of six forces and four mental applications. The five faults and eight antidotes have already been explained. The nine mental placements are: 1. placing mind on its object, 2. continual placement, 3. replacement, 4. close placement, 5. subduing, 6. pacifying, 7. completely pacifying, 8. making single-pointed, and 9. equal placement. The six forces are: 1. the force of hearing, 2. force of contemplation, 3. force of mindfulness, 4. force of meta-awareness, 5. force of enthusiasm, and 6. force of familiarity. (67 b1) As for how the mental placements are attained by these forces: the first mental placement is attained through the force of hearing; the second mental placement is attained through the force of contemplation; the third and fourth mental placements are attained through the force of mindfulness; the fifth and sixth mental placements are attained through the force of meta-awareness; the seventh and eighth mental placements are attained through the force of enthusiasm; and the ninth mental placement is attained through the force of familiarity. The four mental applications are: 1. application of tightly concentrated engagement; 2. application of occasional, interrupted engagement; 3. application of uninterrupted engagement; and 4. spontaneous engagement. As for how these applications engage the nine mental placements: the first and second mental placements are with concentrated engagement; the third through seventh mental placements are with interrupted engagement; the eighth mental placement is with uninterrupted engagement; and the ninth mental placement is with spontaneous engagement.

These instructions on how to meditate on the nine mental placements were taught by Je Tsongkhapa in the oral lineage only; he did not explain it in his other written commentaries. Yet, if you examine his collected works in detail, you can ascertain that he had these instructions. In his *Queries from a Sincere Heart* (68 a1) there are many objections from an opponent regarding various points of these instructions, which Je Tsongkhapa refutes; and from that these instructions may be gleaned. In the Tranquil Abiding chapter of his shorter *Stages of the Path* Tsongkhapa indicates, a mode of meditation such as this, which takes the mind itself as the focal object, is clearly taught. Not placing the mind on any other focal object such as the form of a deity, cultivates just a non-conceptual mind; just rest in that without thinking about any mental object whatsoever. Remembering this, remain undistracted from the mind without scattering. Not wandering, remaining undistracted, means the same thing as

remembering the focal object without forgetting it. Thus, this meditation is not something other than cultivating mindfulness, because it also relies on mindfulness to bring out its force of ascertainment.

Thus, it is clearly indicated. He also clearly indicates the existence of these instructions on how to eliminate scattering. From the same text: At first various objects such as forms appear. As soon as they appear they automatically subside and disappear. Finally, when settling in equipoise, no signs of forms, sounds, etc., appear; only the mind's clarity and cognition and an aspect of bliss. For it to transform it into non-conceptuality, by not thinking or paying attention to anything, whatever thought that arises will be like a bubble bursting in water, unable to connect with discursive scattering, disappearing on the spot. (68 b1) Then, by meditating as before, there is no need to intentionally stop experiences of cognition and bliss; as soon as they arise it is like their covering is peeled away; they cannot bear to stay and automatically subside and disappear. The experience of cognition and bliss becomes more subtle. At that point, when in meditative equipoise, there is no appearance of anything, including your body. An experience arises in which your mind seems to be inseparable from space. When you arise from this there is an experience of your body suddenly appearing. Afterwards, although deluded thoughts of anger and so forth may arise, they are not at all like before. They are weaker and cannot last for long. This is the stage referred to as 'closely pacified.' There is an experience of great clarity which seems as if you could count all the tiny particles in the pillars and walls. When stability is very strong, even sleep will not be the same as before. There will be an experience of sleep mixing with the absorption, many dream appearances also disappearing, and so on.

Thus, he clearly teaches it here. The words of the Great Seal root text regarding this are (69 a1) none other than the teachings of the great adepts (mahāsiddhas); and their ultimate intention is high levels of the tantric path. The instructions presented here, however, are intended for beginners to easily accomplish focusing their minds. As said in the *Descent to Lañkā Sūtra*:⁶³

*Just as physicians give medicines
to patients for their sicknesses,
Buddhas give sentient beings
teachings fully suited to their minds.*

And, as said in the *Precious Garland*,

⁶³ Skt. *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra*.

*Just as language teachers have students
learn to read the alphabet,
so Buddhas reveal to trainees
the teachings that they can bear.*

As said, Buddhas' activities and skillful means are unexcelled. Ultimately, these instructions will also ripen the mind to quickly develop high practices of the tantric path. To take an example, the words of great adept Saraha:

*If the mind element, bound by compulsion,
is released, one is liberated, without doubt.*

He is describing bondage by the various dualistic concepts being released through the skillful means of tantra. Penetrating the points of the subtle body allows the extremely subtle mind to manifest just as it is. By meditating on that, all concepts and their movement cease, a clear light mind appears and, in dependence upon that, one quickly attains (69 b1) liberation. That was Saraha's intention in saying this. His means of focusing the mind was presented here as instructions for beginners to be able to focus their minds; in dependence upon them, the ultimate focusing of the mind will also be realized.

The secret aspects of these instructions, as often said before, should be taught only to those who have received highest yoga tantra initiation, who are keeping their commitments. Those who have not received the four initiations should be given these instructions only in their non-exclusive form. This completes the instructions on focusing the mind, including those of the orally transmitted tradition.

**[End of translation of Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide
to Tranquil Abiding]**

Author's colophon

(122a2) This teaching, *Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of oral Transmission : An Instruction Manual of Gelug Great Seal*, has been written at the behest of the Supreme Changkya Tulku, who sits like crown among the eminent teachers who are akin to victorious banners, unparallel to maintaining, safeguarding, and disseminating Tsongkhpa's doctrine.

He requested me to write an introductory guide to the Instruction of the Profound Path of the Great Seal, in accordance with the Gelug Oral Tradition that elucidates profound key points, substantiated by

scriptural quotations and logical reasonings, and supplemented with oral instructions.

Therefore, I, Yeshe Gyaltzen, a fully ordained monk, who had privilege to receive this teaching of oral instruction from master who have traversed on this remarkable path and attained high realization, have composed this text at Tashi Samtenling, which is tucked away in the remote forest area of Kyirong, lies on the border of Tibet and Nepal. May this teaching establish cause of victory against the degeneration of the Buddha's doctrine.

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