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The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra

From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness,
the Quintessence of the Great Mystery of the Mantra[yāna],
the Primordially Pure, Absolute Space of Samantabhadrī,
the Spontaneously Actualized Treasury of the Great Perfection¹

**by
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At the Retreat

**“Shamatha and Vipashyana in the Tradition
of
The Great Perfection”**

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The Commentary

[Introduction] [340]

From the crown of my head I beseech the Dharma King, the great treasure revealer, the regent of Padmasambhava,ⁱⁱ who truly sees the meaning of the Great Perfection of unmodified conscious awareness and is skilled in disseminating it to others: May I never be separated from you until I reach great enlightenment!

This [treatise] is a uniquely marvelous sign that the time is ripe for experiential realization due to the training of many previous generations in the unsurpassed Old Translation School, the Nyingma tradition, which is the essential dharma of the swift path to Buddhahood in one lifetime.

Here I shall present to the best of my ability a concise commentary on *The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*, a synthesis of the quintessence of the great mystery of the Mantra[yāna] [341], which infallibly reveals the nature of the breakthrough to original purity and the path of the direct crossing-over to spontaneous actualization. This includes three sections: (1) the meaning of the title, (2) the meaning of the text, and (3) the conclusion.¹

1 The Meaning of the Title

This section has four parts: (1) the title, (2) an explanation of the meaning of the title, (3) how the title was chosen, and (4) the reason for that choice.

1.1 The Title

The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra: From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness, the Quintessence of the Great Mystery of the Mantra[yāna], the Primordially Pure, Absolute Space of Samantabhadrī, the Spontaneously Actualized Treasury of the Great Perfection Is Presented Here

1.2 An Explanation of the Meaning of the Title

This section has two parts: (1) the basis from which it arises and (2) the title of the dharma that arises from it.

1.2.1 The Basis from Which It Arises

By the power of familiarization with the profound path of the stages of generation and completion, however objects appear, they all arise solely as **pure appearances**. [342] When it fully expands, the creative power of the subject that apprehends these appearances—the **primordial consciousness** that knows how they exist and the extent of their existence—becomes the means for achieving the supreme and common *siddhis*.ⁱⁱⁱ Since entrances to the path of skillful means and wisdom limitlessly arise from it, it is said to be **from the matrix**. The meaning of “matrix” is that it connects many things. In short, all the collections of dharmas that emerge from the creative power of the wisdom that arises from meditation are called “the matrix of pure appearances and primordial consciousness.”

1.2.2 The Title of the Dharma That Arises from It

When the nature of existence is apprehended within itself, it transcends words and concepts, so the presentation of the bodhisattva grounds and paths and so on cannot be applied to it. [343] However, in dependence upon the way it appears to disciples, the conventions of the ground, path, and fruition are used. In accordance with that, the union of the **primordially pure** essential nature of ultimate reality, the pristinely pure **absolute space of Samantabhadrī**, which is immutable throughout the three times, with the **spontaneously actualized** clear light totally encompasses all the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, without blending them together. Therefore, this is the **Great Perfection**. Since it is the basis from which all the qualities of the paths and fruition emerge, it is like a **treasury**, and this is the tantra of the ground. The subject that arises in accordance with the object, the absolute space of phenomena [344], is the primordial consciousness, or **wisdom**, that is inwardly aware of itself, and this is the tantra of the authentic path. The manifestation of its symbols in the form of names, words, and letters is that which designates the tantra of the path.

Its three divisions include tantras that appear as sounds, tantras that are renowned as sounds, and symbolic tantras. Their essential nature is wisdom, and they are imbued with the seven qualities of a vajra.^{iv} Due to familiarization with realization, reified appearances, together with their habitual propensities, are pierced and demolished, so it is called **The Sharp Vajra. Tantra** has the meaning of constant presence, without interruption, so it is said that “tantra” refers to continuity. Moreover, the tantra of the ground, the *sugatagarbha*, is constantly present from the time of being a sentient being up to buddhahood. *The Sublime Continuum* states, “It is immutable ultimate reality, which will be in the future as it was in the past.”^v

Its two divisions include the ground as the essence of the nature of existence and the delusive, imputed ground. This implies that the former is real and the latter is derivative. The path unites the ground and the fruition, so it is a tantra. As for its classification, between skillful means and liberation, it is the latter. The path dispels adventitious obscurations, and it manifests the essential nature of indivisibility of the ground and the fruition, so it is the fruitional path. Its two divisions include the dharmakāya for one's own sake [345] and the rūpakāya for the sake of others. This dharma synthesizes the **quintessence** of the definitive sūtras and collections of tantras that constitute the **great mystery of Mantra[yāna]**. It is said that it **is presented here**, for that is the case.

1.3 How the Title Was Chosen

In general, among the many ways of designating a title, in this case the title was chosen in reference to the meaning.

1.4 The Reason for That Choice

This is obvious.

2 The Meaning of the Text

This section has two parts: (1) the homage as a branch of the text as a whole, and (2) the actual explanation of the meaning of the tantra.

2.1 The Homage as a Branch of the Text as a Whole

To the supreme, Omnipresent Lord of all the buddha families and *maṇḍalas*—

To the sugatagarbha, I bow with unwavering faith.

The sugatagarbha is the basis of emanation of all the **buddha families**, for it is the nature of the body, speech, mind, sublime qualities, and enlightened activities of all the jinas of the three times. While ultimate reality is one, for the sake of disciples it merely appears as distinct manifestations, so it is the **Omnipresent Lord of all the maṇḍalas** of peaceful, expansive, powerful, and wrathful deities. Because it appears as the progenitor of all the buddhas, it is even more **supreme** than the buddhas. To sustain the stream of non-meditation in which your own visage manifests as the unique revealer of the Great Perfection—the original protector Samantabhadra, pristine awareness, the sugatagarbha—is to **bow with unwavering faith**. [346] The realization of subject and object as nondual is the homage of encountering the ultimate view. The purpose of the homage is that by perfecting the accumulations, obstacles are pacified, the treatise will be completed, one's intelligence will be perfected, and one will gain sublime realization.

2.2 The Actual Explanation of the Meaning of the Tantra

This section has three parts: (1) an account of the cause that gave rise to the tantra, (2) a discussion of the contributing conditions, and (3) the resultant comprehension of the actual meaning of the tantra.

2.2.1 An Account of the Cause That Gave Rise to the Tantra

This section has four parts: (a) how the appearances of phenomena dissolved into the absolute space of phenomena, (b) how the nature of existence of ultimate reality manifested, (c) how spontaneously actualized appearances emerged as the Teacher and his circle of disciples, and (d) the addendum of the qualities of disciples.

2.2.1.1 How the Appearances of Phenomena Dissolved into the Absolute Space of Phenomena

**In the equality of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path,
The pervasive emptiness of pristine space,
I, the great yogin of the dharmakāya, free of conceptual
elaborations,
Arose as an apparitional display of primordial
consciousness.**

Due to the power of sublime qualities acquired over many lifetimes, all phenomena included among **saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path**, as they delusively appear to ignorance, subsided into the **equality** of the originally pure primordial ground, absolute space, the **pervasive emptiness of pristine space**. After some time, I limitlessly pervaded that mode of existence, and I directly fathomed its essential nature by taking as the path the ultimate meaning of the breakthrough to original purity.

2.2.1.2 How the Nature of Existence of Ultimate Reality Manifested

When I, **the great yogin**, as the original Buddha Samantabhadra [347], or **the dharmakāya, free of conceptual elaborations**, emerged as an appearance from that ground, without deludedly succumbing to appearances as “other,” I recognized ultimate reality as my own great visage. Consequently, I took as the path the

appearances of the luster of pristine awareness and directly perceived the ultimate path of the direct crossing-over to spontaneous actualization. In the one **primordial consciousness** of the essential nature of great purity there **arose an apparitional display** of a buddhafiield, the Teacher, and his vast circle of disciples. Here is how they appeared.

2.2.1.3 How Spontaneously Actualized Appearances Arose as the Teacher and His Circle of Disciples

**The ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha,
Free of conceptual elaborations and imbued with the
three doors of liberation, is primordially enlightened.
As spontaneously actualized displays of the union of the
three kāyas in absolute space,
The Teacher and his circle of disciples appeared, their
minds indivisible.**

Because the original **ground dharmakāya, the sugatagarbha**, is **free of** the eight kinds of **conceptual elaborations**^{vi} and is **imbued with the three doors of liberation**,^{vii} it is **primordially enlightened**. It is enlightened as the progenitor of all the buddhas, and its unceasing, **spontaneously actualized**, natural luster is the saṃbhogakāya Samantabhadra, the Lake-Born Vajra. Its creative **displays** variously appeared as *nirmāṇakāyas*, including the Bodhisattva Vajra of Pristine Awareness.^{viii} **In the absolute space of the union of the three kāyas, the Teacher and his circle of disciples arose** as displays whose **minds were indivisible**. In dependence upon their appearance, I easily apprehended and fathomed this profound Dharma. In that place and at the time of that assembly of the Teacher and his circle of disciples [348], the meaning of the tantra definitely emerged. So to classify this

discourse in terms of common and uncommon teachings, it is the latter.

2.2.1.4 The Addendum of the Qualities of Disciples

This arose as the splendor of fine karma, prayers, and merit

Of myself and of some individuals with fortune equal to my own.

Those people who lack the karmic momentum of this path

Will get no more from this than from a drawing of food and wealth.

This space treasury of ultimate reality is granted as an inheritance

To people of good fortune.

This sublime entrance to the nonconceptual primordial consciousness of the minds of all the jinas of the three times **arose as the splendor of fine karma, prayers, and merit** acquired over the course of many previous lifetimes by **myself**, a vidyādhara, **and of some other individuals with fortune equal to my own**. **Those people who lack the karmic momentum of** having followed **this path** will either not encounter this path, or even if they do, they will not be attracted to it. Even if they are slightly drawn to it and they apply themselves to teaching and listening, due to their poor intelligence and faltering enthusiasm, they **will get nothing from this, any more than** if they had encountered **a drawing of food and wealth**. If they memorize it, they will not retain the words; if they ponder it, they will fail to understand it; and if they meditate, it will not arise in their mindstreams.

Therefore, **this** inexhaustible **space treasury of ultimate reality is granted as an inheritance**, or bestowed, by the self-arisen

Padmasambhava **to people of good fortune** endowed with faith, enthusiasm, and intelligence. He implied with this statement that in the future many people may achieve liberation in dependence upon this path. [349]

Phase One: Taking the Impure Mind as the Path

2.2.2 A Discussion of the Contributing Conditions

**For the satisfaction of the apparitional display of his circle of disciples,
The supreme Teacher Samantabhadra, the Omnipresent Lord Vajra,
Declared, "Listen!" to his circle of disciples, who were the nondual display of his own creative power.**

The topic of discussion is the request to explain the meaning of the tantra, for this is the condition that contributed to the emergence of the teaching. In this case, as a result of the natural sound of ultimate reality arousing the circle of disciples to make the request, the meaning of the tantra was ready to emerge in accordance with the minds of disciples of the future. **For the satisfaction of his circle of disciples**, who were an **apparitional display of** primordial consciousness, the naturally appearing, supreme Teacher who surpasses other buddhas, **Samantabhadra, the Omnipresent Lord**, the great **Vajradhara, declared, "Listen!"** Having caught their attention, the Teacher spoke **to his** emanated **circle of disciples, who were the nondual display of his own creative power**. Among common and uncommon teachings, these were the latter, for the minds of the Teacher and his circle of disciples were indivisible, which is to say that the Teacher exhorted and taught himself, and not anyone else.

The four related aspects of the significance of this section are (1) the subject of this tantra, namely the pristine awareness that is present as the ground dharmakāya, (2) the significance of gaining realization by hearing and reflecting upon the words of this tantra, (3) the essential significance of gaining liberation either in this life or in the intermediate period by practicing the realized meaning [350] with unflagging enthusiasm, and (4) the interdependent relationship among these aspects. These four aspects are characteristics of an authentic tantra or treatise.

2.2.3 The Resultant Comprehension of the Actual Meaning of the Tantra

This section has three parts: (1) the path of the breakthrough to original purity, (2) the path of the direct crossing-over to spontaneous actualization, and (3) the manner in which the indivisible nature of the ground and the fruition is experienced.

2.2.3.1 The Path of the Breakthrough to Original Purity

This section has three parts: (1) identifying the creator of all phenomena as the mind, (2) establishing the mind as baseless and rootless, and (3) how individuals with specific faculties may enter the path.

2.2.3.1.1 Identifying the Creator of All Phenomena as the Mind

Examine the body, speech, and mind and recognize the foremost among them as the all-creating monarch.

Here is the way to **examine** the agent, or **monarch**, that **creates all** phenomena as the mind, which is **foremost among the body, speech, and mind**. During the daytime, nighttime, and the intermediate period, due to the mind's self-grasping, the body and speech appear to the mind. Over the course of a lifetime, it is the

mind that experiences joy and sorrow. Finally, when the body and mind separate, the body remains as a corpse. When the speech disappears without a trace, the mind follows after karma and is the agent that wanders in saṃsāra. From one perspective, for those three reasons, **recognize** the foremost among them as the mind. From another perspective, none of those three is anything other than the mind; [351] therefore, by ascertaining them as the mind alone, recognize the foremost among them as the mind. The former perspective is determined in accordance with their conventional mode of appearances, while the latter perspective is determined in accordance with their conventional mode of existence.

To explain the meaning of the latter perspective a bit more, Mahāpaṇḍita Nāropā's treatise *The Synthesis of the View* states:

All phenomena that appear and come into being
Have no existence apart from the self-aware mind,
For it causes them to appear and be clear,
Just like the experience of one's own awareness.

If they were not the mind,

They would be unrelated to the mind and would not appear at all.

Determine conventional reality in that way.^{ix}

To the deluded mind, the body and mind appear as if they were different, but in terms of their mode of existence, they directly appear to nonconceptual consciousness and are clearly experienced. This indicates that they exist not as something material but simply as the natural illumination of one's own awareness, like consciousness that experiences joy and sorrow. If they were not the mind but were instead matter, like light and darkness, they could never interact with the mind, so they could never appear at all. For these reasons, the body and speech—indeed all appearing phenomena—are established as the mind.

2.2.3.1.2 Establishing the Mind as Baseless and Rootless

**The shape and color of the all-creating monarch,
As well as its origins, location, and destination are
objectless openness.**

**This is the spontaneous actualization of the nature of
the path of the breakthrough. [352]**

By examining in that way whether the mind that is the **all-creating monarch** of the body, speech, and mind, or of all phenomena, is really existent or really nonexistent, the mind is found to have no basis or root, so it is not established as any **shape** or **color**. The five elements and five [sensory] objects appear like objects of the mind, and your own body appears as its base. But if all these are investigated from an ultimate perspective, they are found to be like space, without being truly established as either one thing or many. Ascertaining **the origin, location, and destination** [of the mind] as **objectless openness is the spontaneous actualization of the nature of the path of the breakthrough**. This is not something freshly achieved, but is simply the knowledge of the mode of being of the nature of existence.

2.2.3.1.3 How Individuals with Specific Faculties May Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (1) how individuals of superior faculties enter the path and (2) how individuals of middling and inferior faculties enter the path.

2.2.3.1.3.1 How Individuals of Superior Faculties Enter the Path

**Simultaneous individuals enter the path with no basis
and no root.**

Others should come to rest in space,

And within three weeks they will certainly awaken and enter the path.

Thus, simply by determining the ultimate nature of the mind as having **no basis and no root**, **individuals** with superior faculties, who are of the **simultaneous** class, identify the vast, unimpeded consciousness that remains after discerning intelligence has naturally vanished. Since this is primordial consciousness, which transcends the mind, they **enter the authentic path**. [353]

2.2.3.1.3.2 How Individuals of Middling and Inferior Faculties Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (1) how individuals of middling faculties enter the path and (2) how individuals of inferior faculties enter the path.

2.2.3.1.3.2.1 How Individuals of Middling Faculties Enter the Path

The first of these two kinds of individuals, namely, **others** who do not have the fortune to identify primordial consciousness like that, should retire to a solitary place, practice guru yoga, and take the four empowerments.^x Then they should meditate on the domain of **space**, a pebble, a stick, or such things as a Buddha image or seed syllable, or at their heart they may visualize a radiant orb of five-colored light. By sustaining their attention and **resting** in meditative equipoise, **within three weeks** they will see with the eye of wisdom the primordial nature of existence. Then **they will certainly awaken and enter the path** of the Great Perfection.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2 How Individuals of Inferior Faculties Enter the Path

This section has two parts: (1) taking aspects of the mind as the path and (2) taking the essential nature as the path.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1 Taking Aspects of the Mind as the Path

This section has three parts: (1) the teaching, (2) the explanation, and (3) the synthesis.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.1 The Teaching

**Those of the class with inferior faculties
Identify stillness and movement,
And by taking the mind as the path, they are led to the
domain of pristine awareness.**

Those of the class with inferior faculties, not having the fortune to **identify** [primordial consciousness] like that, first recognize the difference between **stillness** with respect to consciousness and the **movement** of thoughts. **And, by first taking** the aspects of **the mind as the path**, finally **they are led to the domain of pristine awareness**.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.2 The Elaborate Explanation of How This Occurs

This section has four parts: (1) mindfulness of the essential nature of the path [354], (2) specific meditative experiences to be purified, (3) the essential nature of that which is to be abandoned and its remedy, and (4) how never to be separated from the experience of the practical instructions.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.2.1 Mindfulness of the Essential Nature of the Path

**First is single-pointed unification of the two.
Then by resting without observing, its natural power
manifests.
Abide loosely without mindfulness in a vacuous, wide-
open clarity;**

And resting in a luminous vacuity is called naturally luminous mindfulness.

According to the teachings, there are four types of mindfulness of the essential nature of the path. The **first** entails distinguishing between stillness and movement, and by the power of familiarizing yourself with their different appearances, there **is single-pointed** mindfulness of the **unification of the two**. **Then**, even while **resting without** strenuously **observing** them like before, as **its natural power manifests**, there is manifest mindfulness. **Abiding loosely without mindfulness in a vacuous, wide-open clarity**, a spacious vacuity, constitutes lying down on a bed that is devoid of mindfulness, which is the substrate. Once coarse mindfulness has subsided, **resting in a luminous vacuity is called naturally luminous mindfulness**, or the substrate consciousness.

The former two kinds of mindfulness [single-pointed mindfulness and manifest mindfulness] directly perceive whatever creative displays arise, while during the latter two [the absence of mindfulness and naturally luminous mindfulness], apart from abiding solely in dependence upon a subtle mode of cognition, all lustrous appearances and creative displays of thoughts cease, so there is only nonconceptuality. These kinds of mindfulness are aroused by the path, and since they descend to the substrate and its corresponding consciousness, this is called the substrate of descent. [355] Some teachers regard the first stage as the “one taste” and the second as “freedom from conceptual elaborations.” Others claim it is ethically neutral, but whatever they say, one has arrived at the essential nature of the mind.^{xi}

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.2.2 Specific Meditative Experiences to Be Purified

For everyone the various experiences of bliss, vacuity, and clarity

**Become objects of craving and attachment;
And meditative experiences of illnesses and discomfort
in the body, speech, and mind
Unbearably arise over time.**

Occasionally on this path, due to being bound by coarse and subtle grasping of mindfulness, there may certainly arise **various experiences for everyone**, such as **bliss** like the warmth of a fire, **clarity** like the breaking of the dawn, and **vacuity**, or nonconceptuality, like an ocean unmoved by waves. However, if you don't know that these deceptive meditative experiences are not to be believed or trusted, and if you fixate on them as the highest virtues such that they **become objects of craving and attachment**, they will become nothing more than causes of rebirth in the three realms of mundane existence. Therefore, even if you cultivate them for a long time, you will not rise above saṃsāra. Moreover, from your guru's teachings, you must thoroughly understand how outer upheavals of apparitions of gods and demons, inner upheavals of physical illnesses, and secret upheavals of various joys and sorrows, and so on, **unbearably arise over time** as various **meditative experiences of illnesses and discomfort in the body, speech, and mind**. [356]

**2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.2.3 Recognizing the Essential Nature of That
Which Is to Be Abandoned, and Its Direct Remedy as
the Foremost Path**

**Whenever you proudly hope for good things and cling to
them,
And fear bad things and reify inflictors of harm,
You have stumbled upon a dangerous juncture that can
lead you astray.**

Whenever you have fallen under the influence of **proudly hoping for and clinging to things** that seem to be **good**, such as material gain, respect, and renown, **and fearing things** that seem to be **bad**, such as misconduct, abuse, and slander by your enemies—this makes for misery and suffering. In short, insofar as you **reify** all gods and **inflictors of harm** and all joys and sorrows, **you have stumbled upon a dangerous, obstructive juncture that can lead you astray**. Thinking, “I will be unable to ascend to the supreme city of great liberation,” take this to heart. Whatever good and bad experiences, joys and sorrows, and so on arise, there is no need to counteract them, for mere appearances cannot bind you, as Ācārya Āryadeva wrote:

These are mere appearances and are not to be blocked.

Instead, stop reifying them.

The real root of the thing to be blocked is the mind that reifies appearances. Outwardly, everything that appears as demons, malevolent spirits, and deceptive māras arises from nothing other than this root. [357] Consequently, without subduing it, there will be no end to subduing all the outward demons and malevolent spirits, one by one.

The general synthesis that is the sole, vital point of the path

Is ascertaining all experiences of pleasure, pain, and indifference

As false impressions of unreal meditative experiences.

**By releasing them, without blocking or embracing them,
You bring an end to deviations and losses, and this is
the one eye of wisdom.**

The general synthesis that is the remedy of all that is to be abandoned and **the sole, vital point of all paths is ascertaining** that even though **all good and bad experiences of pleasure, pain,**

and indifference appear, they are unreal, delusive appearances, nothing more than **false impressions of unreal meditative experiences**. **By releasing them** as being of one taste, **without blocking** the bad **or embracing** the good, adverse circumstances will arise as the path and obstructive conditions will arise as aids. In so doing, **you bring an end to** adversities of **deviations, losses,** and mistakes. The felicity of the **wisdom** of infallibly seeing the profound meaning of the nature of existence is indispensable for entering the path, so **this is like the one eye**. A more elaborate explanation of the manner in which everything that appears consists of delusive appearances that are not established as real will be presented later.

This is the actual path praised by the jinas for effortlessly realizing the meaning, but as the means for this to occur, first you must familiarize yourself with [358] the union of focused *śamatha* and investigative *vipaśyanā*. Novices should practice *śamatha* from the phase of single-pointedness until the experience of conscious awareness, as well as *vipaśyanā*, which is implicitly taught here, without letting them disintegrate. So here they are taught sequentially.

2.2.3.1.3.2.2.1.2.4 How Never to Be Separated from the Experience of the Practical Instructions

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual friends

Should cherish the five topics as the sublimity of the path.

**If you strive too hard in practicing single-pointedness,
The power of your mind will decline; and with stagnant mindfulness,**

Although your body is human, your mind becomes that of an animal.

**Some people stray into delirium,
So inseparably devote yourself to a spiritual friend.**

Those who have become distant from sublime spiritual friends who reveal the path may not know how to distinguish between what is and is not the path or how to cut through their uncertainties and false assumptions. So the previously presented **five topics** on stillness and movement and the four kinds of mindfulness are **the sublimity of the path**. You should know that they are indispensable when first venturing into practice, and you must **cherish** that knowledge by gaining the firm certainty of proper understanding.

Some regard the practice that is merely initial as being the ultimate nature of existence and strive only **in the practice** of **single-pointedness**. Or, without knowing how to apply the appropriate degree of effort in accordance with the state of their own mindstreams, like blocking a water canal, they regard the mere single-pointed awareness of stopping thoughts as the [359] highest view and meditation. Then, **if they strive much too hard** in the practice, the functioning of the channels and elements—for some people who are dominant in the water element or earth element—causes the analytical **power of their minds to decline**. Their **mindfulness then becomes stagnant**, and **though their body is human, their mind becomes that of an animal**, by becoming stupid and turgid. With this in mind, Mañjughoṣa Sakya Panchen wrote:

Striving only in meditation, without study,
Is a way to achieve rebirth as an animal.

Some people who are dominant in the fire element or earth element **stray** off the path as their minds become muddled **due to delirium**, fainting, and so on. **So** cut through your false assumptions by **inseparably devoting yourself to a** sublime **spiritual friend** who knows how to teach the essential points of this

path correctly. Even if you lack such good fortune, it is indispensable that you, without falling into indolence, properly seek out and familiarize yourself with the practical instructions of the vidyādhara of the past who have achieved siddhis by way of this path.

2.2.3.1.3.2.1.3 The Synthesis

**In short, even if you strive diligently in this phase of
these practices for a long time,
Taking the mind as the path
Does not bring you even an iota closer to the paths
Of liberation and omniscience,
And your life will certainly have been spent in vain!
So understand this, you fortunate people.**

In short [360], these practices from śamatha to luminous, cognizant consciousness and the substrate consciousness, as taught previously, constitute the **phase of taking** the aspects of **the mind as the path**. But as long as it is divorced from the vipaśyanā of knowing the nature of existence, this **does not bring you even an iota closer to the path of liberation** from the suffering of mundane existence **and** the path of **omniscience** that liberates from the two extremes. Thus, **even if you strive diligently in these practices for a long time**, this does nothing more than perpetuate saṃsāra. **So understand** how **your life will certainly have been spent in vain!** With these words he offered compassionate advice to **fortunate people** who are following this path.

However, whether or not people have identified pristine awareness within themselves, those who become muddled due to distraction and sloth should first mount their discursive mind, which is like a cripple, onto their breath, which is like a blind, wild stallion. By tethering it with meditative experience and sustained attention so that they can meditate uninterruptedly, eventually all coarse and

subtle obsessive thoughts will appear to be dispelled—and uncontrived, primordially present consciousness will manifest. When one alights upon the great nonmeditation of pristine awareness [361], it is easy for the guru's introduction to pristine awareness to strike home. Given how very important it is for disciples not to stray onto false paths, this needs to be clearly taught, as was implied in the preceding passage. This concludes the synthesis of this phase, revealed in *The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra*.

Footnotes

ⁱ Dūdjom Lingpa, *The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra: From the Matrix of Pure Appearances and Primordial Consciousness, the Quintessence of the Great Mystery of the Mantra[yāna], the Primordially Pure, Absolute Space of Samantabhadrī, the Spontaneously Actualized Treasury of the Great Perfection. Dag snang ye shes draw ba las, ka dag kun tun bzang mo'i dbyings, lhun grub rdzogs pa chen po'i mdzod, shes rig rdo rje rnon po'i rgyud, gsang chen sngags kyi yang bcud. Collected Works of the Emanated Great Treasures, the Secret, Profound Treasures of Dūdjom Lingpa, Volume 17* (Phuentsoling, Bhutan: Lama Kuenzang Wangdue, 2004), 609–22.

ⁱⁱ This presumably refers to Dūdjom Lingpa's root guru, Lama Jamyang.

ⁱⁱⁱ The supreme siddhi is the perfect enlightenment of a buddha, while the common siddhis include: (1) the siddhi of celestial realms, the ability to dwell in celestial realms while still alive; (2) the siddhi of the sword, the ability to overcome any hostile army; (3) the siddhi of medicinal pills, the ability to become invisible by holding blessing pills in your hand; (4) the siddhi of fleet-footedness, by which you can walk around a lake in an instant by wearing boots you have blessed; (5) the

vase siddhi, by which you can create a vessel that renders inexhaustible anything you put inside it, food or money for example; (6) the siddhi of yakṣas, the power to make yakṣas your servants; (7) the siddhi of the elixir [Skt. *amṛta* or “ambrosia”], which gives you a lifespan as long as the sun and the moon, the strength of an elephant, the beauty of a lotus, and makes you feel as light as cotton wool whenever you arise from your seat; and (8) the siddhi of the balm of magic sight, which, when applied to your eyes, allows you to see things beneath the earth, such as treasures and so on.

^{iv} The seven qualities of a vajra are invulnerability, indestructibility, reality, incorruptibility, unchangeability, total unobstructability, and invincibility.

^v Tib. *rgyud bla ma*; Skt. *Uttaratantra*

^{vi} The eight conceptual elaborations are origination and cessation, existence and nonexistence, going and coming, and one and many.

^{vii} The three doors of liberation are emptiness, signlessness, and desirelessness.

^{viii} Tib. *rig pa'i rdo rje*

^{ix} Tib. *lta ba mdor bsdus*

^x The four empowerments are (1) the vase, or water empowerment, (2) the secret, or crown empowerment, (3) the wisdom-gnosis, or vajra empowerment, and (4) the word, or bell empowerment.

^{xi} These two sentences compare with VE p. 27–28, pecha 46.