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**Seeds of Words and Their Meanings:
An Unmistaken Presentation of the View
Expounded by the Venerable Founding
Masters of the Sakya Tradition**

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

This text includes Vajrayāna content. Please be aware that some Vajrayāna texts may only be fully understood and appreciated through receiving the necessary empowerments, transmissions, or practice instructions from a qualified teacher.

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Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

In Buddhism, the term “view” generally indicates the understanding of reality that informs one’s course of action. As such, it constitutes the foundation of the path. Based on the view, the aspirant cultivates wholesome and liberating states of mind and adopts skillful conduct. Together, view, meditative cultivation, and disciplined conduct form the comprehensive path of training taught by the Buddha.

In *Seeds of Words and Their Meanings*, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo expounds the view according to the Precious Oral Instructions on the Path Including the Result, commonly referred to as Lamdre, which comprises the core cycle of teachings transmitted in the Sakya tradition.¹ Based on the *Vajra Verses* of Mahāsiddha Virūpa, these teachings are composed of two main sections: the three perceptions, which are the exoteric teachings in common with the Perfection Vehicle, and the three continua, the esoteric teachings on the path of Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra. As Khyentse Wangpo points out at the beginning of this work, the view is taught in both contexts.

In relation to the teachings on the three perceptions, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo elucidates the view of the middle way according to two instruction lineages: one going back to the writings of Nāgārjuna and his followers, and the other based on the teachings of Maitreya.² For the former, he quotes a verse from Nāgārjuna’s disciple Āryadeva, which describes the process of purification in three steps: turning away from unwholesome conduct to avoid rebirth in the lower realms, negating the existence of the self to establish the ground for liberation, and finally cutting all conceptual elaborations to eradicate the root cause of saṃsāra. While the primary focus of these instructions is on the ultimate view itself, the instructions from Maitreya’s lineage emphasize the meditative process aimed at deconstructing the falsely imagined duality of apprehended objects and the apprehending mind, culminating in direct perception of the mind’s natural luminosity. This recognition is then cultivated and refined until

all latencies of ignorance are completely purified, resulting in the state of perfect awakening.

In relation to the three continua, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo expounds the instructions on the view based on four key points: searching for the mind, introducing the ground of experience as the union of luminosity and emptiness, establishing this as pristine wisdom, and gaining experience through familiarization. This last section contains the renowned instructions on the nature of mind according to the Sakya tradition, explaining it by means of three points: establishing appearances as mind, establishing mind as illusory, and establishing the illusory as devoid of inherent nature.

Important Sources

The Sakya tradition is famously built on the activities of four great translators,³ one of whom was Drogmi Lotsāwa Śākya Yeshe (eleventh century). This master received three of the eight great transmission lineages of the Hevajra teachings, of which Virūpa's pith instructions—passed on through the Indian masters Kāṇha, Ḍamarūpa, Avadhūti, and Gayādhara—are regarded as especially important. Another important source of the Lamdre teachings is the short lineage of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (twelfth century), the first founding master of the Sakya tradition, who received the entire cycle in a series of visionary encounters directly from Virūpa himself.

The most recent comprehensive collection of writings on the Lamdre tradition, edited by the late Khenchen Appey Rinpoche (1926–2009) and comprising forty-three volumes, contains a great number of biographies, commentaries, rituals, meditation liturgies, and pith instructions according to both of the Lamdre traditions maintained to this day in the Sakya school: those teachings given to close disciples and those given to larger groups.⁴ Until the eleventh century, the teachings on the three perceptions and the three continua were transmitted exclusively in an oral lineage. It was Sachen Kunga Nyingpo who, with the permission of his master, was the first to put these instructions to paper. The most renowned and commonly taught commentaries on these instructions are those of Ngorchon Könchok Lhundrub and Paṇchen Ngawang Chödrak. Other important commentators, especially regarding the transmission for close disciples, were Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk, who was a previous incarnation in the line of Khyentse Wangpo, and Mangtö Ludrub Gyatso. Both these masters were eminent disciples of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso, one of the most influential masters of the Sakya school.

It is interesting to note that Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo does not name or quote any particular master or writing of the Lamdre tradition in this text. He only cites Āryadeva, Nāgārjuna, Mañjuśrī, and the master Mañjughoṣa Narendrakīrti as scriptural supports for some of the points he makes. It is therefore recommended to

consult the works of the aforementioned masters to delve deeper into the view expounded in the Sakya tradition.

OUTLINE

I. THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE WAY

- A. The Pith Instruction of Ārya Nāgārjuna
- B. The Pith Instruction of the Protector Maitreya
 - 1. Cutting the Deluded Perception of Apprehended Objects
 - 2. Cutting the Deluded Perception of an Apprehending Subject

II. THE PRISTINE WISDOM OF MAHĀMUDRĀ

- A. Searching for the Mind, the Ground of Experience
- B. Introducing It as the Union of Luminosity and Emptiness
- C. Establishing It as the Fundamental, Innate Pristine Wisdom
- D. Experience through Familiarization
 - 1. Establishing Appearing Objects as Mind
 - 2. Establishing Mental Perceptions as Illusions
 - 3. Establishing the Illusory as Devoid of Inherent Nature
 - 1.1 Establishing All Phenomena as Dependently Arising
 - 1.2 Establishing All Phenomena as Inexpressible

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Seeds of Words and Their Meanings

*Namo gurubhyaḥ!*⁵

According to the Precious Oral Instructions on the Path Including the Result and other teachings transmitted by the Great and Glorious Sakyapa,⁶ the manner in which the view is expounded can be condensed into two approaches: (1) the view of the middle way taught in the context of the instructions on the three perceptions and (2) the section on the pristine wisdom of mahāmudrā taught in the context of the instructions on the three continua.

I. The View of the Middle Way

The view of the middle way includes the pith instructions of Ārya Nāgārjuna and those of the Protector Maitreya. [214]

A. The Pith Instruction of Ārya Nāgārjuna

Ācārya Āryadeva states:

First, turn away from what is unwholesome,
In the middle, negate the self,
And in the end, overturn all foundations for views—
Those who understand this are wise indeed.⁷

This means that, at the beginning, renunciation is generated based on impure perception, followed by the cultivation of love, compassion, and relative bodhicitta from among [the practices related to] the perception of experience. Turning away from

unwholesome deeds through these means, one is established at the level of higher rebirth.⁸

In the middle, at the time of cultivating ultimate bodhicitta, belief in the self is negated by cutting elaborations of apprehending things as truly existent. This establishes one in the ground of liberation. Furthermore, one identifies belief in true existence in terms of apprehending the five skandhas of one's own continuum as truly existent. If these skandhas were truly existent, they would have to exist primordially, independent of causes and conditions. However, as they exist only due to causes and conditions, they are not truly existent. Establish this reasoning with certainty until you truly understand it.

Then, as a first step, through focused concentration on this view, defeat thoughts that cling to true existence. In the middle, relax the mind into the view of the lack of true existence. Finally, alternate between these two or remain in the natural state—without losing awareness of the view, being free of thoughts and completely open, as if awestruck.⁹ Having gained trust in this, [215] all phenomena are released into the lack of true existence. At this point, one enters the state of union by suffusing the previously generated state of calm abiding with the view by means of its key points.

In the end, since karma and mental afflictions have their origin in thoughts apprehending things as truly existent, which in turn comes from conceptual elaborations or clinging to signs, the foundation of the view that sees things as not truly existent is negated as well. When this is embraced with skillful means, there arises the pristine wisdom of omniscience. That being so, rather than continually bringing forth the certainty that all phenomena lack inherent existence through the key points of dependent arising, one should ascertain that the object—emptiness—is not something to be apprehended in any way as “existent” or “nonexistent,” and so forth, because it is not the domain of the dualistic mind. Having gained certainty in this understanding, unsullied by elaborations related to objects of the mind, all conceptual views are relinquished and one rests in a state of utter equality, not grasping at anything.

Therefore, Lord Mañjuśrī stated: “If there is grasping, it is not the view.”¹⁰ This indicates the relinquishment of clinging to true existence in the middle stage of the cultivation of the view and the elimination of clinging to signs in its final stage.

B. The Pith Instruction of the Protector Maitreya

Natural luminosity free of elaborations at the time of the ground is the cause of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. When it is not recognized for what it is, it dawns as the duality of apprehended objects and an apprehending subject. Since the manifest affliction of this dualistic perception along with its dormant latencies is innate ignorance, the root of saṃsāra, [216] its source must be cut and dissolved into the ultimate expanse. This has

two aspects: cutting the deluded perception of apprehended objects and cutting the deluded perception of an apprehending subject.

1. CUTTING THE DELUDED PERCEPTION OF APPREHENDED OBJECTS

The first aspect requires three steps: seeking the samādhi that achieves perception at the level of heat, seeking the samādhi of enhanced perception at the level of peak, and seeking the samādhi that realizes the nonexistence of the apprehended at the level of forbearance.¹¹

Regarding the first, free of the duality of apprehended and apprehender and beyond all limitations of conceptual elaboration, self-cognizant pristine wisdom resides within one's own mind stream. However, because it is obscured by grasping at "external phenomena" as separate from one's mind, this notion must be eliminated. The way to do this is to first determine that these objects are nothing but the mind's deluded perceptions—in reality, not even a single particle truly exists separate from mind—and then to bring about an experience of this reality. In this way, one gains certainty in the understanding that "external phenomena" are nothing but mental delusions in reality devoid of true existence. Thus, clear perception arises to a small degree. Second, by greatly enhancing this clear perception, the experience becomes exceptionally clear.

Third, by continuing to exert oneself in this way, the manifest deluded perceptions of apprehended objects that veil one's mind stream are purified and there arises an extraordinarily bright and blissful clear perception of the mind. Even though deluded perceptions of the inner apprehending mind have not subsided at this point, since deluded perceptions of externally apprehended objects have ceased [217] and there is not the slightest clinging to them as truly existent, it is also called the samādhi that achieves perception.¹²

2. CUTTING THE DELUDED PERCEPTION OF AN APPREHENDING SUBJECT

Through sustained effort, the deluded perceptions of the inner apprehending mind fade out as well, and a powerful clear perception of the luminosity of one's mind shines forth. This experience is similar to directly seeing [the nature of mind]. This is the unobstructed samādhi at the level of supreme worldly phenomena. Even though innate ignorance is not yet purified, the luminosity experienced at this point is purified of the majority of the manifest deluded perceptions of duality that arise from that ignorance. With this samādhi, the path of seeing is accomplished without interruption and with ease.

Through further perseverance, even though the dormant latencies of innate ignorance—namely, the ground of the elaborations of the duality of apprehended and apprehender—are not yet purified, innate ignorance in its manifest state is. With the arising of clear perception and pristine wisdom, one sees the bare and vivid pristine wisdom that is self-cognizant and self-illuminating.

After the manifest deluded perceptions related to the experiences of perception, enhancement, and achievement have faded away and their counteragents, the clear perceptions of the experiences of perception, enhancement, and achievement, have gradually unfolded, the coarse aspect of manifest innate ignorance ceases as well, and one has the experience of great luminosity at the level of supreme worldly phenomena.

The completion of this cultivation, directly seeing the aspect purified of innate ignorance, together with its dormant latencies, [218] is the first bhūmi. Then, the various aspects of ignorance that obstruct the ten bhūmis are gradually purified, enhancing this clear perception. On the eleventh bhūmi, the level of buddhahood, the luminosity that is endowed with the twofold purity and is beyond the objects of the mind is directly seen.

II. The Pristine Wisdom of Mahāmudrā

Regarding the pristine wisdom of mahāmudrā taught in the context of the instructions on the three continua: after the bestowal of the empowerment, the view of the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is first introduced and then experientially integrated. This consists of four points: (1) searching for the mind, the ground of experience; (2) introducing it as the union of luminosity and emptiness; (3) establishing that itself as the fundamental, innate pristine wisdom; and (4) experientially integrating its meaning through meditative cultivation.

A. Searching for the Mind, the Ground of Experience

At first, one directs the cognitive awareness inward to analyze and examine the mind in detail with such questions as: Where is my mind? What does it look like? Does it have a color or a shape?

B. Introducing It as the Union of Luminosity and Emptiness

Even though no certainty is gained by investigating the mind in this way, at the conventional level one identifies the mind as mere unceasing, luminous awareness and there dawns to a small degree the experience of its self-arising from within. This is the understanding of one of the three properties of the mind, referred to as “luminosity, the characteristic of the mind.”

By investigating its essential nature, one gains certainty with regard to its emptiness, free of the three aspects of arising, ceasing, and abiding. This is the understanding of the second of the mind’s three properties, referred to as “emptiness, the nature of the mind.” [219] Thus, when there is a conceptual experience, one finds that it is mere luminous awareness, which, rather than a nihilistic emptiness, can appear as anything whatsoever. Looking at its essential nature, one determines it to be emptiness because no intrinsic nature whatsoever can be apprehended.

These two aspects being inseparable, it is empty while being luminous: the nature of mind is emptiness and the movement of that which investigates emptiness is luminosity. And it is luminous while being empty: from within its empty nature, luminosity naturally manifests. Determining that luminosity and emptiness are in union is called “reaching decisive certainty with regard to union.” When a genuine experience of this dawns, rather than mere theoretical understanding, whatever appears is experienced as the play of the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. This is the understanding of the properties of the mind in their entirety, the union of luminosity and emptiness, called “the uncontrived essential nature of the mind.”

C. Establishing It as the Fundamental, Innate Pristine Wisdom

By introducing the fundamental, innate pristine wisdom, this pristine wisdom is identified as neither one’s mind in a mere general sense nor the mind characterized by deluded perceptions. Instead, it is posited as the unmistaken union of luminosity and emptiness at the time of the ground.

Many names are given to it in the sūtras and tantras, including “buddha nature,” “mind of complete purity,” “mind of natural luminosity,” [220] “mind vajra,” and so forth. It is also called the “causal continuum of the universal ground.” The innate deluded mind that arises in one’s mind stream is adventitious saṃsāra; this is the object to be purified.

One may wonder, “How so?” Even though innate pristine wisdom is the nature of the adventitious mind that is saṃsāra, and has been closely associated with it since beginningless time, it has not yet been recognized. The innate pristine wisdom is nirvāṇa. Even though these two are designated as distinct aspects, they cannot be differentiated from the perspective of their essential nature. This is called “the view of the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa at the time of the cause.”

Resting in equipoise in the recognized pristine wisdom free of the duality of apprehended and apprehender, the union of luminosity and emptiness of one’s mind is called “the view of the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa at the time of the path.”

D. Experience through Familiarization

Meditative cultivation requires that one stabilize and enhance the view based on three key points.

1. ESTABLISHING APPEARING OBJECTS AS MIND

The view that all externally appearing objects are but deluded perceptions, stirred up by the karmic latencies present in one’s own mind and devoid of true existence, is established by means of scriptural quotations and examples. Through meditative cultivation, one gains decisive certainty that appearing objects are mind. One then settles in this view, without clinging, in a state of clear and unsullied awareness. By

understanding in this way that external objects are not real, [221] one's view is similar to that of the True Images Mind-Only school.¹³ In this way, one's view is enhanced by relying on the aspect of natural luminosity.

2. ESTABLISHING MENTAL PERCEPTIONS AS ILLUSIONS

By establishing with scriptural quotations and examples the notion that external apprehended objects are deluded perceptions contrived by the deluded apprehending mind, and that just as there are no apprehended objects there is no apprehending mind either, [the understanding of] the empty aspect of the mind is stabilized and enhanced. However, even though one understands that the deluded duality of apprehended and apprehender is devoid of true existence, this view is still similar to that of the False Images Mind-Only school, because empty luminosity, which is neither the apprehended nor the apprehender, is held to be truly existent.

3. ESTABLISHING THE ILLUSORY AS DEVOID OF INHERENT NATURE

One may wonder, "Even though all apprehended objects and apprehending subjects are not real, might there be some substance other than them that truly exists?" In order to show that that substance too is devoid of inherent existence, there are two points: establishing it as dependently arising and as inexpressible.

1.1 Establishing All Phenomena as Dependently Arising

Compounded phenomena are not truly existent, due to their dependent nature. Uncompounded phenomena are either posited in relation to compounded phenomena or the term "uncompounded" is given in relation to the compounded phenomena's aspect of lack of true existence. Apart from this, [222] no truly existent uncompounded phenomena are seen. As stated by Nāgārjuna:

If the compounded is not existent at all,
How could the uncompounded exist?¹⁴

To establish in this way through scriptural quotations and examples—both being based on the reasoning of dependent arising—that all phenomena are devoid of inherent existence is the understanding of the wondrous path of the middle way, free from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. This is referred to as "the view equal to that of the Perfection Vehicle." Thus, misconceptions are eliminated by means of hearing and reflection. The meditative experience of emptiness of true existence is also experienced in union with the luminosity of the fundamental mind. This is the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

1.2 Establishing All Phenomena as Inexpressible

By practicing in this manner, there arises the conviction that appearing objects are mind, that mind is illusory, and that the illusory is dependently arising. Phenomena that seem contradictory are thus experienced without contradiction and certainty is

born. Since the exact nature of this experience cannot be put into words, it is merely labeled “inexpressible.”

Thus, even though its essential nature is inexpressible, the meaning of the indivisibility of luminosity and emptiness is understood through the master’s pith instructions and with the help of quotations and logical reasoning. By then merging with the inconceivable expanse, the uncultivated nature is actualized. Based on the great seeing, which consists of not seeing, the true nature is realized without restrictions. Thus, liberation is gained.

Even though ultimately there is nothing to awaken, [223] on the relative level the methods of awakening are displayed by force of aspiration and compassion, bringing beings to spiritual maturity. At this point, eight examples are taught: four common examples and four uncommon ones.¹⁵ The former merely bring about the understanding that appearing objects are mind, that mind is illusory, and that the illusory is devoid of inherent nature. This understanding only neutralizes the poison of ignorance, which is the first of the factors to be eliminated, but not the poison of the persistent flow of thoughts, which is the root of saṃsāra. It is therefore called “the contaminated view at the time of the cause.” It is classified as “view” merely in terms of being the understanding of the object.

Because the pristine wisdom that arises from the latter examples, empowerment, and the two stages has the power to neutralize the poison of effort of the persistent flow of thoughts, it is called “the uncontaminated view at the time of the path.” It is also called “exemplifying pristine wisdom” due to its ability to intimate the actual pristine wisdom. It is classified as “view” in terms of experiential meditative absorption. Having practiced in this way, the mind does not get lost in the profusion of deluded perceptions and whatever appears is seen as the play of pristine wisdom. Though deluded perceptions may still occur, by striving to recollect the view, they all dawn as pristine wisdom, like blocks of ice melting into water. This is the uncommon characteristic of this teaching.

In brief, it is the intention of the tantras [224] and the great accomplished masters to assert that at the conventional level appearances are mind. Since speaking of the “emptiness of the examined skandhas” by merely establishing mind as devoid of true existence would be futile, the uncommon characteristic of Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra is to introduce it as inexpressible, innate pristine wisdom. This is the intent of the statement by Mañjuśrī: “Emptiness of the investigated skandhas. . .” and so forth.¹⁶

This was a condensed presentation of the view and meditation as expounded by the masters of the glorious Sakya tradition.

*Śubham.*¹⁷

NOTES

1. As an indication of the significance of this text for that tradition, it was included in the oral transmission section (first Kabab, *bka' ma*) of the Kabab Dun collection to represent the Sakya Lamdre as one of the eight chariots of the practice lineage (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*).
2. Here, the term “middle way” describes the genuine view of the Mahāyāna path in general, that is, a view free from all conceptual extremes. It should be distinguished from the Middle Way (Madhyamaka) school of thought going back to Nāgārjuna.
3. These four are Drogmi Lotsāwa (’brog mi lo tsA ba, 993–1074/1087), Rinchen Zangpo (rin chen bzang po, 957–1055), Bari Lotsāwa (ba ri lo tsA ba, 1040–1111), and Mal Lotsāwa (mal lo tsA ba, eleventh century).
4. The division of these (*slob bshad* and *tsbogs bshad*) into two Lamdre traditions occurred at the time of the Sakya throne-holder Dagchen Lodrö Gyaltzen (bdag chen blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1444–1495).
5. “Homage to the gurus!”
6. This name could refer either to the Sakya tradition as a whole or to Sachen Kunga Nyingpo.
7. *Catuhśatakaśāstra* 8.15. In the Derge edition of this text, the third line of this stanza reads *phyi nas lta ba kun bzlog pa*, which could be translated as: “Then overturn all views.”
8. Here, “higher” refers to the level of beings who do not create further causes for rebirth in the lower realms.
9. The Tibetan expression used here by Khyentse Wangpo is *bad de phyad de*. Such experiential terms present challenges for the translation, as they are meant to convey the flavor of the experience in a rather immediate way. The word *bad* expresses a sense of suddenness or surprise, and *phyad* conveys the meaning of continuity or not being interrupted. The *de* attached to each of these words is a repetition of their final consonant with the vowel *e*, inviting an experiential response of openness to the reading or hearing of these words.

10. This is the fourth line of the instructions Sachen Kunga Nyingpo received in a vision directly from Mañjuśrī. The four lines read: “If you are attached to this life, you are not a Dharma practitioner. If you are attached to saṃsāra, you do not have renunciation. If you are attached to your own benefit, you do not have bodhicitta. If there is grasping, you do not have the view.” These instructions are said to encapsulate the essence of all the teachings on Sūtra and Tantra. See Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, *Parting from the Four Attachments*.
11. The levels of heat, peak, and forbearance are the first three of the four levels of the path of joining, the second of the five paths to awakening. According to this presentation, all grasping at apprehended objects is eliminated through the wisdom generated at these levels. By then eliminating grasping at an apprehending subject at the fourth level, called supreme worldly phenomenon, one reaches the path of seeing, which is the first time that ultimate reality is directly perceived, free of conceptual, dualistic thought.
12. Note that this alternative name for the third samādhi is identical to the name of the first samādhi given in the outline.
13. Even though all available editions of the text state that this view is “similar to that of the False Images Mind-Only school” (*Alīkāḥāravāda Cittamātra; *sems tsam rnam rdzun pa*), this is probably a scribal error, since this is the school whose view is said to be similar to that developed through the next step in this process. To resolve this repetition, the doctrinal reference was amended to “True Images Mind-Only school” (*Satyākāravāda Cittamātra; *sems tsam rnam bden pa*).
14. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 7.33cd.
15. Eight examples are given for each of the four key points: establishing appearances as mind, establishing mind as illusory, establishing the illusory as dependently arisen, and establishing it as inexpressible. This makes a total of thirty-two examples. These examples are taught in the instructions on the three continua in the context of instructions on the causal continuum of the universal ground.
16. This is a quote from Mañjughoṣa Narendrakīrti’s *Pradarśanānumatoddeśaparīkṣa*. Note that this text is not included in the Derge Tengyur.
17. “May it be auspicious!”

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GLOSSARY

Āryadeva

སྟོབ་དཔོན་འཕགས་པ་ལྷ། • *slob dpon 'phags pa lha*

Ācārya Āryadeva (fl. third century CE) was a Madhyamaka master and disciple of Nāgārjuna.

bhūmi

ས། • *sa* • bhūmi

Stage of attainment on the Mahāyāna path. In the context of the Perfection Vehicle one generally speaks of eleven bhūmis, beginning with the attainment of liberation from saṃsāra and leading up to the attainment of buddhahood. In the context of the vehicle of the secret mantra, thirteen bhūmis are taught.

calm abiding

ཞི་གནས། • *zhi gnas* • śamatha

One of the two principal branches of Buddhist meditation, calm abiding is aimed at developing stability and clarity of mind.

cognitive awareness

སྟོ། • *blo* • buddhi

Used in a general sense similar to “mind” (*citta/manas; sems/yid*), “knowing” (*jñāna; shes pa*), and “awareness” (*vidyā; rig pa*) to denote the mind’s capacity to cognize a given object of consciousness.

Drogmi Lotsāwa

འབྲོག་མི་ལོ་ཙ་བ། • *'brog mi lo tsA ba*

Drogmi Lotsāwa (992–1074/1087) was one of four great translators revered as key for the Sakya tradition.

empowerment

དབང་བསྐྱར་བ། • *dbang bskur ba* • abhiṣeka

A ritual that functions as the entrance to the path of Secret Mantra.

emptiness

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད། • *stong pa nyid* • śūnyatā

Ultimate reality, the lack of inherent and true existence. Also the ultimate view, free from all extremes and conceptual elaborations.

essential nature

ངོ་བོ། • *ngo bo* • svabhāva

The true identity of a given phenomenon. The Tibetan term *ngo bo* is closely related to *rang bzhin*, translated as “nature.”

False Images Mind-Only school

སེམས་ཅམ་རྣམ་རྟུན་པ། • *sems tsam rnam rdzun pa* • alikākāravāda cittamātra

One of the two sub-schools of the Mind-Only system, according to which the object-aspects apprehended by the mind are not real because they are based on delusion.

five skandhas

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ། • *phung po lnga* • pañcaskandha

The five groups of psychophysical phenomena, making up the entirety of human experience. The five are form (*rūpa*; *gzugs*), feeling (*vedanā*; *tshor ba*), perception (*saṃjñā*; *’du shes*), formative factors (*saṃskāra*; *’du byed*), and consciousness (*viññāna*; *rnam shes*).

innate ignorance

ལྟན་སྟེས་ཀྱི་མ་རིག་པ། • *lhan skyes kyi ma rig pa* • saḥajāvidyā

The instinctive sense of self that accompanies the mind stream of a sentient being from life to life and since time without beginning. It is contrasted with conceptually acquired ignorance (*parikalpitaśābda*; *kun tu brtags pa’i ma rig pa*), which denotes the wrong views newly acquired in each life on the basis of prevalent world views and so forth.

innate pristine wisdom

ལྟན་སྟེས་ཀྱི་ཡེ་ཤེས། • *lhan skyes kyi ye shes* • saḥajājñāna

The mind’s natural union of luminosity and emptiness. Note that definitions for this term may vary depending on context.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk

འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁྱེན་བརྟེན་པའི་དབང་ཕྱུག། • *’jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse’i dbang phyug*

Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk (1524–1568) was a disciple of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso.

karma

ལས། • *las*

Literally, “actions,” and, by extension, the causal relationship between actions and their results.

luminosity

འོད་གསལ། • *’od gsal* • prabhāsvara

The mind’s most subtle, inherent cognitive ability, obscured by afflictions and conceptual thought.

mahāmudrā

ཕྱག་གྱུ་ཆེན་པོ། • *phyag rgya chen po*

Literally, “great seal,” a term with a vast range of meaning related to the ground, the path, and the result of tantric practice.

Maitreya

མགོན་པོ་བྱམས་པ། • *mgon po byams pa*

Bodhisattva dwelling on the tenth bhūmi and the future buddha, who transmitted his teachings to his human disciple Asaṅga.

Mangtö Ludrub Gyatso

མང་ཐོས་ལྷུན་གྲུབ་གྱུ་མཚོ། • *mang thos lhun grub rgya mtsho*

Mangtö Ludrub Gyatso (1523–1596) was a disciple of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso.

Mañjuśrī

འཇམ་དཔལ་དབྱངས། • *'jam dpal dbyangs*

Bodhisattva dwelling on the tenth bhūmi and the embodiment of wisdom.

mental afflictions

ཉོན་མོངས་པ། • *nyon mongs pa* • kleśa

The mental states that disturb the mind and distort perception.

Nāgārjuna

འཕགས་པ་ལྷ་སྒུབ། • *'phags pa klu sgrub*

Ārya Nāgārjuna (fl. ca. second to third century CE) was an Indian master and founder of the Madhyamaka school.

Ngorchen Könchok Lhundrub

ངོར་ཆེན་དཀོན་མཆོག་ལྷུན་གྲུབ། • *ngor chen dkon mchog lhun grub*

Ngorchen Könchok Lhundrub (1497–1557) was the tenth abbot of Ngor Monastery.

Pañchen Ngawang Chödrak

པཎ་ཆེན་ངག་དབང་ཆོས་གྲགས། • *paN chen ngag dbang chos grags*

Pañchen Ngawang Chödrak (1572–1641) was an important Lamdre master.

Precious Oral Instructions on the Path Including the Result

གསུང་ངག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ལས་འབྲས་བྱ་དང་བཅས་པ། གསུང་ངག་ལས་འབྲས། • *gsung ngag rin po che lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa; gsung ngag lam 'bras*

Core cycle of teachings transmitted in the Sakya tradition, based on the *Vajra Verses* of Mahāsiddha Virūpa.

pristine wisdom

ཡེ་ཤེས། • *ye shes* • jñāna

Depending on the context, the meaning of this term ranges from the luminous awareness present in the mind stream of all sentient beings to specific kinds of wisdom of the path, and even to the resultant, nonconceptual wisdom of a buddha.

relative bodhicitta

ཀུན་རྩོབ་བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས། • *kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems* • saṃvṛtibodhicitta

The conventional aspect of the mind resolved to attain perfect awakening rooted in compassion for all sentient beings.

Sachen Kunga Nyingpo

ས་ཆེན་ཀུན་དགའ་སྡིང་པོ། • *sa chen kun dga' snying po*

Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158) was the first of the five founding masters of the Sakya tradition.

samādhi

བསམ་གཏན། • *bsam gtan* • samādhi

State of meditative attainment.

three continua

རྒྱུད་གསུམ། • *rgyud gsum*

Following the empowerment, disciples receive the teachings on the three continua describing the ground, path, and fruition of the Vajrayāna path. First is the causal continuum of the universal ground or *ālaya*, the basis for all appearances of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa in general, and in particular for the Vajrayāna path. It is in this context that the most detailed instructions on the view are given. Second is the method continuum of the body, which is the path itself, comprising the stages of generation and completion. Third is the teaching on the resultant continuum of mahāmudrā, describing the kāyas of perfect awakening achieved by means of this path. According to this system, all three aspects—ground, path, and fruition—are entirely based on the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa (*'khor 'das dbyer med*), the understanding of which is the characteristic view of the Lamdre tradition.

three perceptions

སྣང་གསུམ། • *snang gsum*

The three types of perception are the impure perception of ordinary beings, the perception of yogis based on meditative experience, and the pure perception related to the resultant state of buddhahood. The purpose of the instructions on impure perception is to guide the practitioner to generate renunciation by contemplating the suffering that beings undergo in saṃsāra, the nature of a precious human life, and the karmic law of cause and effect. To bring forth the extraordinary aspiration and view of the Mahāyāna, the teachings on perception based on meditative experience are then given. These mainly consist of the cultivation of loving kindness, compassion, and relative and ultimate bodhicitta. Finally, to arouse inspiration and joy in the practitioner, the instructions based on pure perception are given, describing the inconceivable qualities of perfect awakening. The instructions on the three perceptions serve as a preliminary for the path of tantra, which in the Lamdre system is entered by receiving the Hevajra empowerment from a qualified master.

True Images Mind-Only school

སེམས་ཅོམ་རྣམ་བཤེས་པ། • *sems tsam rnam bden pa* • *satyākāravāda cittamātra

One of the two sub-schools of the Mind-Only system, according to which the object-aspects apprehended by the mind are real phenomena, albeit not externally existent.

Tsarchen Losal Gyatso

ཚར་ཆེན་བློ་གསལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ། • *tshar chen blo gsal rgya mtsho*

Tsarchen Losal Gyatso (1502–1567) was an important Sakya master and founder of the Tsarpa subschool.

two stages

རིམ་པ་གཉིས། • *rim pa gnyis*

The two stages of meditative cultivation according to the class of Unsurpassed Yoga Tantra: generation stage and completion stage.

ultimate bodhicitta

དོན་དམ་བྱང་ཆུབ་གྱི་སེམས། • *don dam byang chub kyi sems* • paramārthabodhicitta

The ultimate aspect of the mind resolved to attain perfect awakening—the wisdom that realizes emptiness.

ultimate expanse

དབྱིངས། • *dbyings* • dhātu

Synonym for emptiness or ultimate reality.

universal ground

ཀུན་གཞི། • *kun gzhi* • ālaya

The fundamental mind's union of luminosity and emptiness, which functions as the ground for all possible appearances and forms of existence.

Vajra Verses

རྫོང་ཚིག་ཀླང་། • *rdo rje tshig rkang*

Instructions by Mahāsiddha Virūpa on which the Lamdre teachings are based. Based on the teachings of the Hevajra Tantra, *Vajra Verses* is a cryptic text of pith instructions that the mahāsiddha imparted to his disciple Kāṇha (nag po pa).

view of the middle way

དབུ་མའི་ལྟ་བུ། • *dbu ma'i lta ba*

Name of the view based on the Perfection Vehicle, that is, the general Mahāyāna.

view, meditative cultivation, and disciplined conduct

ལྟ་སྦྱོང་སྦྱོང་གསུམ། • *lta sgom spyod gsum*

The three areas of training that make up the Buddhist path.

Virūpa

གུབ་ཆེན་བི་རུ་པ། • *grub chen bi rU pa*

One of the eighty-four mahāsiddhas or accomplished tantric masters. Mahāsiddha Virūpa is believed to have lived in India between the sixth and the ninth centuries CE. A monk at the monastic institute of Nālandā, he received instructions directly from the tantric deity Vajra Nairātmyā, the consort of Hevajra, due to which he swiftly attained sublime levels of accomplishment. After this, he engaged in miraculous and outrageous conduct, displaying his realization and benefiting beings and the Dharma.