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Note: This essay was prepared as an appendix to the document "The Shambhala Vajrayana Path", which itself was an attempt at re-framing our practice traditions at a time when the Sakyong had introduced the Primordial Rigden ngöndro, but before he rolled out the Scorpion Seal path. It concentrates on the Buddhist traditions. (The password to that document is vy4275)

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A HISTORY OF OUR PRACTICE TRADITIONS

Dorje Loppön Lodrö Dorje

This historical section gives a brief sketch of how our practice traditions came to be established, principally by the Vidyadhara, with the assistance of other teachers of close lineage, and most recently by the Sakyong.

Now, more than thirty-five years into its establishment in the West, the Shambhala sangha has become a repository for numerous teachings of the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Shambhala lineages. Many essential teachings and streams of practice have been transmitted to our community, and these teachings have taken root in the practice of many sangha members.

Several Generations of Practitioners

At the present time, about a third of the approximately 8,000 members of our sangha have completed the vajrayana preliminary practices and entered into the actual practice of tantra—that is, they have completed the Kagyü ngöndro and received the Vajrayogini empowerment. By any measure, this is an extraordinary result. The Vajrayogini feast tradition is well established. Well over 1,000 practitioners have accomplished the Vajrayogini recitation and fire offerings and received the Chakrasamvara empowerment. It is estimated that at least five hundred of those have completed the Chakrasamvara retreat. Many of those practitioners have proceeded to practice Vajrakilaya, the Six Dharmas of Naropa, and mahamudra. Seven or eight cycles of practitioners have completed the three-year retreat. Many senior students have also been active for years as teachers and meditation instructors.

Thus, from one point of view, the current system of practice has been very successful. Many of our practice traditions are very strong. Yet from another point of view, this system has not worked for everyone. For example, perhaps half the sangha members who have received the ngöndro transmission have not completed the practice; and of those who have received the Chakrasamvara empowerment, probably less than half have completed the retreat even though this practice was first given twenty years ago.

At this stage the Shambhala sangha includes several generations of practitioners. As a result of the wealth of teaching we have received over the years, students have developed a variety of connections. This diversity is a source of richness and a natural evolution of the Vidyadhara's work. Some students have entered the sangha over the past fifteen years, and their primary teacher is Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Others, who studied primarily with the Vidyadhara or the Vajra Regent, now also have a strong connection with the Sakyong and look to him for practice guidance. Still other students who studied primarily with the Vidyadhara now have their strongest connection with

another teacher of a close lineage, for instance, Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, Ven. Thrangu Rinpoche, Ven. Tenga Rinpoche, His Eminence Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Ven. Ponlop Rinpoche, Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche, or Khandro Rinpoche. A final group of students includes those who studied primarily with the Vidyadhara but may not be actively engaged in studying with any of the current Buddhist teachers.

For purposes of discussion, we could divide this history into three periods.

FIRST PERIOD: 1967–1991. ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPAL TRADITIONS

This is the period of *establishment of the principal traditions* by the Vidyadhara, with the assistance principally of His Holiness the 16th Karmapa and the four regents of the Kagyü lineage; His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche; Thrangu Rinpoche; and Tenga Rinpoche.

Samye Ling

While still in Tibet, and less than twenty years old, the Vidyadhara discovered many terma teachings; we are just now learning about this from Ven. Karma Senge Rinpoche. The Vidyadhara describes his early life and arduous escape from the Chinese communists in *Born in Tibet*. For a few years after his escape he lived in refugee camps in India. He served by appointment of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as spiritual advisor to the Young Lamas' Home School in Dharamsala. He began to learn English and received a scholarship to study at Oxford, where from 1965 to 1970 he completed studies of fine arts, Western psychology and comparative religion. During this time he also visited various Christian contemplative centers in England. He and his colleague Akong Tülku were given the former Johnstone Contemplative House in Scotland, which they transformed into Samye Ling Meditation Centre. Here, Trungpa Rinpoche began to explore appropriate ways to teach Westerners. From various accounts it seems that the Vidyadhara's earliest approach to teaching in the West was the Nyingma ati style. The flavor of this period may be gathered from some of the following: *Meditation in Action*; *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*; *Mudra*; and Francesca Fremantle's *Luminous Emptiness*. In 1968, the Vidyadhara's went into retreat at Taktsang in Bhutan, leading to a breakthrough in skillful means, which manifested in his writing the *Sadhana of Mahamudra*, as well as in a more direct and daring style of teaching. This evolving teaching style led to conflicts with Akong and the trustees of Samye Ling and, as a result, the Vidyadhara and Lady Diana moved to North America. With the help of his students, the Vidyadhara established Tail of the Tiger in Vermont (now Karmê Chöling) and Karma Dzong in Boulder. In response to demand for the teachings, he began to travel all over North America, and would give more than five thousand talks and seminars in the next ten years.

Establishing the Teachings in North America

The period from 1971 through 1975 was characterized by a combination of the ati style with an introduction of the gradual path training of the mahamudra lineage, laying the groundwork for our understanding of dharma and of vajrayana practice. Important teachings from this period are found in the following, which are only a few of the published works of the Vidyadhara:

- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (talks given to the formative community in Boulder)
- *The Myth of Freedom*
- *Glimpses of Abhidharma* (abhidharma from a somewhat tantric viewpoint)
- *Transcending Madness* (the Six Realms and Six Bardos seminars)
- *Crazy Wisdom* (the Padmasambhava seminars)
- *Illusion's Game* (the Life and Teaching of Naropa seminars)
- The Jewel Ornament and Milarepa seminars (unpublished)
- *The Lion's Roar* (seminars on the nine yantras)
- *Journey Without Goal* (the 1974 Naropa Institute talks introducing tantra)
- *Orderly Chaos* (mandala principle and the five buddha families)
- *Milarepa Film Workshop* (the five buddha families in terms of perception, art and filmmaking)

Initially, the sangha's main practice was shamatha-vipashyana, which was introduced in a somewhat mahamudra style (the "out-dissolve" instruction); and *nyinthun*, or day-long meditation practice. The Vidyadhara was inspired to emphasize group shamatha-vipashyana practice in part from his deep connection with the Zen master Suzuki Roshi and the training style of the Zen tradition. Students would make shamatha-vipashyana their main practice for at least the first two-three years, and this remained a very important practice on one's path thereafter. Other significant practices from this time are the Sadhana of Mahamudra, Maitri space awareness and the Mudra theater exercises. The Vidyadhara said that these last two practices were derived from ati and mahamudra principles. He also frequently discussed the five buddha families, both in terms of neurotic styles and in terms of perception.

The Vidyadhara obviously knew many, many practices: when he was fourteen he gave the empowerments of the *Rinchen Terdzö*, consisting of nearly 800 abhishekas. We now know from Karma Senge Rinpoche's work that in Tibet, the Vidyadhara discovered many dozens of termas (mostly earth termas) and wrote over 2,000 pages. His exposition of mahayoga, anu, and ati yoga in the Seminary transcripts is awe inspiring. However, his style of teaching in the West was to lay out a gradual and systematic method of training. He had his students focus on one main practice at a time so that they would develop depth in that practice. Thus, from 1973 through 1987, the main practices in the community were limited to shamatha-vipashyana, tonglen, the Kagyü ngöndro, the *Sadhana of Mahamudra*, the Vajrayogini sadhana, the Werma sadhana, and the vajrayana

formless meditation of those. In 1986, he introduced the Chakrasamvara sadhana. Thus, even though every encounter with the Vidyadhara was a potential transmission event or a situational empowerment (for instance, Kalapa Assembly or Magyel Pomra Encampment), up to the time of his parinirvana the only formal empowerments he gave his Western students were of Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara.

Seminary, Dathün, and the Kagyü Ngöndro

Whereas in 1971 the Vidyadhara had emphasized cutting through all expectations of what the spiritual path was about, and cutting through goal orientation altogether, from 1972 onward he was setting down the foundations of a gradual path of training: extensive shamatha-vipashyana, the six paramitas, the ngöndro practice and devotion to the lineage.

In 1973, the Vidyadhara introduced the three-month seminary program as a systematic process of training in the hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana. The Vidyadhara called the program a “Seminary” because his explicit intent was that many of his Western students would teach others. During his lifetime, the Vidyadhara presided at thirteen of these Seminaries. He often commented that he was proud of the seminary format, in that traditional training situations in Tibet had often been study programs alone or practice programs alone. He felt the Vajradhatu Seminaries were unique in combining together meditation practice and study, and he attributed this style to his training with Khenpo Gangshar.

Early in 1974, after the first Seminary, the Vidyadhara gave mind transmission to some students, and they worked with integrating this practice into their daily lives. Several months later he had them begin the practice of the Kagyü ngöndro. Some flavor of his initial way of introducing and discussing the mind transmission is recorded in *Early Tantra Groups*.

In 1974 the Vidyadhara introduced the month-long practice of *dathün* at Tail of the Tiger (now Karmê Chöling) and Rocky Mountain Dharma Center (now Shambhala Mountain Center), and this became a foundation training and prerequisite for Seminary for all students from then on.

The teaching content of the Seminaries is well recorded in the Seminary transcripts. The 1973 and 1974 Seminaries contain a masterful exposition of the nine yantras, and especially of the tantric yantras. The 1975 Seminary talks emphasize mahayana principles, including the first presentation of lojong and mahayana philosophy. Beginning in 1976, the Vidyadhara emphasized what he called a “more doctrinal approach,” saying that in his earlier teaching he used somewhat psychological language, but now there was a need for us to understand the logic of the dharma on its own terms. During this period, he introduced the practice of threefold logic, and students began to participate in teacher training, inspired in part by his way of working with the teachers at the Seminaries.

Teachers' training literature from that period is still in use. The Vidyadhara characterized his expositions from 1976 onward as increasingly contemplative and experiential, which was made possible because students were getting deeper into tantric practice.

At the Seminaries it was common for the Vidyadhara to make innovations in chants, meditation teaching, or practice forms (for instance, the practice of *oryoki*). Subsequently, these innovations would be propagated to the larger community through the Office of Three Yana Studies (now the Practice and Study office) and the returning Seminary participants.

Journey Upward and Journey Downward, Ground Tantra and Fruition Tantra

Many great teachers, including Tülku Ugyen Rinpoche, say that the Kagyü mahamudra and the maha ati or dzogchen practice of cutting through to primordial purity are essentially identical. In particular in the Karma Kagyü lineage, the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, unified these perspectives. The Vidyadhara essentially agreed with this, and in many respects his teachings are a blend of the mahamudra and ati styles. He characterized mahamudra as a "journey upward" towards the dharmakaya, and ati as a "journey downward," starting with the dharmakaya and from there learning to express wisdom. This is a very advanced way to practice.

At the same time, the Vidyadhara characterized the mahamudra approach as more gradual. He taught the ground tantra method of approaching one's enlightened potential by using one's life and its confusions as a working basis. He characterized the maha ati (or dzokchen) approach as fruition tantra: a more sudden and imperial approach that begins with the view that one's nature is already the nature of enlightenment. (See the 1973, 1974 and 1975 *Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts; Crazy Wisdom*; the *Sadhana of Mahamudra Sourcebook* [now published as *Devotion and Crazy Wisdom*]; and *The Lion's Roar*.) He remarked that if students were given the ati approach right away, in most cases they would not be able to handle it. (In the *Sadhana of Mahamudra* seminars he said that it would produce lots of neurotics and suicides.) Therefore he said that even if students were studying in the Nyingma style, experientially, they had to go through a mahamudra stage first before getting into maha ati. He said that in the mahamudra stage, you take your life, your emotions, and your sense perceptions as a working basis; the luminosity and energy in these things becomes a path to the sambhogakaya.

Sadhana Translation and Vajra Feasts

The first sadhana we translated with the Vidyadhara was the *Sun of Wisdom*, a guru-yoga sadhana to his guru Sechen Kongtrül. He remarked that in its viewpoint this sadhana was a blend of mahamudra and maha ati, and that the style of language he used was reminiscent of the writings of Jigme Lingpa, the tertön of the Longchen Nyingthik cycle of teachings. Around 1976, the Vidyadhara began the introduction of

vajra feast practices with several that he personally conducted at the Seminaries. This was initially practiced by the tantric sangha as a whole in the context of the *Sun of Wisdom*. Subsequent to that, the vajra feast tradition was mainly carried on by the Vajrayogini sadhakas.

Vajrayogini Sadhana

The Vajrayogini sadhana, which is a cornerstone of the mahamudra path in the Kagyü school, was translated in 1976 at the Vajradhatu Seminary in Land 'O Lakes Wisconsin. Our text is by the Sixth Karmapa. (This and the *Sun of Wisdom*, along with the Kagyü ngöndro text, were the first major projects of what became the Nalanda Translation Committee.) The Vidyadhara gave the first formal Vajrayogini empowerment in January 1977 to thirty-five practitioners. He would continue to give this empowerment annually for the rest of his life, and he gave many exceptional oral explanations on this practice as a transmission of coemergent wisdom.

The Vidyadhara also requested the Sixteenth Karmapa to give the Vajrayogini empowerment to all the tantrikas during His Holiness' visit to Boulder in 1977. The chant leader from Rumtek monastery who was accompanying His Holiness gave us instruction on the mudras and ritual details. His Holiness suggested that we incorporate a Pernakchen offering chant into the Vajrayogini feast.

At the Seminary, we did not translate the feast section of the Vajrayogini sadhana; the Vidyadhara quite definitely declined to do it. But on the day after the empowerment he said that the abhisheka had taken place without any obstacles, so that now we should translate the feast offering. This was done, and two weeks later he gave the oral instruction on it. It was typical of the Vidyadhara to introduce something and then watch for indications of whether to proceed further or not. After about six months, the Vidyadhara instructed us to begin doing the self-abhisheka portion of the sadhana, which is often done only after completing extensive retreat. Since that time, it has been a regular element of the feast practice.

In 1981, during the Sixteenth Karmapa's third visit to Boulder, His Eminence Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche asked us what kind of instruction the Vidyadhara had given us. Several things were described, and concerning a particular instruction he replied, "Oh, that kind of practice requires complete commitment."

His Eminence Situ Rinpoche asked us in 1982 how we practiced the feasts; and we described the complete liturgy including the self-abhisheka practice. He seemed a little surprised, and said, "Oh, you are very lucky to be able to do it that way."

Students gradually began to hear about the notion of outer, inner and secret practice. On one occasion I asked the Vidyadhara whether these categories applied to how he had introduced the sadhana to us. He replied that sometimes masters give the first abhisheka

(visualization and recitation) and the fourth abhisheka (mind transmission), and let the rest develop in between.

Nalanda Translation Committee

The Sun of Wisdom and the Vajrayogini sadhana were the first major projects of what became the Nalanda Translation Committee. (Group translation is a well-established practice in the Buddhist tradition.) We moved on to translate *The Rain of Wisdom*, *the Life of Marpa*, and various Shambhala terma texts, including the *Scorpion Seal* and the *Golden Dot*, and finally, the Chakrasamvara sadhana. The Vidyadhara would meet with members of the committee on projects at the Seminaries, during encampments, and at the Kalapa Court in Boulder. From time to time he would meet with the committee to refine or clarify our instructions about Vajrayogini practice; his comments would be duly recorded in the *Vajrayogini Practice Manual*. Thus the Translation Committee became a key vehicle used to transmit the vajrayana liturgies and, because the Vidyadhara had an astonishing command of the English language and the nuances of its meaning, to shape our dharma language.

The Vajra Regent; Westerners Teaching Westerners

From the beginning of his teaching in North America, the Vidyadhara emphasized that the dharma would have to take root in the West in its own way; in his view it made no sense for his students to attempt to adopt a Tibetan style or mentality. He also made it clear that he expected his Western students to teach each other, and as time went on, with his guidance we developed both teacher and meditation instructor trainings. Early on the Vidyadhara chose Thomas F. Rich, a former student of Swami Satchitananda, as his dharma heir. (See the Vajra Regent's account in the *1980 Vajrayana Seminary Transcripts*, and his description of devotion mahamudra in the *1976 Vajrayana Transcripts*.) The Vidyadhara formally empowered the Vajra Regent in 1976, and from that time until his untimely death in 1990 the Vajra Regent contributed significantly to the teaching, administration and establishment of Vajradhatu centers. Upon the Vajra Regent's death, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Jamgön Kongtrül Rinpoche entrusted the dharma lineage to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, in addition to the Shambhala lineage which he already carried.

Vajra Assemblies

From 1976 onward, the Vidyadhara periodically gathered the vajra sangha for advanced vajrayana teachings, beautifully recorded in the two-volume set, *Collected Vajra Assemblies*. These presentations addressed the vajra sangha as a whole, and show the Vidyadhara's unique ability to express the essential meaning and experience of vajrayana practice, stripped of technicalities.

Fire Offerings

The Vajrayogini fire offerings were initiated in 1980 for practitioners who had accomplished a million Vajrayogini recitations. The fire-offering practice includes both an amending practice, which purifies and further empowers the sadhana, and a four-karmas practice, introducing the four activities. The Vidyadhara observed that these group retreats seemed quite powerful and effective for us, and remarked that it would be extremely beneficial for sadhakas to perform a fire offering once a year. Many sadhakas have taken this advice and done fire offerings repeatedly.

Dorje Kasung

From 1976 on, the Vidyadhara instituted the Dorje Kasung practice and organization, and the Magyel Pomra encampments. He anticipated that his presentation of vajrayana teachings might upset some people. Genuine dharma will be a threat to ego, and this could arouse aggressive, neurotic responses. For this reason, there is a need for the teacher and the teaching situation to have protection and containment. The Seminary container, a retreat center, and a monastery are each examples of this kind of protection and container principle, which creates space for the sanity of the teaching to be appreciated. In terms of vajrayana mandala symbolism, Dorje Kasung practice corresponds to the protection boundary and the role of the dharma protectors. Protection may include pacifying situations and presenting obstacles to the manifestation of confusion. The Dorje Kasung training uses a military metaphor, including uniforms and a chain of command. Seen from the outside, the Kasung might appear like a security force or even a paramilitary, and of course the world has seen so many "security forces" that are agents of aggression. However the Kasung discipline is based on wakefulness, non-aggression, service, and humor. At the same time one is working with the potential application of force, and one has to transmute one's fears or ambitions around that. Force in this case comes from exertion, genuineness, attention to detail, the projection of a wakeful presence and magnetizing the drala principle. (See *True Command, the Teachings of the Dorje Kasung*.)

Ashe Stroke, Shambhala Teachings and Werma Sadhana

The Vidyadhara began transmitting the Shambhala teachings on enlightened society and the stroke of Ashe in the fall of 1976. As mentioned in *The Auto-commentary of the Golden Sun of the Great East*, the Ashe is intimately connected with the Vajrakilaya tantra. This was followed by the *Letter of the Black Ashe*, elaborating the four dignities, and the *Golden Key*, and the Vidyadhara gave commentaries on these at the Kalapa Assemblies beginning in 1978. In 1980, the Vidyadhara received the terma of the *Scorpion Seal*, and the *Werma Sadhana* was extracted from this. (See the *Collected Kalapa Assemblies* and the historical information in the *Werma Sadhana Manual*.) From this time until the introduction of the Primordial Rigden ngöndro in 2004, the *Werma Sadhana* was transmitted in the context of Kalapa Assembly. In 1982, H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche requested a lung from the Vidyadhara of his Shambhala termas, and he gave him a copy

of all the texts. His Holiness remarked that these terms were precious, and that the Vidyadhara's students should practice and guard them well. Some years later, in response to a question about the relationship between Ashe and Vajrakilaya, His Holiness explained, "The buddhadharma is taught to overcome ego and conflicting emotions. The Shambhala teachings are taught to show how to manifest the enlightened potential. Vajrakilaya is the visualization stage of mahayoga. Ashe is the completion stage of anu yoga."

Visits of Lineage Teachers

Beginning in 1970, with his second seminar in North America, which was on the life and teachings of Milarepa, the Vidyadhara taught over a dozen seminars on lineage teachers: Padmakara, Naropa, Marpa, Jamgön Kongtrül, and others. These teachings became a cornerstone of our understanding of lineage, devotion and the vajrayana path.

The Vidyadhara was keen to introduce us to important teachers of our lineage, so in particular he invited the 16th Karmapa, the four Kagyü princes, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Thrangu Rinpoche, and Tenga Rinpoche to visit our centers and teach us. In 1979?, Thrangu Rinpoche visited our centers for the first time. While visiting the Seminary, he had several students talk him through eight years of the Seminary transcripts. The Vidyadhara also showed him all the Shambhala texts. Later in Boulder, Thrangu Rinpoche guided us through the translation of a particularly obscure section of the Chakrasamvara sadhana—how to draw the extremely detailed mandala palace.

Comment [WU1]: Check on year. He worked with NTC on CS 2d mandala in Boulder, which might have been his first visit.

Ngedön School

At the Seminaries, the Vidyadhara would give general dharma teachings suitable for the new seminarians. His talks were sometimes preceded by fascinating technical discussions with the Translation Committee or Seminary teachers. In 1981, we wondered out loud if there could be a context for more advanced study of the dharma by the tantrikas. The Vidyadhara encouraged us to start such training, and gave it the name Ngedön School. *Ngedön* means "ultimate, true or definitive meaning," and stands in contrast to *trangdon*, which means "literal, relative or provisional meaning." The intent was that the Ngedön School would not offer merely academic study of the dharma, but study informed by the perspective of the Practice Lineage. The Ngedön curriculum begins with a history of transmission of the dharma, and continues with a study of the three yanas from abhidharma through tantra. The Ngedön School has been especially active in Boulder and Halifax, and is currently available online.

Chakrasamvara Sadhana

Starting at the 1978 Seminary, the Vidyadhara began working with us on the translation of the Chakrasamvara sadhana by the Eighth Karmapa, Mikyö Dorje, which is a central tradition at Surmang and one of the principal yidams of the Karma Kagyü, as well as being extensively practiced in the other schools. This translation effort extended over several years, reaching its final form in 1986. He thought it was important for students to

make a deep connection with this practice, since, as he said, it would be the last anuttara yoga practice we would do before moving into ati teachings. (See comments in the *Chakrasamvara Practice Manual*.)

He requested Tenga Rinpoche, who was very learned in this tradition, to give a complete and extensive transmission of the Chakrasamvara tradition, including the construction of a three-dimensional mandala. Five years passed before Tenga Rinpoche could respond to this invitation. When he did arrive, in 1985, he said, "I have been asked for these teachings many times before, and have not given them. But now since I have been requested by a king of dharma, Trungpa Rinpoche, I will give them since they will benefit hundreds and thousands of students." In nearly two months of extraordinary activity, Tenga Rinpoche spent mornings giving the practice explanations to the Translation Committee, afternoons supervising construction of a three-dimensional mandala (an elaborate visualization aid), and evenings sketching drawings for the artisans. Just before Tenga Rinpoche arrived, the Vidyadhara attended one of the week-long four-karmas fire offerings. The Kusung on duty at the time could not believe that the Vidyadhara was actually going to do this; however, the Vidyadhara explained that it was part of his preparation for giving the Chakrasamvara empowerment. He gave the empowerment in April 1986 to almost three hundred students.

Gampo Abbey and Three-Year Retreat

In 1982, the Vidyadhara gave his consent for the foundation of a monastery under the auspices of Vajradhatu. Gelong Tsültrim began looking for a site in Nova Scotia, and in 1985, Ane Pema Chödrön became the director of Gampo Abbey in Pleasant Bay on the rugged west coast of Cape Breton. The Vidyadhara placed the Abbey under the care of Thrangu Rinpoche, naming him its abbot, and requested that Thrangu Rinpoche establish there whatever he thought best.

Around the same time, in 1985, several students had been asking the Vidyadhara if they could begin the three-year retreat practice, which was then being offered at retreat centers in England and France. His response was, "We should institute our own retreat, we should translate all the practices into English, and it will take about five years." This coincided with Thrangu Rinpoche's intention to establish the three-year retreat tradition at Gampo Abbey, and five years later, in 1990, the first three-year retreat began. The three-year retreat curriculum includes, among other things, intensive practice of guru yoga, of the mahamudra investigations, further practice of Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara, and the inner yoga practice of the six yogas of Naropa. Our retreat remains the only such retreat conduct entirely in English.

The Vidyadhara's Intention for Further Practices: the Nyingma Stream

In about 1980, from time to time the Vidyadhara discussed with the Translation Committee and the Loppön further practices he had in mind for us to do. Among these he mentioned particularly Könchok Chidü, or Embodiment of the Three Jewels, a three-

roots terma sadhana of Guru Rinpoche widely practiced in the Kagyü school; Vajrakilaya, a principal heruka of the mahayoga cycle and an important yidam in the Nyingma tradition; a sadhana of the eight herukas of mahayoga; and the Longchen Nyingthig, a profound dzokchen terma cycle based on Jigme Lingpa's visions of Longchen Rabjam. He said this might include the secret sadhana of Longchenpa (the Thigle Gyachen). He seemed to indicate we would begin a cycle of practicing in the Nyingma style, and after that some students would begin inner yoga practices, like the six yogas of Naropa.

In 1987, after the Vidyadhara's passing, we requested Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche for assistance, and at the same time requested the teachings the Vidyadhara had mentioned. His Holiness consented, mentioning that he and Trungpa Rinpoche were quite close and that each had vowed to assist the development of the other's work. Thus the cycle of empowerments His Holiness gave directly after the Vidyadhara's parinirvana were specifically the teachings the Vidyadhara had in mind. In particular, His Holiness gave empowerments for Vajrasattva, Vajrakilaya, and the three-roots cycles of Könchok Chidü (Pema Öbar, Guru Trakpo, Simhamukha) and Longchen Nyingthik (Rigdzin Düpa, Tsokchen Düpa, and Yumka Dechen Gyalmo). (Assembly of the Vidyadharas, Assembly of the Eight Herukas, and Queen of Great Bliss).

The Path as of 1987

After the Vidyadhara's parinirvana, a basic shape of the path was outlined in consultation with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche. By way of encouragement to us, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche gave us this advice on at least four different occasions: "Trungpa Rinpoche's way of teaching was very special and profound. However, some lamas in Asia thought his methods were controversial, so in the future they might tell you to do things differently. However, you should not pay any attention to them, but continue to present the teachings in exactly the same style as you were taught."

The basic plan Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche suggested for our vajrayana practice was as follows: concurrent with or following Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara, we should emphasize some practice of formless mahamudra. After Chakrasamvara, the Vidyadhara had left the order of practice up to the practitioner. For those wishing to go further, His Holiness recommended Vajrakilaya, along with "The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel" guru yoga from the Longchen Nyingthik. After this, one might do some or all of the six yogas of Naropa. If one wished to emphasize the Nyingma practices, one would begin the Nyingma ngöndro after Vajrakilaya.

Vajrakilaya Sadhana

In 1989 emphasis was placed on Vajrakilaya practice in the vajra sangha, in part related to resolving turmoil we were undergoing. At that time, following Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's instruction, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche gave extensive teachings on

Vajrakilaya. These, together with instructions gleaned by the Translation Committee from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Tülku Rigdzin Pema, were compiled into a *Vajrakilaya Practice Manual* in 1991, and these have supported the Vajrakilaya retreat practice since then.

SECOND PERIOD: 1991-2004. CONSOLIDATING AND ENRICHING THE TRADITIONS

This second period was one of *consolidation and enrichment*. After the death of the Vajra Regent in 1990, the Sawang Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo assumed the leadership of the Vajradhatu sangha. He was enthroned by H.H. Penor Rinpoche as Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche in May 1995. During this period, the Sakyong gave the empowerment of the Sadhana of Mahamudra, beginning in 1993, as transmitted to him by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and continued conducting the Seminars and, beginning in 1997, conferring the Vajrayogini and Chakrasamvara empowerments. At the 1999 Seminary, he began to teach from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which is an important exposition of the mahayoga yana from the Nyingma tradition.

Comment [WU2]: Find year.

A few other teachers, especially Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Ponlop Rinpoche, Khandro Rinpoche, and Dzigar Kongtrül Rinpoche worked with and encouraged our sangha members during this period. Also during this time Thrangu Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche, and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche were especially active in transmitting to us the central instructions for advanced practices of the Kagyü tradition. For the benefit of current and future students many of these teachings and supporting translations have been compiled into practice manuals and study materials by the Nalanda Translation Committee.

Mahamudra

Thrangu Rinpoche originally transmitted the mahamudra investigations according to the Ninth Karmapa's *Pointing Out the Dharmakaya* to a restricted group of three-year retreatants, specifying that this retreat be done for 90 days. Subsequently, he taught this text in other contexts and approved a 49-day form of the retreat at Karmê Chöling. The first of several of these took place in 1994, and this tradition (now a month long) still continues. This retreat can also be done in individual practice, and shorter group retreats have also become popular.

Six Dharmas of Naropa

Thrangu Rinpoche introduced these in the three-year retreat, where the sequence takes eight months. Tenga Rinpoche has indicated that the six yogas could also be done in individual retreat, outside the three-year retreat context. Accordingly, he gave instruction on the root practice of chandali to Chakrasamvara sadhakas in 1991, and instruction on the rest of the yogas in 1996. Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche has promoted working on the six yogas in the context of daily life as well as in intensive

retreat, and has given extensive teachings on the six yogas according to Jamgön Kongtrül's commentaries. The Nalanda/Vajravairochana Translation Committee has compiled all this material into a comprehensive manual on these practices.

Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche's Cycle of Teaching

Since 1991, Khenpo Rinpoche taught regularly at Karmê Chöling, Dechen Chöling, Dorje Denma Ling, and other places, laying out the mainstream oral tradition of the Karma Kagyü tradition in an extraordinary effort of fourteen years. These teachings have included the following texts and their associated practices:

- Exposition of the Ninth Karmapa's extensive mahamudra treatise, *Ocean of Definitive Meaning* (1991, 1993 and 1994)
- Atiyoga: *trekchö*, "cutting through to primordial purity," and *tögal*, "direct vision of spontaneous presence" (1995 and 1996), according to the *Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo* (*Gradual Path of the Heart of Wisdom*) a terma and commentary by Jamgön Kongtrül), *Complete Liberation of the Three Realms*, and the *Karma Nyingthig* of Rangjung Dorje (1998)
- Commentary on the six yogas of Naropa (1997 & 1998) from Jamgön Kongtrül's *Treasury of Knowledge*
- The Third Karmapa's *Profound Inner Reality*; (1999-2001)
- Jamgön Kongtrül's commentary on Hevajra (2000-2005)

The latter two texts are traditionally studied in connection with the vajrayana completion stage.

Guhyagarbha Tantra

Beginning at the 2000 Vajrayana Seminary, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche began to transmit the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, a text on the vajrayana view and practice much used in the Nyingma tradition.

THIRD PERIOD: 2004 TO THE PRESENT: EMPHASIZING THE SHAMBHALA TERMAS

Based on fifteen years of observation and conversation with sangha members, and also in order to place the Shambhala practices in a central position, in 2004 the Sakyong introduced the Primordial Rigden ngöndro and the Werma Sadhana as a centerpiece of the sangha's practice. He composed the Shambhala ngöndro liturgy during the 2004 Seminary, and students there were able to choose to focus on either that or the Kagyü ngöndro. That choice was available again at the 2005 Seminary, but at future Seminaries and the programs that evolved from Seminary, students were expected to proceed with the Primordial Rigden ngöndro.

In 2007/2009?, the Sakyong compiled the Rigden abhisheka text from *The Scorpion Seal of the Golden Sun* termas, and he began to confer this for students who had completed the

Shambhala ngöndro. Existing Shambhala Lodge members were allowed to do an abbreviated practice of this in order to receive the abhisheka.

Beginning in 2009, the Sakyong established the Scorpion Seal Assembly program, teaching a new level each year, continuing through SSA 10 in 2018. Shambhala acharyas have also led many of these programs.