

Behind the Façade of Secret Mantra

Abridged Version

by

Venerable Xiao Pingshi

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First Edition

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*Seeing a row of flying geese,
Feeling a wave of grief,
How can I express the least with a simple “worry”?*

*Month after month, year after year,
Seeing the evil gaining ground over the good,
Is there really nothing we can do?*

*Raising my hand to wipe my tearful eyes,
With all my might, I yell out my immovable vow,
The vow to demolish the banners of the devil!*

*Now let's raise the flag of the true Dharma
And watch it wave for the millennium to come!*

— Xiao Pingshi

*A master once asserted,
“The Secret Mantra religion is analogous to
a diamond enwrapped in gilded garbage.”*

*I would add a note to this statement,
“That sparkling diamond is nothing but polished glass;
it will fail all inspections.”*

— Xiao Pingshi

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Preface

In order to realize the path of doctrines, all Buddhist learners must entirely rely on and invariably act according to the Buddha's discourses compiled in the sūtras. Only with the Buddha's blessings can Buddhist disciples realize firsthand the mode of *prajñāpāramitā* with sudden insight. Anyone who aspires to attain the Buddha-Bodhi Path - the Path to Buddhahood - without adhering to the World-Honored One's teachings is but a fool. Unfortunately, this is precisely the case of Secret Mantra practitioners. Their views, practices, deeds, and fruitions all stem from the tenets stipulated by yab-yum buddhas, who are fabricated by their patriarchs and represented as perpetually embracing a woman and enjoying lustful bliss. These yab-yum "**buddhas**" are regarded as complete enjoyment body buddhas [they are not authentic complete enjoyment body buddhas, but ghosts, deities, and yakshas who manifest themselves as buddhas]. Furthermore, Secret Mantra devotees

have drawn the practice of sexual union from non-Buddhist Shaktism and established it as a perceived rightful Buddhist method that can help them attain Buddhahood. Instead of following the founder of Buddhism, the World-Honored One Śākyamuni, they have surprisingly enthroned a common being, Guru Padmasambhava, as the leader of Secret Mantra, have adhered to his teachings, and have proclaimed their religion as an equal to Exoteric Buddhism. These acts are nothing but fallacies.

Padmasambhava did not emanate from a lotus, as he claimed, but was just a non-Buddhist commoner born from a womb and who later married and had children. In order to cement his status as the Secret Mantra founder, the gurus corroborated, exaggerated, and disseminated the false story that he originated from a lotus. As later generations blindly spread this rumor, Padmasambhava came to be officially recognized within Secret Mantra as the emanation of a lotus and was named the Lotus Born. Not only is the Lotus Born as ordinary as any other person, but all he has ever preached is the worldly, fallacious path of lustful bliss drawn from non-Buddhist Shaktism. Such contents are precisely a form of ignorance that consists of the attachment to the desire-realm, which the Buddha has repeatedly and strongly warned against in the scriptures and has exhorted all Three-Vehicle disciples to eliminate. The Lotus Born taught followers to crave the greatest tactile bliss experienced during sex, which stands in complete opposition to the Buddha's instructions. How could this man be called "**the Secret Mantra founder of Buddhism**"? As such, it is with the greatest and utmost importance that

Buddhist learners should follow Buddha Śākyamuni rather than Guru Padmasambhava, a non-Buddhist common being.

In addition to knowing the above-mentioned principle of following the Buddha rather than a non-Buddhist common being, practitioners must be aware of the necessity to abide by the true doctrines rather than those of any individual [the principle of relying on doctrines rather than on a person]. In fact, the Buddha's teachings are exclusively comprised of the Liberation Path and the Buddha-Bodhi Path. Briefly speaking, these two paths can be subsumed under the Buddha-Bodhi Path. The Liberation Path is attained by eradicating the wrong view on the self and self-attachment. The wrong view on the self consists of holding the mind that sees, hears, and perceives to be “**the permanent and indestructible self.**” Indeed, those who maintain this view erroneously assert that this mental consciousness (sixth consciousness, *manovijñāna*, *yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*)¹ is the foundational consciousness of cyclic existence - they firmly believe that this mind has transmigrated from past lifetimes and will proceed into future ones after death. Such a wrong view on the self corresponds to the state of thoughtless, lucid awareness preached by the Secret Mantra guru Padmasambhava after his “**enlightenment and achievement of Buddhahood.**” After installing Padmasambhava as their founder, Secret Mantra proponents have inserted Buddhist terms into their eternalist, non-Buddhist teachings, claiming

¹ In this book, the Sanskrit and/or Tibetan equivalents of the key Buddhist and Secret Mantra terms appear in italics and in parentheses.

that these doctrines correspond to the Buddha Dharma. Furthermore, they pretend that these non-Buddhist tenets are superior to the contents of Exoteric Buddhism and constitute the supreme path that permits **the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime**. In reality, these assertions entirely contradict the Buddha Dharma and are therefore wholly non-Buddhist.

The rightful cultivation of the Liberation Path consists of destroying self-attachment after eliminating the wrong view on the self. By severing self-attachment, one becomes an arhat or solitary realizer worthy of receiving offerings from all humans and celestial beings in the three realms. In contrast, all the Secret Mantra devotees, from their designated founder Padmasambhava to all the current gurus and doctrine-kings, regard **the mind of lucid awareness that realizes bliss and emptiness** through sexual orgasm and **the thoughtless mind of lucid awareness** attained via sitting meditation as **the Thusness (*Tathatā*) of Buddhahood**. These states all pertain to the plane of one's mental consciousness. In addition, these practitioners incorrectly believe that they are able to attain the **Emptiness (*Śūnyatā, Stong-pa-nyid*)** set forth in the Buddha Dharma by realizing the fact that both the lustful bliss and the perceptive mind enjoying this bliss are empty of all forms. As such, they have misunderstood the Buddha's instructions in the perfection of wisdom sūtras. For the above two reasons, Secret Mantra practitioners are common beings who have yet to abandon the wrong view on the self. The religion that they propagate based on such a level of attainment entirely consists of non-Buddhist, eternalist methods and is therefore akin to the ideas concerning

the soul found in folk traditions. The mere difference lies in the fact that **the former “is concerned with lustful bliss and thoughtlessness,” while the latter is not.** If such non-Buddhist, eternalist tenets are to be relied upon, then all non-Buddhist methods could be counted as the Buddha Dharma.

The teachings of ancient and modern Secret Mantra gurus all consist of non-Buddhist, eternalist doctrines centered on the Shaktist practice of sexual union transmitted by ghosts, deities, and yakshas. How could anyone abide by such contents? The wise should contemplate these facts carefully and make the right choice based on the principle of following the true doctrines rather than any so-called guru. The rightful cultivation of the Buddha-Bodhi Path consists of adhering to the Buddha’s instructions: Initially, one must realize firsthand the eighth consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*, *kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*) - the Tathāgatagarbha (matrix-of-one-gone-thus). Based on this realization, one must personally and clearly experience the characteristics of the Tathāgatagarbha, thereby generating the principal wisdom [the general-aspect-wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā*] and the subsequent wisdom [the specific-aspect-wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā* and the exalted-wisdom-of-all-aspects] in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā*. The realization of the eighth consciousness allows practitioners to understand Reality and to attain the exalted-wisdom-of-the-aspects-of-the-path, which makes up a small portion of the exalted-wisdom-of-all-aspects pertaining to the subsequent wisdom. By gaining the exalted-wisdom-of-the-aspects-of-the-path, practitioners become bodhisattvas of the first ground. Such is the correct way to

cultivate the Buddha-Bodhi Path.

Secret Mantra followers are unable to generate the wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā* due to their failure to realize the eighth consciousness - the *Tathāgatagarbha*. Therefore, they have invented the method of visualizing drops in the central channel. Through this, they have attempted to dupe followers by counterfeiting the *Tathāgatagarbha* (the *ālayavijñāna* set forth by the Buddha) with these drops and by pretending that the exercise thereof corresponds to the cultivation of the wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā*. Furthermore, they have deliberately concealed this practice from the public so as to prevent Exoteric Buddhists from discovering that the *Tathāgatagarbha* - the *ālayavijñāna* - that they have realized is nothing but visualized drops. In addition, they have claimed that the non-Buddhist unimpeded ability to cause the drops to ascend and descend through the five cakras of the central channel is tantamount to the attainment of the first ground, which is the stage of unimpeded penetrating understanding (*prativēdhāvasthā*) with respect to the Buddhist wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā*. They have been using these false assertions to fool Exoteric Buddhist bodhisattvas, lay and monastic alike, and to deceive Secret Mantra novices, fueling their worship to the extent that they do not dare to question these teachings.

Past and current Secret Mantra masters have thus strived to realize the Buddha Dharma by relying on Padmasambhava's non-Buddhist concepts and on the non-Buddhist methods of visualizing the central channel and the drops. These endeavors have actually nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma and are

as nonsensical as trying to make bread by baking sand. Therefore, all Buddhist learners should follow the World-Honored One Śākyamuni rather than the non-Buddhist Padmasambhava, adhere to the true Buddhist doctrines rather than the non-Buddhist Secret Mantra tenets, and rely on the Buddhist sangha rather than the non-Buddhist lamas and gurus. Otherwise, all of one's thoughts and practices will be erroneous.

Secret Mantra proponents, moreover, regard sexual union as a rightful Buddhist practice, the one-pointed focus attained during orgasm as a state of meditative stabilization, and sexual intercourse as a legitimate concentration method. Such a way of cultivation conflicts with the contents of the four concentrations and four formless absorptions practiced by either non-Buddhists or bodhisattvas, as set forth in the Buddha's discourses. Not only do those Secret Mantra views contradict the Liberation Path taught by the Buddha, but they also stand in complete opposition to His instructions with respect to the Buddha-Bodhi Path. Secret Mantra proponents affirm that such mundane methods based on lustful bliss and inherited from Hindu Shaktism supersede the supreme Buddhist doctrines. In fact, the cultivation of these methods will cause practitioners to be tormented by measureless pain and agony during innumerable transmigrations in the three lower realms for many long eons to come. How could these methods embody a legitimate Buddhist practice? Again, all Buddhist learners should adhere to the Buddha's teachings rather than to the non-Buddhist philosophy preached by Secret Mantra masters.

The expansion of Secret Mantra inevitably leads to the demise of Buddhism, which is a phenomenon that actually transpired in ancient India. As history has shown, the growth of Secret Mantra culminates in its complete substitution, hence extinguishing, of Exoteric Buddhism. The reason is that the Secret Mantra methods do not correspond to the true Buddha Dharma. In spite of their Buddhist veneer, their essence consists of non-Buddhist eternalism and mundane practices based on sexual pleasure. In other words, lamas are monastics in disguise who engage in layman acts. Once Tibetan Buddhism supplants Exoteric Buddhism, there will be nothing left of the latter other than temples and monks. Exoteric Buddhism will in essence be disastrously turned into **a non-Buddhist faith that revolves around the worship of ghosts and deities.**

The ancient gurus and doctrine-kings concurred that practitioners must entirely rely on the Buddha's blessings to progress on the Secret Mantra path. However, their modern counterparts unanimously advocate that "one must principally rely on the guru, and secondarily on the Buddha," and that "one must follow the tantras created by the gurus instead of the sūtras set forth by Buddha Śākyamuni, for the tantras are superior to the Exoteric Buddhist scriptures." Similarly, Tsongkhapa asserts that "one must practice according to the great craving experienced in sexual union; the abandonment of craving is a violation of the pledges (*samaya*)." In truth, the cultivation and attainments of the doctrine-kings and gurus, past and current alike, all fall prey to non-Buddhist eternalism. Furthermore, the Secret Mantra scriptures and tantras do not

contain the Buddha's discourses, as they are just a compilation of texts composed by the patriarchs over a long period of time and their contents consist of non-Buddhist teachings. How could anyone realize the Buddha Dharma by relying on a guru rather than on the Exoteric Buddhist scriptures, and by following yab-yum buddhas, who are manifestations of the ghosts and deities worshipped by Secret Mantra followers, rather than by adhering to the authentic buddhas of Exoteric Buddhism? These facts demonstrate that the teachings preached by the Secret Mantra masters and set forth in the tantras are all incorrect.

I am composing this book for a variety of reasons. First, most Secret Mantra learners are unaware of their religion's unsound essence and have therefore been deceived and misled all along. Second, many renowned Exoteric Buddhist masters in Taiwan have, in recent years, been eagerly fawning over the Dalai Lama, hoping to use his fame to raise their own profiles. Such behavior has induced multitudes of Exoteric Buddhist monastics, who actually do not know the masters' intention, to mistake Secret Mantra for authentic Buddhism. Moreover, the import of *prajñāpāramitā* is extremely difficult to realize, even after a long-held practice, yet all Secret Mantra masters have achieved “**attainment levels**” that they claim to be “**superior**” - easily reaching the first ground or Buddhahood. Given that the monastics do not know the true colors of Secret Mantra, they have increasingly turned towards it to learn the Dharma. Lastly, because the general public is unaware that Secret Mantra does not correspond to Buddhism, it has ascribed the “sexual scandals” that have surfaced at Secret Mantra cultivation

centers to Buddhist masters and have put the blame solely on Buddhism. In fact, numerous instances of such sexual misdeeds have caused damage to Buddhism. Due to these factors, I am composing this work in order to rectify the erroneous teachings and to protect the one and only true Buddhism.

In reality, the first and foremost reason that led to the writing of this book is the observation that Secret Mantra devotees have been replacing the Buddhist doctrines with their non-Buddhist tenets. Those followers have extensively claimed that their ultimate methods to Buddhahood are superior to those found in Exoteric Buddhism. Aside from counterfeiting the Buddha Dharma with such non-Buddhist concepts, the non-Buddhist lamas have been disguising themselves as Buddhist sanghas. Furthermore, the Secret Mantra proponents have either been pecking at or devouring Buddhist resources through the tactic of exalting Secret Mantra while disparaging Exoteric Buddhism, thus destroying Buddhism in a gradual and peaceful manner to its disciples' complete unawareness. As such, we will see a repeat of ancient Indian history whereby Buddhism was extinguished at the hands of Secret Mantra followers. In fact, the two foremost exponents of the Secret Mantra teachings in the modern age are the Dalai Lama and Master Yin Shun. The former openly propagates the concept of "dependent-arising without inherent existence" pertaining to the theory of no-cause. He has further refuted the Mind-Only following scriptures of the third wheel of doctrine and, just like Tsongkhapa, has stipulated that these scriptures are non-definitive. Moreover, the Dalai Lama has been secretly

transmitting the practice of sexual union, asserting that it is the ultimate method to Buddhahood. As a master of Exoteric Buddhism, Yin Shun took the initiative to carry on the legacy of the Secret Mantra falsities, vigorously promoting the view of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka, which pertains to the no-cause theory preached by the Gelug tradition of Lamaism. On an appearance level, he spoke against Secret Mantra [by criticizing its practice of sexual union], but in reality he supported it by popularizing the doctrines of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka contained in the no-cause theory, thereby negating the supreme teachings about the Tathāgatagarbha set forth by the Buddha in the sūtras of the third wheel of doctrine. Master Yin Shun's deeds have opened up room for the Secret Mantra practice of sexual union to survive. Therefore, the propagation of the Secret Mantra fallacies by two renowned **masters**, one Exoteric and the other Esoteric, one in secret and the other in public, has concurrently fostered the expansion of Secret Mantra and induced Buddhist learners to mistake such a religion for true Buddhism. In light of the grievous and extensive impact from these pernicious acts, it is a necessity to reveal the truth.

Due to the above reasons, it is indispensable to fully expose the mysteries behind the Secret Mantra teachings and to thoroughly refute their fallacies, such that all Buddhist disciples and the general public can see the reality. The composition and publication of this book can hopefully protect true Buddhism by informing people about the non-Buddhist essence of Secret Mantra and its discrepancies with authentic Buddhism.

By refuting the incorrectness of the Secret Mantra teachings, my objective is to help Secret Mantra followers return to the right path by embracing Exoteric Buddhist doctrines. In addition, I hope to expel the non-Buddhist falsities worshipped by those practitioners and keep them far away from true Buddhism. It is my sincere wish that this book can help restore the purity that the Buddhist doctrines enjoyed when the Buddha lived in this world - when they were free from all Secret Mantra and non-Buddhist contaminations. May all masters and learners in our religion be informed of the truth with respect to Secret Mantra; may Secret Mantra followers abandon non-Buddhist practices for the true doctrines taught by the Buddha in the Exoteric Buddhist scriptures; and may Buddhism grow purer by the day such that the wisdom-life of the Buddha Dharma can be extended until the arrival of Bodhisattva Candra-prabha in this world. If Secret Mantra followers refuse to rectify their non-Buddhist beliefs, then they should detach themselves from and sever all ties with Buddhism, so as to allow the exalted teachings of the World-Honored One to exist in peace once and for all, free from any further non-Buddhist Secret Mantra intrusion.

The Secret Mantra masters have refused to amend their incorrect teachings despite my refutation thereof in the past. Their intention has been to maintain those mistaken assertions in order to save their non-Buddhist religion from the brink and ensure its longevity. To achieve this goal, they have deliberately used fake identities - names of Exoteric Buddhist learners - to vilify me on the Internet, branding me

as a non-Buddhist who takes advantage of Buddhist resources. In doing so, they are trying to give the false impression that those criticisms emanate from Exoteric Buddhist learners. Such lowly and undignified behavior is analogous to that of a thief who yells out, “Catch the thief!” Despite those gurus’ furor, which has been evidenced by their vigorous attempts to defame me as a non-Buddhist, they have not had the courage or the ability to respond to my statements by inviting me to a Buddhist Dharma debate under their real names and addresses. Instead, they have only been able to come up with various alibis to justify and cover up their behavior, such as telling their followers in private, **“The lay Buddhist Pingshi does not understand Secret Mantra. We do not want to condescend to him either for discussions or debates.”**

The reason behind this attitude is that the lamas and gurus who have practiced over thirty years within the Secret Mantra system are well aware of the following facts: Their doctrines merely consist of mundane methods that their patriarchs have learned from non-Buddhists and to which Buddhist terminology was then inserted. Such teachings are, in essence, absolutely and conclusively not Buddhism. Moreover, those gurus know that they themselves have not attained the import of *prajñāpāramitā*, not realized the Tathāgatagarbha, and not entered the doctrines of bodhisattvas, but they do not dare to reveal the truth. The reason is that they fear being assaulted by hordes of Secret Mantra devotees. In addition, as they are reluctant to relinquish fame and wealth, they simply stick to their old routine of teaching Secret Mantra in exchange of offerings from their disciples. Due to the above

factors, the gurus all keep the Secret Mantra contents that I have exposed strictly confidential. Not only do they worry about having to defend these doctrines openly under their real names, but they are also scared to do so through a Dharma debate with me in private. Indeed, they are aware that the Secret Mantra tenets cannot be presented in full openness, as they consist of non-Buddhist, mundane methods embellished with Buddhist terms.

The Secret Mantra teachings, moreover, entirely revolve around the fourth joy, which pertains to the lustful bliss generated through the practice of sexual union. In reality, the attainment of the fourth joy is the ultimate objective behind their endeavors to attain Buddhahood. The encrypted jargon employed in the tantras of Tibetan Lamaism entirely alludes to this practice without any other implications. It would be meaningless to explicate each and every tantra of the various traditions individually, as it entails myriad repeats throughout the book, which can only bore the readers. Therefore, I will only cite those publications that are representative of the Secret Mantra teachings and provide annotations in brackets, so as to help the readers understand their meanings.

The language of this book must also be easily accessible and understandable. Colloquial terms are preferred to formal proverbs. The reasons are as follows: Given that the obscene, preposterous nature of the Secret Mantra doctrines must strictly be kept from the knowledge of outsiders, these teachings are propagated through the prolific use of obscure terms in the tantras. If the esoteric words are not clarified with

simple vocabulary, then the learners are unable to grasp their significance and consequently would not be able to determine whether they are correct or not. As a result, the Secret Mantra gurus still find new excuses to divert others' attention and to conceal their own mistakes, thereby sabotaging my endeavors to uphold and protect the true Buddhist doctrines. Therefore, the writing style of this work must be clear and plain to facilitate the comprehension of all readers and to prevent Secret Mantra masters from garbling their own statements. Additionally, given the limited knowledge of most Secret Mantra neophytes, it is necessary to use simple terms while avoiding uncommon vocabulary, so that they can truly understand the meanings conveyed in my book.

Annotations for the terms used in the Secret Mantra “Scripture Divisions of Sūtras and Tantras” cited in this book appear in brackets right after those words. The reason is that a detailed explanation of each passage entails a substantial boost to the length of the book; hence, the more succinct style of annotated brackets is adopted in order to save space. The readers will then be able to grasp the Secret Mantra teachings upon going over them, analyze them in accordance with the truth, and determine whether they are correct or not. Therefore, Secret Mantra followers will abandon those mistaken practices and return to the right path. By then, my goal will have been achieved.

Before the publication of this book, I hereby account for the reasons behind its composition and highlight the major concepts and underpinnings contained therein. May

all Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhist practitioners read these contents carefully and distinguish right from wrong by personally validating every point, in order to protect themselves and save others. Let us all stay away from the grievous sin of destroying the true Buddhist doctrines and refrain from negligently following the erroneous Secret Mantra teachings deep down the wrong path.

Buddhist disciple and holder of the Bodhisattva Precepts

XIAO PINGSHI

In Spring 2002
At the Residence of Clamor

Jiangba Luojie's Foreword From Dzi Beads to Secret Mantra

*Prostrating myself to the omniscient Bhagavān
and offering my body, speech, and mind to the Three Jewels*

About ten years ago, the western New Age movement and the unique social customs of Taiwan brought the dzi bead into vogue on this island nation. Initially a family heirloom of Tibetan women, this gemstone was either intentionally or unintentionally hyped as “a treasure that fell from the sky and that did not originally exist in this world.” It was said, “Anyone who carries a dzi bead will become a buddha in the future without the need for actual practice.” Today, Taiwan has even become the world's largest exporter of ancient dzi beads, which are sold to Tibet to satisfy collectors worldwide. Later, results of modern scientific testing showed that these stones merely come from the processing of whitened ancient agates. This revelation put an end to the beautiful but soiled myth surrounding the dzi bead.

From an anthropological perspective, the propagation of the Buddha Dharma in history has often undergone cultural

substitution based on temporal and geographical conditions, with the environment being a determinant factor of the restructured cultural elements. Li Yuan-Song of Taiwan's Modern Ch'an Society once stated, "The Secret Mantra religion is analogous to a diamond enwrapped in gilded garbage." However, is this sparkling diamond really the ground of truth that the World-Honored One touched with His cotton-like soft hand and the morning star that He beheld with His clear and blue eyes? Or is it just a simulacrum that consists of a zircon whose glare is so strong that Secret Mantra practitioners cannot and will not see through its essence?

Generally speaking, China inherited the Mahāyāna Buddhism that existed in India before the Tang Dynasty in its entirety, whereas, following this time period, Tibet took over the non-Buddhist form that Indian Buddhism evolved into. After it flourished in India, Mahāyāna Buddhism gradually assimilated a large number of cultural elements from Hinduism, and, through this phenomenon of transculturation, it evolved into Tantric Buddhism, which became the prevalent philosophy of the Indian Buddha Dharma. These facts are attested by the archeological records uncovered at the ruins of the Nalanda Monastery and are also well evidenced by the bibliographies of Masters Xuanzang and Yiching.

At the time of Emperor Songtsän Gampo (around early Tang Dynasty), Tibet officially entered the era of writing and publication and profusely imported new cultural elements from India and China. The most impactful measure was certainly the installment of **Buddhism** as its state religion.

After the Dark Age, Tibet adopted Tantric Buddhism from India almost in its entirety and incorporated some aspects of the local Bonpa religion therein. The dissemination of this practice by translation masters, such as Rinchen Bzangpo, during the period of the second propagation of Buddhism in Tibet helped establish the main structures of Tibetan Lamaism, which feature, in sequential order, Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna (**Secret Mantra**), and finally the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime as its principal stages of cultivation.

The Tibetan Lamaist traditions that have existed since ancient times can be subsumed into two main systems based on their philosophical background: Tathāgatagarbha-Mādhyamaka and Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamaka. The former system encompasses the following lineages: Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, Jonang, etc. It preaches about the Tathāgatagarbha, Svātantrika-Mādhyamaka, the Mind-Only view, the view of the non-duality of cyclic existence and nirvāṇa, the Great Middle Way, the view of other-emptiness, and so forth. Although these teachings are all based on the principle of **“the non-existence of the conventional truth vs. the existence of the ultimate truth,”** each school delineates the ultimate truth in a drastically different way. Separately, the doctrine of Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamaka was popularized by Tsongkhapa, founder of the later-established Gelug tradition, as well as by his disciples over many generations. Boosted by its newly-acquired political predominance, the Gelug tradition's endeavors thwarted the propagation of the thought pertaining to the class of the Tathāgatagarbha and led to a loss of talents in the

related lineages. Up to present day, Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamaka remains the prevalent thought within the Tibetan Lamaist philosophy.

Within the thought of Tibetan Secret Mantra, Highest Yoga (Mahāyoga) is regarded as the most supreme and difficult path - the only one that allows practitioners to instantaneously bypass all intermediary grounds (even the intermediate states) and attain Buddhahood in one single lifetime. Secret Mantra proponents believe that those who are endowed with both merits and wisdom can rely on this path to attain the three exalted bodies and achieve Buddhahood. With respect to the cultivation of this path, the first and second initiations serve as the foundation for the latter third and fourth initiations. After fulfilling the merits of activities obtained from the third initiation, practitioners can proceed to the fourth initiation and thereby attain Buddhahood. In some instances, practitioners can directly cultivate name initiation by skipping over wisdom initiation, as long as they do not violate the principle of the three initiations.

I started to practice Secret Mantra in 1984 and spent an extensive amount of time absorbing the complete set of initiations and instructions. Thereafter, I set aside all worldly affairs and made my religious practice a full-time occupation. For eleven years, I read and reflected upon the scriptures by day - I managed to peruse more than half of the books found in the Buddhist library during that period - and practiced Secret Mantra at night. In those days, it was hard to get a hold of Secret Mantra information, and anyone who came upon

such material treated it as a treasure. I remember that in order to obtain fragmentary pieces of tantric literature, I journeyed everywhere throughout the country to visit gurus and friends. In order to receive Secret Mantra instructions, I traveled back and forth between India and Nepal and met with elders and meritorious practitioners from various traditions. Over the years, I have been able to witness firsthand the broad expansion of Secret Mantra in Taiwan.

While I was able to personally experience most of the contents realized by my predecessors with respect to the various practice trails, I felt increasingly doubtful about this religion. Although the Secret Mantra doctrines are known to truly consist of specific instructions outside the scriptures, they contradict the World-Honored One's teachings in the sūtras in all respects. The discrepancies are so significant that they cannot be negligently accounted for with designations such as "expedient or temporary teachings." Worse yet, whenever I raised the ambiguities that I could not wrap my arms around to the renowned vajra gurus "endowed with knowledge and attainments," they simply obfuscated the issue by talking nonsense.

After the fading of the dzi bead hype in Taiwan came the obsession for the Iron Meteorite. Once, the owner of a Buddhist craft shop near the Bouddhanath stupa in Nepal unintentionally put an iron pestle at his doorway. As the pestle became heated by the sun, a Taiwanese traveler burnt his hand upon grabbing it and immediately declared that the iron rod was blessed by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. He eventually

paid a huge sum of money to purchase that “blessed” pestle. Thereafter, every owner of any type of Buddhist craft store in Nepal displayed iron products under the sun in the shop window at the doorway in order to attract Taiwanese pilgrims. The generous donations from Taiwanese Buddhist disciples largely contributed to the construction and spiritual equipment of “**Buddhist monasteries**” in Tibet, India, and Nepal. In those foreign lands, I often came across pious Buddhists who had given up their family and career in order to follow a Secret Mantra guru. It is truly pitiful to see that, despite their devout minds and assiduous practice, all they are able to gain is deluded thoughts, which are nothing but arising and ceasing phenomena.

The cultivation of the four initiations pertaining to the class of Highest Yoga is entirely based on imaginative thinking and perceptive sensations carried out on the plane of one’s mental consciousness. Such practices require self-hypnosis and self-numbness, and sometimes even a psychic connection with ghosts and deities. As such, they are all of a deluded nature. As stated by Guru Norlha, “Being able to talk to a deity is only the first step of practice.” Secret Mantra practitioners are unaware that their supernatural powers have been conferred by external parties such as ghosts and deities, who in the worse cases will turn these followers into their subordinates. Moreover, no matter how solid the deity yoga accomplishments of those practitioners are, all it takes is one dose of anesthesia in the surgery room to obliterate their attainments. How could such a practice be called the yoga that permits the attainment of the deity’s form body?

The contents of the second and third initiations are in fact drawn from Hindu Tantrism and consist of the repeated cultivation of the wind-energies, channels, and drops pertaining to the **subtle body**. The so-called “**accomplishment of the subtle body**” has actually nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma, as it is based on a **Hindu practice** prescribed with the Buddhist term *samādhi*. Hindu followers also cultivate channels, wind-energies, drops, and sexual union, and many of them are also rumored to have attained the rainbow body. Moreover, numerous renowned masters in the history of Secret Mantra have acted as lineage heirs of Hinduism. After the emergence of the hippy movement in the West, many books about the Hindu **philosophy on the subtle body** were translated into English, thus allowing us to easily verify that both the Tibetan and Hindu **methods of the subtle body** originate from the same source and feature identical steps of practice. The only difference is that the Tibetan version contains Buddhist jargon. However, most Secret Mantra practitioners are either ignorant of this fact or unwilling to admit it, given their reluctance to extensively learn about the Buddhist *sūtras* or even the worldly doctrines. Similarly, the five essential sets of tenets of the Bonpa religion, such as “Great Perfection,” “Ritual Dagger,” and so forth, are basically identical to the Secret Mantra teachings. Historically, Bonpa devotees and **the excavators of the hidden Nyingma Treasure (*terma*)** have always maintained intimate contacts and shared the same aspirations. Indeed, many “renowned gurus” hold the position of venerable master in both Buddhism and Bonpa. These

facts make one wonder: What then sets the Buddha Dharma apart from those non-Buddhist beliefs?

The cultivation of name initiation denotes the end of the Secret Mantra practice, but a look into the unsurpassed, strictly confidential doctrines of the four main traditions demonstrates the following: Their essence is akin to the concept of “the great ease pervading the infinite space” taught by Master Yuexi of Hong Kong, which is an assertion based on nonsensical imagination. The practice based on those teachings pertains to the plane of one’s mental consciousness and is analogous to the endeavors of baking bread with sand. Those followers do not even have the ability to clearly observe the functioning of their own seventh and eighth consciousnesses, yet falsely claim to have realized the Thusness of Buddhahood. In reality, their attainments all pertain to the entity and functions of the sixth consciousness. Therefore, how could they transform their consciousnesses into pristine wisdom? They have no idea that they have committed the grievous sin of severe deception.

The cultivation of Highest Yoga is meaningless to the practice of the three disciplines in the Buddha Dharma. Despite its Buddhist veneer, Highest Yoga is founded on the same concepts as those of the other faiths. This is the reason why Indian Buddhism had already lost its core teachings - the Buddha Dharma - and in essence was extinguished during its transformation into Secret Mantra, long before the heretics attempted to wipe it out.

In short, the Secret Mantra philosophy does not correspond to the authentic Buddha Dharma. It violates the World-Honored One's teachings in the sūtras in all respects. Given that its followers do not possess the exalted-wisdom-of-all-aspects nor understand Buddha Śākyamuni's real intention, they do not have the ability to determine the incorrectness of the Secret Mantra tenets and practices; therefore, they can only follow their gurus' instructions. The early generations of practitioners could not distinguish right from wrong, whereas later generations have made even bigger mistakes without knowing it. Over the years, Secret Mantra has become a religion with a non-Buddhist essence packaged with Buddhist terms. However, its practitioners seem determined to not face the truth nor analyze right from wrong due to their inability to inspect those teachings, their idolizing of the doctrine-kings and gurus based on fame and authority, etc. All they can do is numb themselves into believing the following assertions: (1) The guru is identical to the buddha; (2) the imagined deity bodies will one day materialize; (3) the contents of their visualization will turn into reality once the conditions ripen; (4) the states manifested by the deities and ḍākas (ḍākinīs) are real; (5) the visualizer and the visualized will eventually become one; (6) the instructions granted by the deities and ḍākas (ḍākinīs), who are emanations of ghosts, are definitive; (7) the states perceived during meditative concentration are real; (8) the Shambhala Pure Land truly exists; (9) the imagined pure lands will eventually come true; (10) the accomplishment of the cultivation on channels and wind-energies is tantamount to the attainment of the buddha

body; (11) the practice of sexual union is supreme and untainted with obscenity; (12) the thoughtless, full awareness of clear light and bliss is a state pertaining to the fundamental mind of nirvāṇa; (13) the transformation of a **hundred peaceful and wrathful deities within and beyond one's body** into buddhas after death is equivalent to the attainment of the non-duality of cyclic existence and nirvāṇa, and so forth.

Secret Mantra has now developed into a massive religious institution. Over one hundred practice centers have been gradually established in Taiwan alone, attracting hundreds of thousands of devotees and absorbing incalculable resources. While the Buddha Dharma seems to be flourishing in Taiwan, the truth is that those followers have been led into non-Buddhist methods and doctrines, as well as into practices that entail the grievous sin of violating precepts. Such broad actions are assisting in the replay of history that saw the demise of Buddhism in India. The profound cause underlying these phenomena is that almost every Buddhist institute in Taiwan has, for the past few decades, adopted Master Yin Shun's writings as a core curriculum. However, Yin Shun inherited his views from the philosophy of Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka propagated by the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Lamaism. His works extensively imply, "The Mahāyāna Buddha Dharma was not taught by Buddha Śākyamuni; Buddha Amitabha and His Pure Land do not exist; Buddha Śākyamuni's complete enjoyment body does not permanently reside nor teach the Dharma in the Highest Heaven of the form-realm; there are no such things as bodhisattvas and hell, etc." As a result, Yin Shun's disciples

can only seek the Buddha Dharma in either one of two extremes - Theravāda Buddhism or Tibetan Lamaism - if they want to advance in their cultivation. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that Yin Shun “wears a monastic garment, but destroys the World-Honored One’s true doctrines.” Some leaders at the major Buddhist cultivation centers have embraced Yin Shun’s concepts, as their lack of the exalted-wisdom-of-the-aspects-of-the-path has prevented them from verifying his teachings. Others have eagerly corroborated and relied on his statements due to their craving for the wealth and fame of Secret Mantra followers that can be bestowed upon them. One cannot help but worry about the future of the true Buddhist doctrines.

All disciples of Three-Vehicle Buddhism should frequently undergo an in-depth self-examination: What was my **original motivation** to learn the Buddha Dharma? Have I improved my ability to perceive the dark sides of my mind? Have I expelled some mistaken views since I started to learn Buddhism? Has this learning generated in me the Buddhist wisdom? Do I rely on wisdom or on an individual? Does each of my deeds truly benefit sentient beings? Have I been acting in accordance with the true Dharma, which was taught by the Buddha? Have I realized firsthand the bodhi - the definitive Reality? Furthermore, the Buddha said that the seventh and the eighth consciousnesses of every sentient being exist permanently; so, can I observe their uninterrupted functioning at all times? If you have neither knowledge of the ālayavijñāna - the eighth consciousness, which each person inherently possesses and which exists in every instant - nor

knowledge of the manasvijñāna - the seventh consciousness, which examines phenomena and makes decisions at all times - then you are deceiving yourself and others by claiming how marvelous the other samādhis are.

In the winter of 1996, I had the lucky opportunity to learn Buddhism from my teacher Xiao Pingshi, perhaps due to the small amount of merits that I had accumulated in my past lifetimes. Since then, I have had the chance to acquaint myself with the marvelous nature of the Buddha Dharma. On the one hand, I have been able to rectify my Buddhist knowledge. The different parts of the true doctrines and their interconnections gradually surfaced in my mind, while the doubts and queries I had previously had while learning Secret Mantra sequentially disappeared. Only then could I see the mistaken preconceptions and self-limiting mindset that had bound me in the past. Thereafter, I gained a clear understanding of the steps and path that lead a practitioner from the state of a common being to the grounds of bodhisattvas, and eventually to Buddhahood. I gradually acquired the exalted-wisdom-of-the-aspects-of-the-path and the ability to distinguish the correct doctrines from the incorrect ones. As a result, I could see the errors made by each school as clearly as if I was looking at a fruit in the palm of my hand. On the other hand, I kicked off my cultivation on the Buddha-Bodhi path with the practice of the Signless Mindfulness of Buddha combined with prostration in order to enhance my concentration skills. Once I developed the capacity to maintain my mind in one-pointed focus for an extensive period of time, I gained full confidence about my

rebirth in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitābha, without having to wait for the appearance of Buddha Amitābha after my death to assure myself of it. I suddenly comprehended the reason behind the fact that numerous meritorious practitioners, ancient and modern alike, despite knowing that the rebirth in Buddha Amitābha's Pure Land is not an impossible dream, doubted with regrets their ability to reach this goal. Once the causes and conditions had ripened, I was able to see the Reality - Thusness - upon which all the definitive Three-Vehicle sūtras are founded, which is unknown even to the deities and ghosts. Based on this attainment, I am able to embark on the post-enlightenment practice, progress through the various stages, and will cultivate the exalted-wisdom-of-all-aspects and correctly learn the various samādhis in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha and my benevolent teacher. All these experiences can only be communicated to those who have also realized the eighth consciousness. I am no longer like the short-lived frog at the bottom of the well that is unaware that the dragon can actually fly.

My benevolent teacher Xiao Pingshi has a personality that befits his name. In fact, he was a religious leader in many of his former lives, and the Dharma instructions that he had left behind are still widely revered today. However, he does not cling to the illusory fame of the past and refuses to act like the masters in this world who attempt to attract followers with gimmicks. He has always conducted himself and teaches his students in an ordinary and down-to-earth fashion and acts as a strong model for all. Since he never

boasts about his attainments and accomplishments, arrogant learners often fail to show due respect toward him. My teacher protects the true Buddha Dharma with his own body and life, and no disparagement or trampling can even slightly alter his determination. Due to his compassion, he cannot bear seeing “**sentient beings commit a sin that will make them tumble to hell despite acting out of good intentions.**” Therefore, he adheres to the tradition of the one-gone-thus’ lineage that consists of refuting the erroneous teachings and articulating the truth by making the lion’s roar. With such outcries, he hopes to rescue and protect sentient beings by awakening them from ignorance. Those who do not know my teacher’s real intentions are truly mistaken to believe that he is acting out of arrogance.

Having followed my teacher for years, I know that he handles all matters graciously and with a respect for karmic conditions. He is extremely compassionate, teaches with endless patience, and benefits all sentient beings with a total disregard for himself. To save and protect Buddhist disciples, to radically reform the current state of Buddhism, and to ensure the longevity of the true doctrines, my teacher cannot turn a blind eye nor act like a hypocrite. He has no choice but to constantly reiterate his earnest proclamations in order to cure practitioners of the serious illness of ignorance. He composed this monumental work - *Behind the Façade of Secret Mantra* - by collecting a large number of Secret Mantra sūtras and tantras, thoroughly exposing the lines of thought within the **pseudo-Buddhist doctrines**, and revealing the wish-granting jewel that consists of the

exalted-wisdom-of-the-aspects-of-the-path in order to clarify the defiled views and to steer learners away from the retribution of falling to hell in future lifetimes. Only a reincarnated bodhisattva can accomplish such an amazing task.

My teacher kindly asked me to compose this preface despite my slow wits and my undeserved role as his student. I wrote these words with great respect. I sincerely hope that all readers can set aside their prejudices for a moment, carefully examine and compare the Secret Mantra scriptures, and then repeatedly reflect upon and extensively verify the contents of this book in order to save themselves from those erroneous teachings. This is my humble wish!

Holder of the Bodhisattva Precepts
QIUJI JIANGBA LUOJIE

Chinese New Year Vacation, 2002
At the Xuanghe Residence

XXXII / Behind the Façade of Secret Mantra

Chapter 1

Overview of Secret Mantra

1. Background

1.1 Where It All Began

This book's Secret Mantra refers to the esoteric teachings propagated in the world today, not to the secret essence realized in the Buddha Dharma. Practitioners in the early days relied on mantra recitations and blessings from buddhas, bodhisattvas, Dharma-protectors, dragons, and celestial beings in order to achieve physical and mental bliss at the mundane level and to fend off any obstacle that might hinder their cultivation of the Buddha Dharma. Therefore, at their outset the Secret Mantra teachings did not consist of a body of doctrines as compact and elaborate as they do today, but rather were comprised of only methods and rituals that were practiced to obtain blessings from the Dharma-protecting deities. The compact and elaborate nature of the Secret Mantra teachings has resulted from the gradual addition of

non-Buddhist tenets and Buddhist terms over time, followed by the incorporation of the philosophy of sexual union into Buddhism. The Secret Mantra teachings eventually achieved their current scale after their followers connected old and new practices with the philosophy of sexual union. Unlike Exoteric Buddhism, Secret Mantra does not encompass the Three-Vehicle Bodhi Dharma, which was fully explained during the three wheels of doctrine and also either implicitly or explicitly explicated in the four *Āgamas*. Therefore, the Secret Mantra teachings consist of unreal methods established and expanded over time by common beings based on their deluded thoughts; as such, they do not correspond to true Buddhism.

The Secret Mantra doctrines are preposterous beyond imagination. They involve the quest for the occult and the adoption of eccentric behavior, and their essence has nothing to do with Buddhism. The Liberation Path and Buddha-Bodhi Path contained therein completely contradict the true principles set forth in the Three-Vehicle sūtras and have extensively misled sentient beings. They have prevented practitioners from attaining any realization after a long-time cultivation of the Buddha Dharma and have gradually enticed them onto the wrong path, causing indulgence in the pursuit of the contaminated, compounded phenomena of the three realms. The more they practice, the deeper they will become mired in those phenomena, without any ability to break away. They become endlessly entrapped in cyclic existence and may even slump into the three lower realms - hence, the pernicious impact of the Secret Mantra practice on its followers.

Few people, however, are aware of this grievous fact. The insiders within and beyond this esoteric religion who know the truth do not dare to reveal it, seriously fearing they will be attacked, insulted, or even killed by hordes of Secret Mantra devotees. They can only guard the truth silently in their minds, having no courage to speak about it publicly, let alone expose it in writing. As a result, the true nature of the Secret Mantra practice has long been kept from the knowledge of Buddhist learners in general. Even high-level intellectuals such as Chen Lu-an have long been fooled without even knowing it.

In this modern era of great technological advances, the general increase in the education level of Buddhist practitioners has led to their widespread understanding of basic Buddhism. If someone were to be bold enough to stand up against the overwhelming power and influence of the Secret Mantra system and openly point out the fallacies of its tenets in accordance with the truth - thus rendering speechless all the doctrine-kings, living buddhas, and rinpoches and helping all learners to understand the erroneous nature of the Secret Mantra doctrines - then the practitioners of Exoteric Buddhism would not need to give up exoteric teachings for esoteric practices. In fact, they would not be obliged to abandon the true Dharma for this erroneous path. If all Secret Mantra followers, including the doctrine-kings and rinpoches, could also embrace the true Dharma, then there would be a gradual decrease of instances that have plagued practitioners since ancient times - for example, in which Secret Mantra devotees were misled onto the wrong paths; in which their

long-held practices were fruitless or their wrong ways of cultivation led to erroneous attainments; and in which they went to hell after death as a result of committing grievous false speeches about their attainments. Furthermore, the episode in which the Buddhism of ancient India was extinguished at the hands of Secret Mantra followers would not re-occur in present-day Taiwan or future-day mainland China, and the Buddhist Dharma could thus preserve its purity. Thereafter, Buddhism could be passed down without any other issue for another thousand years, while the great many practitioners of present and future generations could be spared the lingering poison injected by the erroneous views contained in ancient and current Secret Mantra teachings.

The disclosure and rectification of the erroneous nature of the Secret Mantra views exhibit profound and great significance; no meritorious person in Buddhism should treat this lightly. Therein lies my real purpose for writing this book. May all elders, meritorious practitioners, learners in all directions, and Secret Mantra doctrine-kings and disciples perceive and comprehend my sincerity, examine and verify the mistaken essence and instructions of the esoteric religion in accordance with the truth, relinquish all prejudices, and join forces together in order to achieve the longevity of Buddhism and the welfare of present and future followers.

Anyone who cultivates the Path of Secret Mantra must furthermore be particularly aware of and investigate the following: What is your objective to learn and practice Secret Mantra? If you seek to obtain the mundane phenomena

consisting of body strength and sexual pleasure, then please just ignore my statements and proceed further with your Secret Mantra practice. If your goal is to cultivate the Liberation Path and Buddha-Bodhi Path, then you must abandon the esoteric methods and embrace the exoteric teachings. You must no longer linger within the Secret Mantra institutions unless their erroneous doctrines are rectified; otherwise, you will be misled onto the wrong path and your cultivation of the Buddha Dharma will be completely fruitless. The Secret Mantra cultivation will even cause you to break a major Bodhisattva Precept, as the practice of sexual union entails deliberate sexual misconduct. Moreover, given that all Secret Mantra practices and realizations related to the proclaimed attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime involve the action of grievous false speeches, you will suffer the retribution of being tormented by nothing but utmost anguish and pain in Unintermittent Hell for measureless lifetimes during long eons to come. Due to these well-founded reasons, I urge all Secret Mantra practitioners to act wisely and make an informed decision on whether you should depart from such habits by first pondering upon the goal you wish to attain and then calmly investigate whether the Secret Mantra doctrines correspond to the true teachings of the two major paths in the Buddha Dharma. It would be unwise for any Secret Mantra follower to react with slanderous comments before reading the entire contents of this book, as such behavior would demonstrate that this person is bound by irrationally strong feelings and emotions.

Erroneous views and practices proliferate within the Secret Mantra system. The principal ones are the Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamaka's fallacious theory of "dependent-arising without the existence of the ālayavijñāna (mind-basis-of-all) as the principal cause," as well as the method permitting the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime embodied in the practice of sexual union pertaining to Highest Yoga Tantra. The secondary erroneous practices consist of the quest for the occult and the adoption of eccentric behavior, involving the collection and incorporation into the Buddha Dharma of all sorts of non-Buddhist, bizarre, mundane, and erroneous views and methods, such as the nectar-seeking rituals, consciousness transference (*saṃkrānti*, 'pho-ba), and so forth. These techniques have been established as legitimate Buddhist practices that attest to high realization levels, while in fact they have nothing to do with the cultivation of the Buddha Dharma. Given its followers' strange behavior and its teachings contradicting the theories and authentic methods of the Buddha Dharma, the Secret Mantra religion is said to involve such a quest for the occult and the adoption of eccentric behavior as noted above.

The Secret Mantra views, practices, deeds, and fruitions are, in addition, all erroneous. For instance, their initiations are devoid of real substance and significance. The method of consciousness transference, which involves a *ḍākinī*'s conveyance of the learner's fundamental consciousness toward the *Ḍākinī* Pure Land or the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, also stems from misconstrued beliefs. What is more, the Secret Mantra texts *The Vairocanābhishambodhi Sūtra* and

Compendium of the Principles of All Tathāgata both set forth the fallacious theory that the successful visualization of a deity's attainment of Buddhahood is tantamount to a visualizer's own achievement of the ultimate Buddhahood. The nectar-seeking rituals are but compounded phenomena of the desire-realm heavens and have nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma. The method of the five nectars is also unrelated to Buddhism, because it is merely based on preposterous, obscene, and erroneous interpretations and deluded thoughts.

The Secret Mantra theory that equates the flesh body through which one attains Buddhahood with the body of attributes (*dharmakāya, chos-sku*) is completely unfounded. Moreover, the exercises of wind-energies and inner fire (*caṇḍālī, gtum-mo*) have nothing to do with Buddhism either. The visualization of the drops (*bindu, thig-le*) in the central channel as the mind of enlightenment (*bodhicitta, byang-chub-kyi sems*) and the consideration of these drops as the ālayavijñāna - which is the holder of lives and bodies - are both based on non-Buddhist, deluded thoughts and do not correspond to the Buddha Dharma. The same goes for the endeavors to attain the four concentrations and four formless absorptions through the vase breathing technique.

Tsongkhapa reversed the correct sequence of the cultivation stages leading to Buddhahood by asserting that the doctrines explicated in the Mind-Only (or Consciousness-Only, *Vijñāptimātratā*) following scriptures of the third wheel of doctrine are non-definitive, and that the “general-aspect-wisdom of the middle way (*Mādhyamaka*)” illustrated in the perfection

of wisdom sūtras of the second wheel of doctrine corresponds to the ultimate Dharma. It is unwise for the vast majority of Secret Mantra practitioners pertaining to the Gelug School to blindly believe in such a statement. In *Illumination of the Thought, Extensive Explanation of (Chandrakīrti's) "Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle Way',"* Tsongkhapa quoted passages from Exoteric Buddhist sūtras in order to corroborate his assertion about “the inexistence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses (*viññānas, rnam-par shes-pa*).”² By taking statements out of their context, he distorted the meanings of the Buddha’s teachings in the Exoteric Buddhist sūtras of the third wheel of doctrine. He was unaware that “the Dharma set forth in the Mind-Only following scriptures of the third wheel of doctrine teaches about the exalted-wisdom-of-all-aspects that practitioners must cultivate once they have realized the general-aspect-wisdom of the prajñāpāramitā system, the first level of realization in the mode of prajñāpāramitā -

² In Buddhism, “consciousness (*viññāna, rnam-par shes-pa*)” is defined as “perception and discernment.” It is commonly understood as a mind (*citta, sems*). Each sentient being possesses eight consciousnesses, which are: (1) eye consciousness (*chakṣhurviññāna, mig-gi rnam-par shes-pa*); (2) ear consciousness (*śrotraviññāna, rna ba'i rnam-par shes-pa*); (3) nose consciousness (*ghrānaviññāna, sna'i rnam-par shes-pa*); (4) tongue consciousness (*jihvāviññāna, lce'i rnam-par shes-pa*); (5) body consciousness (*kāyaviññāna, lus-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*); (6) the sixth consciousness or mental consciousness (*manovijñāna, yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*); (7) the seventh consciousness or manas consciousness (*manasviññāna, nyon-mong yid-kyi rnam-par shes-pa*); and (8) the eighth consciousness or basis-of-all consciousness, storehouse consciousness (*ālayaviññāna, kun-gzhi rnam-par shes-pa*). The first five consciousnesses are known as the five senses.

Mādhyamaka.” He wrongly stipulated the ultimate, definitive, and true contents of the ālayavijñāna taught in the Mind-Only following scriptures as being non-definitive. Based on this erroneous concept, he negated the existence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses in order to escape all criticism that he himself had failed to realize the wisdom in the mode of prajñāpāramitā. As he was unaware that the prajñāpāramitā - Mādhyamaka - tenets teach about the middle-way properties of the eighth consciousness, the Tathāgatagarbha, he further misstated that those tenets preach “the emptiness of all dharmas” on the premise that “the Tathāgatagarbha does not exist.” Such complete misunderstanding of the correct principles demonstrates that he was just a common being who had neither comprehended nor realized the mode of prajñāpāramitā himself.

Tsongkhapa established an utterly nonsensical criterion for a person to qualify as a Gelug School guru: His feces and urine must have a good odor. He also taught nonsensical secret empowerment rituals that involve the guru’s deposit of the four channel secretions [feces, urine, as well as the semen and sexual fluids issued from the sexual union of the guru with his wife or consort in the maṇḍala] on the tongues of his disciples. According to Tsongkhapa, **“the taste of such fluids will generate the samādhi of supreme bliss.”** In the last stage of practice, Secret Mantra followers must cultivate the clear light of bliss, Highest Yoga Tantra, and union of bliss and emptiness. According to Tsongkhapa, they will attain the state of complete full enlightenment if, during this stage, their sexual bliss is able to pervade their bodies long-lastingly, and

if they can meditate on the union of bliss and emptiness, as well as on the non-duality of bliss and emptiness, within the ultimate tactile bliss; such is the highest secret method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime. Surprisingly, Secret Mantra practitioners have absolute faith in this teaching, which makes one wonder whether they have correct wisdom or not. Even the wise at the mundane level can detect the fallacy of this method. A question thus arises: Would it not be disconcerting to see that Buddhist disciples, who strive to become wise, have failed to perceive the fallacy of this method? Even Two-Vehicle practitioners, who do not possess the wisdom in the mode of *prajñāpāramitā*, are aware of the necessity to eliminate the greed for the desire-realm phenomena. In contrast, the highest esoteric method, which “transcends the Three Vehicles,” surprisingly fosters an attachment to the desire-realm phenomena. It is unwise of Secret Mantra practitioners to make the empty vow of “subduing desires with other desires” and to shy away from the Three-Vehicle Buddha Dharma.

By arbitrarily negating the seventh and eighth consciousnesses, “Bodhisattva” Chandrakīrti, a Secret Mantra master of ancient India, and Tsongkhapa had converted the Three-Vehicle Buddha Dharma into nihilism and the theory of dependent-arising without the existence of the *ālayavijñāna* as the principal cause. Such slandering of the Scripture Division of Bodhisattva (*Bodhisattvapīṭaka*) was not just preposterous, but squarely destroyed the fundamentals of the Buddha Dharma, thus turning Chandrakīrti and Tsongkhapa into “incorrigibles (*icchāntikas*)” according to the Buddha’s

teachings in the *Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra*. Surprisingly enough, Secret Mantra practitioners all adhere to and act according to their doctrines with absolute faith. By denying the existence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses, these practitioners have committed the icchantika sin along with Tsongkhapa and other unenlightened patriarchs.

The nonsensical and erroneous Secret Mantra views, as well as their followers' multitudinous endeavors to destroy Buddhism, have taken their tolls without respite throughout history and across various locations, starting from India, passing through Tibet, and reaching to the entire world today. Few are aware of these facts and no one has had the courage to expose them in public. Buddhism has survived the Secret Mantra practitioners' extensive ravage and repeated efforts to wreck its Dharma over time and has finally been transmitted to this land after a long process. The Buddhist doctrines are not left with much real substance, and few can understand and realize the Three-Vehicle Dharma pronounced by the Buddha. With just one breath left, how is Buddhism able to withstand any other attempt of devastation by the Secret Mantra followers who have been replacing the true Dharma with all kinds of non-Buddhist methods?

If no one steps forward to refute the erroneous teachings and to articulate the truth, as well as to restore the definitive and true Dharma endowed with real substance, then the historical episode in which the Buddhism of India was extinguished at the hands of Secret Mantra practitioners will re-occur in present-day China, and over a billion people will

end up being misled by those misconceptions. Moreover, as the Secret Mantra doctrines spread overseas, they will also deceive future generations of learners around the world. If the initiative to identify and rectify those false teachings is not taken, but instead practitioners are indulged to embrace them, then the definitive and true Buddhist Dharma will become forever extinct in this world.

We would not be at fault if the above-mentioned facts are not detected due to a lack of both wisdom and Dharma eyes, and instead a replay of those historical events takes place. However, if we refuse to step forward to turn the tide, despite having clearly seen the truth as it is, then we are failing the Buddha as well as our patriarchs' benevolence and would be acting against the Buddha Dharma's teachings. As such, we would not be true Buddhist disciples. For this reason, I hereby compose *Behind the Façade of Secret Mantra*, hoping to repay the extreme kindness of the different parties I am indebted to: the Buddha at the top, my patriarchs, the Dharma, and all sentient beings beneath the Buddha. After death, I shall be able to meet and prostrate before Buddha Śākyamuni with a mind free of guilt and filled with joy; only then will I take rebirth according to His instructions and proceed with the correct bodhisattva practice. These are the thoughts that I bear in mind. May all celestial and human beings investigate these facts, and may all Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhists shed light on the truth, return to the correct path, and rejoice from the benefits of the Dharma.

1.2 Sources of Quotations

The composition of *Behind the Façade of Secret Mantra* revolves around the critique of *Lamdré (Compendium of the Esoterics of the Mahāyāna Main Path): Commentary on the Vajra Lines*, a text which derives from the *Vajra Lines* written by Virūpa, an Indian patriarch of the Sakya School, later explicated by Sakya Paṇḍita, and translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa. As auxiliary references, I have relied on Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* and various other tantras and sūtras, as well as tantra treatises composed by Secret Mantra patriarchs [please refer to the bibliography at the end of this book]. The reasons for me to profusely quote the Sakya School's *Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines* [abbreviated hereafter as *Lamdré*] are as follows: It embodies the entirety of the Secret Mantra teachings by itself; it offers the most thorough and clearest delineations of the different steps of practice; its contents, including the various stages highlighted, correspond to the truth of Secret Mantra; its teachings encompass the tenets of all the Lamaist schools; and its instructions are more or less similar to the doctrines of each tradition. Nonetheless, in *Lamdré*, the Secret Mantra essence has been skillfully concealed behind extremely succinct and occult wordings, and therefore it is necessary to complement its teachings with detailed explanations and oral instructions from the other lineages. In order to understand the oral instructions about the secret methods scattered across the various tantras and texts composed by the gurus of every school, the reader needs only to read and investigate each of the stages that connect the different parts of *Lamdré*. Therefore, I

hereby briefly indicate my intention to establish *Lamdré* as this book's framework as well as its target of critique.

The following texts served as auxiliary references for the composition of this book: *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* by Tsongkhapa, *Naro's Six Dharmas (Naro Choe Druk)* by Nomzi Khenpo and Blo-Bzan-Grags-Pa Zam Lam, and *The Complete Works of Yogi Chen* by Yogi C.M. Chen, along with the teachings propagated by the various schools of Lamaism. *Lamdré* was chosen for having the best presentation sequence and the most comprehensive contents; *Naro's Six Dharmas* was selected for its oral instructions about the completion stage and the method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime; *The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* was quoted for being the most authoritative text; *The Complete Works of Yogi Chen* was selected for being the richest in content. As for the teachings preached by the various schools of Lamaism, they have long intermingled with one another and have all become similar. [Note: The original name of Dharmarakṣa, the translator of *Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines*, is Tseng Chingchung. Sakya Paṇḍita is the fourth Sakya Forefather. *Lamdré* was originally compiled into eight massive volumes and subsequently expanded and aggregated into a final collection by the first reincarnation of Jamyang Khyentse. Jamyang Khyentse learned the Dharma from more than three hundred Secret Mantra gurus and is the reincarnation of Dilgo Khyentse. Jamyang Khyentse and Dharmarakṣa both obtain merits and virtues for playing a key role today in helping me redirect Lamaist followers onto the right path - the former for his compilation of the Secret

Mantra doctrines into the above-mentioned text, and the latter for his translation thereof.]

Despite possessing more than two hundred Secret Mantra books, I have only cited the most significant ones to support my statements. For instance, *Naro's Six Dharmas* is highly representative of the Secret Mantra teachings for being mostly comprised of oral instructions. Moreover, Yogi C.M. Chen composed a great number of tantras and even elaborated extensively on the practice of Highest Yoga, with a view to propagating the Path of Secret Mantra. By exposing the mysterious Secret Mantra methods, he allowed true and wise Buddhist masters to easily understand, examine, and refute their misleading essence. These authors played a key role in helping correct the erroneous views inherent to the Secret Mantra teachings, and their works can be used as strong evidence to corroborate my statements. The other texts shall only serve as references. Indeed, the works of past and modern gurus all look similar, because their contents mostly come from tantras composed by past patriarchs and by their contemporary counterparts.

The works of the “great master” Kay-drup have followed in the footsteps of Tsongkhapa’s texts by constantly imposing erroneous views through unreasonable argumentation. Kay-drup first distorted and then criticized the Jonang School’s teaching of other-emptiness in order to sabotage the dissemination of the Tathāgatagarbha thought. Given that the contents of his works, which include *Extensive Expressions of the General Tantra Sets* and so forth, are similar

to Tsongkhapa's teachings, it is not necessary to quote them here. Furthermore, I shall not cite the books composed by modern-day masters either, as they are mostly drawn from texts written by ancient patriarchs and do not offer any innovative or seminal view. The bibliography, which includes a detailed list of Secret Mantra texts consulted in the production of this publication, is attached at the end of this book. With respect to the quoting of teachings imparted by Secret Mantra masters, their sources appear in brackets and parentheses right after the excerpts in order to demonstrate their veracity and the fact that I do not cite them out of their context just to condemn the Secret Mantra practice.

Tantric works can roughly be divided into "sūtras" and "tantras." Within the sūtra category, Taishō Tripitaka's Scripture Division of Secret Mantra includes various texts such as *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sūtra*; *Adamantine Pinnacle Sūtra: The Compendium of the Principles of All Tathāgata and the Realization of the Great Vehicle, Being the Scripture of the Great King of Teachings*; *Pavilion of Vajra Peak and All its Yogas and Yogins Sūtra*; *Reality and the Compendium of the Attained Realm of the Buddhas Sūtra*; *Compendium of the Principles of All Tathāgata*; *Secret Samaya Sūtra, Being the Scripture of the Great King of Teachings*; *All Tathagata's Vajra Three Karma of Highest Secrecy Sūtra, Being the Scripture of the Great King of Teachings*; *Great King of Teachings of the Great Compassion Śūnyatā Prajñā Vajra Sādhana*; *Susiddhikara Sūtra*; *Questions of Subahu Tantra*; and so forth. These texts were the collective works of a group of Secret Mantra patriarchs in the last stage of Indian "Buddhism"; they were finally disseminated to the public after

undergoing various acts of compilation over a long period of time. The Secret Mantra practitioners pretended that those teachings originated from Buddha Vairocana and were collected by Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna after he opened the Iron Tower of the Southern Celestial Gate. This is obviously a fabricated story, because none of the Three-Vehicle Buddhist sūtras contain such a prophecy and also because the teachings of those tantric works all conflict with the contents of the Liberation Path and Buddha-Bodhi Path; in other words, they all contradict the doctrines set forth in the Three-Vehicle sūtras. This book highlights each of those discrepancies, which shall serve as a source of reference as well as strong evidence of my statements' accuracy.

The tantras were created by the Secret Mantra patriarchs. Here are some examples: *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra*; *Four Seats Tantra*; *Precious Lamp for the Middle Way*; *Compendium of Meanings of the Middle*; *Quintessential Instructions on the Middle Way*; *Golden Rosary of Eloquence/Extensive Explanation of (Maitreya's) 'Treatise of Quintessential Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom, Ornament for Clear Realization', As Well As Its Commentaries*; *Commentary on the Difficult Points of 'Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment'*; *Extensive Explanation on the Mind of Enlightenment, Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'*; *Commentary on the 'Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle"'*; *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path*; *Medium Exposition of the Stages of the Path*; *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*; *Introduction to the Two Truths*; *Means of Achievement of Śrī-Cakrasaṃvara-kavira*; *Precious*

Garland of Bodhisattva; Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds; Vajra Throne and Vajra Song; Means of Achievement of Śrī-Vajravārāhī; Means of Achievement of Hevajra Yogini; Hevajra Tantra; Vajradāka Tantra; Vajra Garland Tantra; Commentary on the Guhyasamāja Tantra; Saṃvarodaya Tantra; Oral Transmission of Vajra Lines; Oral Transmission of [Naro's] Six Dharmas; Tantra of the Original Buddha; Commentary on the Compendium of the Explanation of the Intention; Great Perfection: Trilogy of Natural Freedom; Drop of Freedom; A lamp to Illuminate the Five Stage: Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra; Means of Achievement of Āryāvalokiteśvara; Means of Achievement of Āryā-tara; Precious Garland of Tenets; Uttaratantra; Secret Treatise on Nectar; Root Tantra; Explanation of the Intention Tantra; and so forth, as well as all kinds of mantra repetition methods and rituals found in Taishō Tripiṭaka's Scripture Division of Secret Mantra. Briefly speaking, any text composed by a Secret Mantra patriarch and containing Secret Mantra theories and practices constitutes a tantra, regardless of whether it has been falsely denominated as a "sūtra" expounded by the Buddha. Those tantras all served as a source of reference in the production of this book. As for the practice methods and rituals, they are not listed herein, given their irrelevance to the discussion of the Secret Mantra doctrines.

Tantras can be divided into either four sets or seven sets. Tibetan Lamaism has traditionally recognized a fourfold partition of them: Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, Yoga Tantra, and Highest Yoga Tantra. The classification of tantras into seven sets consists of distinguishing a sub-category within

Performance Tantra called Discrimination Tantra, one within Yoga Tantra named Dual Tantra, and one within either the Method Father Tantra or the Wisdom Mother Tantra of Highest Yoga Tantra called Mahāyoga or Highest Tantra, respectively. In addition, there exists a sixfold division, which consists of sub-dividing Highest Yoga Tantra into Father Tantra, Mother Tantra, and Non-Dual Tantra; if we add these three levels to Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, and Yoga Tantra, then there is a total of six sets.

Action Tantra principally emphasizes the taking of refuge, the purification of body, and the construction of maṇḍala. Performance Tantra mainly focuses on collecting merits for the Secret Mantra practice by making offerings to the guru, engaging in the outer performance of the body, mind, and so forth, as well as mantra repetition. Yoga Tantra primarily targets the cultivation of Method Yoga and the “samādhi” of mental deeds - Father Tantra - and secondarily concentrates on the practice of Mother Tantra belonging to “Wisdom Yoga.” For instance, *Glorious Guhyasamāja Tantra* is representative of Father Tantras, while *Little Saṃvara Tantra* preaches about the cultivation of ultimate bliss from the perspective of a woman and is the most widely taught of all Mother Tantras. Highest Yoga Tantra principally emphasizes the cultivation of the non-duality of method and wisdom - the simultaneous practice of Father Tantra and Mother Tantra - and is thus denoted as being the supreme and unsurpassed cultivation method within Secret Mantra, involving the actual practice of copulation between a man and a woman, the so-called union of bliss and emptiness or the non-duality of

bliss and emptiness. Along with Father Tantra and Mother Tantra, these terms refer to the practice of sexual union.

Tsongkhapa further divided Father Tantra, which is a method of sexual union, into four sets of tantras: embracing, holding hands, laughing, and looking. His *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra* states:

Viryavajra explains it in terms of the four sets of tantras in his *Commentary on the Samputa Tantra (Samputaṭīkā)*. The eleventh chapter of the *Ornament of the Vajra Essence Tantra (Vajrahṛdayālaṃkāra)* after setting forth many types of desire tantras within method tantras, says:

This shows the tantra divisions
Through the embrace of the two.
Similarly know them through
Holding hands, laughing, and looking.

Through speaking in terms of tantras as communicators [texts]³, the passage indicates the difference between the four sets of tantras. Thus, the sets of tantras are also called tantras of looking [Action]⁴, laughing [Performance]⁵, holding hands or embracing [Yoga]⁶, and union of the two [i.e., the union of the male and female sexual organs] [Highest Yoga]⁷. ...

³ Bracket is from Hopkins.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

... Still, because the lower tantras do use joy arising from laughing, looking, and holding hands or embracing in the path, in general they do use desire for the attributes of the desire realm in the path [their practice is based on the actual craving for the tactile object perceived during sex]. The twenty-fifth cluster of Abhayakara's *Clusters* says, 'Action, Performance, Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantras are illustrated by way of laughing, looking, embracing or holding hands, and union of the two. Thus, in some Action Tantras and so forth the means by which the desire of the god and goddess—Wisdom and Method—is shown is looking; in some [Performance Tantras]⁸, smiling; in some [Yoga Tantras]⁹, holding hands; in some [Yoga Tantras]¹⁰, embracing; in some [Highest Yoga Tantras]¹¹, uniting the two [i.e., the union of the male and female sexual organs].' Also, the third chapter of the continuation of the *Hevajra Tantra* says:

Through laughing and looking,
Embracing and uniting,
The tantras are of four types.

On this Ratnakarashanti's *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the Hevajra Tantra (Hevajrapañjikā)* says, ' "Four" means Action, Performance, Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantras which are illustrated by laughing, looking, embracing and union of the two. Thus, in some Action

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Tantras and so forth there is smiling that indicates the desire of the god and goddess, Method and Wisdom; in some, after that there is looking; in some, embracing; and in some, union of the two.’...

... Viryavajra’s *Commentary on the Samputa Tantra* says:

The text says, ‘Laughing, looking, holding hands’. This means that within the sound of laughter non-conceptual bliss is generated; or it is generated from looking at the body, the touch of holding hands and the embrace of the two; or from the touch [of union]¹² [generating the unsurpassed tactile bliss pertaining to the lustful pleasure and abiding therein without any verbal conceptualization]. ‘In the manner of insects’ indicates non-contaminated great bliss and emptiness [details of which are omitted here; please refer to the explanations in Chapter Nine]; just as an insect is generated from wood and then eats the wood itself, so meditative stabilisation is generated from bliss [in dependence on desire]¹³ and is cultivated as emptiness [whereupon desire is consumed]¹⁴ [while in the “samādhi” state free of all distracting thoughts and arising from sexual pleasure, one must cultivate the Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*, *Stong-pa-nyid*) consisting of “the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

dependant-arising of all phenomena coupled with the absence of inherent existence”]. ...

... and in general they believe in seeking enlightenment through only using in the path desire for the desire realm attributes of a Knowledge Woman [any woman who practices sexual union with a male counterpart is regarded as a Knowledge Woman]. Highest Yoga teaches using the desire of laughing and so forth in the path in cognisance of both actual and meditated Knowledge Women [the Secret Mantra tenets regard the practice of sexual craving as the path to Buddhahood], but in the three lower tantras the joy observing the desire realm attributes of only meditated Wisdom Knowledge Women [the Wisdom Knowledge Woman is so-called, because through her female sexual organ, she can help the male practitioner cultivate “the wisdom on sexual union”] is used in the path. Since in Yoga Tantras even meditating on a union of the organs is inappropriate, joy that is based on another type of touch—holding hands or embracing—is used in the path. Joy that arises in dependence on observing laughing and looking—but not touching—is used in the path in Performance and Action Tantras. The meanings of the names of the four tantra sets, designated in Highest Yoga [as tantras of looking, laughing, holding hands or embracing, and union of the two]¹⁵, are explained through these distinctions, and thus the differences of their trainees and paths are indicated. (*Tantra in Tibet: The Great Exposition*

¹⁵ Ibid.

of *Secret Mantra*, Vol. 1, by Tsong-ka-pa; intro. by H.H. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama; trans. & ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp. 157-162)

Tsongkhapa's text articulates another fourfold set of tantras, using the object of desire as the method of the path in order to cultivate Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*, *Stong-pa-nyid*) and the deity yoga:

Those who resort to a great many external activities in order to actualise these two yogas are trainees of Action Tantras. Those who balance their external activities and internal meditative stabilisation without using very many activities are trainees of Performance Tantras. Those who mainly rely on meditative stabilisation and resort to only few external activities are trainees of Yoga Tantras. Those who do not rely on external activities and are able to generate the yoga of which there is none higher are trainees of Highest Yoga Tantras. (*Tantra in Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, Vol. 1, by Tsong-ka-pa; intro. by H.H. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama; trans. & ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, p. 162)

1.3 The Principal Reference of Secret Mantra to the Doctrines of Western Lamaism

The Secret Mantra practiced in the world today mainly consists of the doctrines propagated by Western Lamaism

[Tibetan Lamaism]. Tibetan Lamaism currently encompasses four major traditions: Gelug, Sakya, Nyingma, and Kagyu. This book draws from the tantric texts composed by their patriarchs, and given that the contents preached by each of these schools vary in detail, I will not list their doctrines due to the limitation of space, but will instead present a synthesis of the available quotes. I hereby clarify that the main themes shall be accurately presented, though some details might be slightly imprecise or omitted. Eastern Lamaism [the Secret Mantra religion transmitted from China to Japan during the Tang Dynasty] will not be discussed herein as it no longer presents any hindrance to the propagation of the true Buddhist Dharma. Indeed, its influence has gradually declined given its incorporation into Japan's folk religions and its disinterest in overseas expansion. As far as we know, it has not taught the practice of sexual union for a long time. In comparison, Western Lamaism has been aggressively disseminating its doctrines worldwide, and given the extreme erroneousness and deceitfulness of its views, knowledge, and actual practice methods, its growing preeminence around the globe could eventually thwart the propagation of authentic Buddhism. Therefore, this book's refutation of the untruth and its articulation of the truth relate to Western Lamaism and do not concern Eastern Lamaism.

This book contains annotations that aim to elucidate the esoteric meanings of the Secret Mantra oral instructions, yet I have never cultivated Secret Mantra in this lifetime. My knowledge of those teachings stems from the interest I took in my youth in learning various practice skills, which led to

the study of sitting meditation, boxing techniques, qigong, and Taoist sorcery. Furthermore, a perusal of Tu-ḡen's *Mirror of the Good Explanations Showing the Sources and Assertions of All Systems of Tenets* a few years ago gradually prompted the emergence in meditation and dreams of memories related to the two lifetimes I spent as the doctrine-king of the Jonang School, during which I followed the local customs in teaching the Kālacakra and the Buddha Dharma, in an attempt to cover up my teachings about the Tathāgatagarbha. These experiences allowed me to gather some knowledge of those esoteric meanings and to provide accurate annotations thereof.

The Secret Mantra theories and actual practice methods set forth in this book, especially those concerning the secret initiation and Highest Yoga Tantra, might slightly be sexually explicit. However, I have no choice but to reveal them exactly as they are because such is the true nature of the Secret Mantra doctrines; I have not overstated any of those contents. If, instead of disclosing them truthfully and clearly, I only allude to them with implicit and vague wordings, then the gurus who crave fame and wealth, as well as the superstitious disciples within Secret Mantra, may very well continue to deliberately find excuses to confuse people and assert that such doctrines do not exist within Secret Mantra. As a result, their practitioners will continue to be misled, and their erroneous teachings could either subsist discreetly or infiltrate and secretly spread within Buddhism. By then, it will become impossible to expel the fallacious Secret Mantra

tenets away from Buddhism. This is the reason why it is indispensable to depict the truth in detail without considering its sexually explicit nature, so as to widely inform the public about the essence of Secret Mantra.

Those who plan to criticize the sexually explicit nature of those teachings should be condemning the Secret Mantra patriarchs and tenets for articulating such contents rather than putting the blame on me. In fact, the Secret Mantra practice involves the cultivation of adulterous, unreal methods; all I have done is state the facts instead of misattributing those contents to Secret Mantra or overstating them with a view to making false accusations. Furthermore, the multitudes of Buddhists who have a limited level of knowledge are precisely those who are most susceptible to being enthralled by the Secret Mantra teachings; if those contents were to be depicted implicitly, then those practitioners would unlikely grasp the meanings conveyed in this book. Consequently, it is necessary to add concise annotations in brackets right behind the crucial parts or the occult Secret Mantra terms, so as to help the practitioners who can only recognize a limited number of words to read and understand the meanings expressed in this book. Therefore, the annotations must appear in simple and clear wordings, thus inevitably rendering the meanings of sexual union more explicit. This is what must be done in this Dharma-ending age in order to protect the World-Honored One's true teachings. May all wise persons make well-founded judgments!

2. The Fundamentals of the Secret Mantra Practice

2.1 Drops, Wind-Energies, Channels, and Highest Yoga

Those who have accomplished the exercises of the drops (*bindu, thig-le*), channels (*nāḍī, rtsa*), and wind-energies (*vāyu, rlung*) can proceed to the practice of sexual union pertaining to Highest Yoga - the method that allows the attainment of “Buddhahood” in one single lifetime, which constitutes the main thought of Secret Mantra. Therefore, the cultivation of the drops, channels, wind-energies, and Highest Yoga is regarded as the basis of the Secret Mantra system. Separately, those who are interested in the technique of qigong may consult the illustrations found in *The Vital Energy Exercises of Tibetan Secret Mantra*, which is listed as No. 162 in the Bibliography. I shall not reiterate those contents here.

The Secret Mantra patriarchs mistakenly believe that by successfully completing the exercises of the drops and wind-energies, a practitioner will attain the worldly fruit consisting of the four concentrations and four formless absorptions and therefore can be reborn in a desire-realm - or even form-realm or formless-realm - heaven. As stated in *Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines*, the four concentrations and four formless absorptions can be achieved through learning the guidance on the path by the vital wind, the guidance on the path by the essential constituent nectars, and the guidance on the path by channel syllables. The other effects of such

learning include the fact that the practitioner becomes “dissolved in the mansion of the great mother Prajñāpāramitā and so forth, the dharmakāya reality body is experienced and there is freedom from subject and object”¹⁶ - in other words, the above-mentioned learning enables the realization of the Dharmakāya and the elimination of the attachments to the self of persons and to the self of phenomena. [Please refer to pp. 371, 487, 492, and 493 of *Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines* (composed by Virūpa; explicated by Sakya Paṇḍita; translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa. Mahapitaka Culture Publisher, 1992), which is listed as No. 61 in the Bibliography.]

The Secret Mantra patriarchs wrongly hold that the completion of the exercises of the drops and wind-energies, along with the successful visualization of syllables and channels, allows a practitioner to escape the three lower realms, to attain supra-mundane fruits, and to be bestowed with the name of “Bodhisattva Who Cannot Fall Back.”¹⁷ [61: 478-491] In addition, these patriarchs erroneously assert that the accomplishment of the methods of the drops and wind-energies brings forth the attainment of the perfection of wisdom and therefore the elimination of “the thoughts of subject and object that are to be abandoned.”¹⁸ [61: 494-495] They incorrectly believe that the four pure lands can be attained through the meditation on the channels and cakras in the body. [61: 552-553]

¹⁶ Citation from *Taking the Result as the Path: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdré Tradition*, translated and edited by Cyrus Stearns. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2006, p. 16.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

(*Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines*, by Virūpa; explicated by Sakya Paṇḍita; translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa. Mahapitaka Culture Publisher, 1992, pp. 552-553)

As stated in Tsongkhapa's *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the Secret Mantra patriarchs also erroneously regard the visualized drops as the bodhicitta:

Having completed the coarse and subtle generation stages, you can cause the bodhicitta¹⁹ to descend from the crown to the tip of the secret place [the tip of the secret place refers to the glans penis or clitoris; sometimes, instead of the clitoris, it may designate the orifice of the uterus, also known as conch channel] by relying upon a wisdom consort. ... (*A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra*, by Tsongkhapa; tr. by Gavin Kilty. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2013, p. 177)

The bodhicitta in fact corresponds to the eighth consciousness, the ālayavijñāna, which exists naturally in all sentient beings. How then could this mind be imagined and transformed into drops given that it is devoid of forms and signs? As this true

¹⁹ bodhicitta (*byang chub kyi sems*). Normally, this is the mind that wishes to attain the highest state of enlightenment for the sake of all beings and is essential to both sūtra and tantra Mahayana practices. The same term is used in tantric language to refer to the white seminal fluid that primarily resides at the crown of the head during life, but can be manipulated to descend through the channels to produce bliss. (*A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra*, by Tsongkhapa; tr. by Gavin Kilty. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2013, p. 606)

bodhicitta pervades all eighteen constituents (*dhātu, khams*) and exists whenever and wherever those constituents exist, how does one's mental consciousness meditate on and transform it into a drop and then condense it at the center of the fleshly heart or lower it to the secret channel wheel (*cakra, rtsa 'khor*)? It does not make any sense. Nevertheless, since the early days when their lineage consisted solely of the Kadam School and after it then split into four major schools, the Lamaist practitioners have all mistaken the drops for the true bodhicitta, thereby completely violating the holy teachings of the Three-Vehicle scriptures.

All ancient and modern Secret Mantra masters assert that the three buddha bodies and the four exalted wisdoms can be attained principally with the practice of the drops and secondarily through the causal initiation, path initiation, wisdom initiation, and highest secret initiation, as well as through the visualization of the channels and syllables. [61: 559-561] However, these methods are irrelevant to the attainment of Buddhahood in the Buddha Dharma. Milarepa's oral instruction says:

When the Instructions of the Lineage
Were imbibed in my heart,
As the dissolving of salt into water,
I experienced thorough absorption.

When the Wisdom shone bright from within,
I felt as if awakened from a great dream —
I was awakened from both the main and ensuing Samādhis;
I was awakened from both “yes” and “no” ideas.

When one secures the great bliss through *Viewing*,

He feels all Dharmas spontaneously freed
As mists of rain vanish into air.

...

When both pure and impure thoughts are cleared,
As in a silver mirror,
The immanent bright Wisdom shines forth.

...

When I act without taking or leaving,
My mind is always at ease and non-doing.

...

Like dividing the horses from the yaks,
The [outer]²⁰ world and the senses are clearly distinct
[from the inner]²¹.

The string of mind and Skandhas is forever cut!
Having fully utilized this human form,
I have now completed all Yoga matters.

*(The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, translated
and annotated by Garma C. C. Chang. Shambhala
Publications, Boston, 1962, p. 437)*

Milarepa does consider that one has attained Buddhahood if one's mental consciousness can visualize the clear entity as abiding in the non-duality of bliss and emptiness. Having failed to realize himself the "consciousness of Reality," the ālayavijñāna, he regarded the drop as this true mind. As a

²⁰ Bracket is from Chang.

²¹ Ibid.

person who had not attained the path of seeing in the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*), much less achieved Buddhahood, how could he have the ability to provide detailed accounts on the fruition obtained from the Secret Mantra method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime?

Ancient and modern Secret Mantra masters have attempted to achieve samādhi states through the clear light mahāmudrā, the meditation on the channels, winds, and the drops, and the practice of sexual union. However, these methods do not permit the realization of the four concentrations and four formless absorptions, implying that those masters' attainments are all very shallow. As a matter of fact, the obtention of the first dhyāna requires the abandonment of the sexual pleasure enjoyed in the desire-realm, yet those practitioners' unwillingness to relinquish their lust has prevented them from attaining any samādhi state beyond the level of desire-realm concentration. Thus, “the samādhi states” achieved by Secret Mantra followers are all based on deluded thoughts and exhibit nothing genuine. Chapter Two will elaborate upon the meditation on the channels, winds, and the drops, while Chapter Nine will illustrate the practices of Highest Yoga, clear light of bliss, union of bliss and emptiness, and non-duality of bliss and emptiness.

2.2 The Twofold Secret in the Esoteric Teachings

The twofold secret refers to the secret of the noumenon (*dharmatā, chos nyid*) and the secret of dependent-arising. The

former relates to the Liberation Path that consists of the union of awareness and emptiness - the mahāmudrā consisting of the self-liberated nature pertaining to the union of lucidity and emptiness. The latter points to the attainment of liberation through the meditation on the non-duality of bliss and emptiness. Given that such meditation depends on the lustful tactile bliss experienced during sexual union, the noumenon of dependent-arising is a method of the Desire Path.

Yogi C.M. Chen states:

There are two types of secrets in the esoteric teachings: The first is the secret of the noumenon and the second is the secret of dependent-arising. The secret of the noumenon is extremely subtle, but also remarkably plain. It is nowhere to be found if a practitioner is not enlightened, whereas an enlightened person will not find it in any way uncommon. Its harms, despite being the least grievous, are extremely hard to remedy. In comparison, the secret of dependent-arising is unrefined, but is also the most dangerous. Practitioners derive special effects during the union [union of the male and female sexual organs]. However, if this practice is mishandled, then the practitioners may fall into bad transmigrations. ... The former secret belongs to mahāmudrā and the latter to action-seal. The former is also known as the Liberation Path, while the latter is the Method Path, or directly the Desire Path, whose contents are the opposite of liberation. Each of these two paths has its own secrecy. ... The secret of the noumenon refers to the basic nature of phenomena,

which is inexpressible, imperceptible, unimaginable, and uncreated. The mahāmudrā teachings found in Secret Mantra have earnestly attempted to reveal this clear entity, but it has never been manifested, contrary to the predictions of those teachings. Separately, the teachings of the Ch’an School with respect to the secret of the noumenon are particularly realistic. They do not rely on any writings or verbalizations, but instead consist of special transmission methods other than scriptures. Such a way of teaching has rendered the secrecy of the noumenon to be more obvious. Unless the practitioner has actually realized it, it is impossible for him to understand it directly. ... For instance, didn’t the monk Beater-of-the-Ground try to reveal the truth? Even if his speech was all about this noumenon, he could only express it by beating the ground. One day, when someone hid his stick and asked him where it was, all he could do was to open his mouth. Having just entered into contact with the full noumenon, this monk was still at the initial stage of enlightenment and therefore was not able to make lively use of the noumenon by exiting the state of abiding within it. One needs to attain the third stage of enlightenment, in which the noumenon’s wondrous qualities become manifest, in order to be able to speak about it at will. ... The following verses from Su Tungpo explain the reason why the monk Beater-of-the-Ground could not reveal the truth:

From the side, a whole range;
 From the end, a single peak;
 Far, near, high, or low - no two parts alike.

Why can't I tell the true shape of Lu-Shan?
Because I am myself in the mountain.

Based on Su Tungpo's poem, I would like to write the following lines to help the monk Beater-of-the-Ground:

It is stuffed to the peaks with emptiness,
An emptiness so full that it cannot be differentiated.
It is difficult to depict the true shape of Lu-Shan,
Because my breath is itself in the mountain. [34: 8-9]
(*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen.
Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991,
pp. 8-9)

However, as Yogi C.M. Chen was unaware of the secret significance of the monk's beating of the ground, his statements were merely based on his own speculation.

Yogi C.M. Chen also notes:

Even Buddha Śākyamuni Himself could not find a comparison for it. Most of the ancient meritorious ones in China and Tibet employed the analogy of infinite space [this analogy was used by the Tibetan gurus, but most definitely never by the enlightened ones in China]. However, if the infinite space above one's head was imagined to be the noumenon, then wouldn't the ground below one's feet be the noumenon as well? And wouldn't the person in the center who is imagining these things also be the noumenon? ... Ever since I realized it thoroughly, I have actually become aware of the following fact: **Not only is the upper space akin to a cloudless and clear sky,**

but the lower space and the space in all the four directions, and even the practitioner himself, are devoid of a physical body at that particular moment. The infinite space is outside, inside, on top, at the bottom, left, right, and without surface or interior, like a **boundless sphere**. Neither a perceiving practitioner nor a perceived noumenon can be found within these spaces. Given the absence of the perceiver and of the perceived, the truth will manifest itself, uncreated. Hence, the so-called secret refers to the secrecy of the noumenon, not to the fact that someone can closely guard it as a secret. The noumenon naturally manifests itself without any effort whatsoever. Therefore, the word “secret” is taken particularly from the perspective of the inexperienced persons; it appears ordinary to those who have experienced it. ... The secret of the noumenon appears like a transparent crystal ball. Through it, people in the east can see the west, while those in the west can perceive the east. Neither the east side nor the west side alone can be held as the crystal ball. If the noumenon came to be regarded as the crystal ball, could anyone lift it entirely? If a person could indeed lift it, I wonder if he could ever find himself beyond this noumenon? This person is himself part of the noumenon. Moreover, could anyone lift this person together with the noumenon? However, the exoteric and esoteric teachings all assert that they function as a whole. How do they function as a whole? Those who have not experienced them firsthand cannot truly understand, explain, or realize this noumenon, and hence its designation as an inconceivable

secret. ... The noumenon cannot be accessed from any side, as it pervades the ordinary and the extraordinary. The guru cannot teach it verbally, while the disciple cannot experience it with the mind. ... Nevertheless, in the face of these challenges, the Great Perfection (*dzogchen*) and the Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*) of Secret Mantra have established skillful means to guide disciples towards the fourth initiation [the non-duality of bliss and emptiness experienced during sexual union], which will help them ripen one day. In contrast, the Ch’an School’s approach is to point directly to the answer based on the disciples’ level of realization, but even those with special faculties are not able to elucidate the secret of this noumenon. All they can do is to let experienced practitioners directly attain enlightenment based on their level of cultivation. These practitioners will find the noumenon ordinary once they have realized it, but there is no special standard for its revelation. [34: 10-13] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 10-13)

Such are the contents realized by all Secret Mantra patriarchs, ancient and modern alike. Some of them believe that the noumenon consists of the non-duality of “awareness - cognizance” and “emptiness” experienced in the thoughtless state. Others, like Yogi C.M. Chen, regard the noumenon as the infinite space, free of all obstructions, obtained by imagining the upper space and lower space, as well as the space in four directions, as an empty and limitless sphere. They hold this noumenon to be the first type of secret found

in the esoteric teachings, while it is actually a state based on the mistaken thoughts of one's mental consciousness. In contrast, the secret of the noumenon realized in the Ch'an School is the eighth consciousness - the ālayavijñāna - from which all sentient beings derive benefits every day. This consciousness can be both realized and utilized, clearly exists no matter what, and, contrary to Secret Mantra assertions, is not the product of one's meditation; in other words, it will neither manifestly appear out of meditation, nor become imperceptible when one no longer meditates on it. Therefore, the noumenon propagated by Yogi C.M. Chen does not correspond to the true noumenon set forth in the Buddha Dharma, but instead stems from the imagination of a deluded practitioner. In reality, this meditated state arises from the noumenon, the ālayavijñāna, which signifies that the two are in fact non-separated. The above-mentioned statements arose from Yogi C.M. Chen's speculation, because he did not know the location of the fundamental mind - the ālayavijñāna.

The secret of dependent-arising found in the esoteric teachings corresponds to the proclaimed "dependently-arising secret of the wisdom and merits experienced in Buddhahood." In reality, it refers to the practice of sexual union. Secret Mantra proponents affirm that this technique "takes the fruition ground as the practice method" and leads to the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime. Therefore, they name it "the supreme vehicle that makes use of the fruition ground." Based on these assertions, they presumptuously denounce that the Exoteric Buddhist practice "begins from the causal ground" - meaning that their methods

lead to low levels of realization and do not permit the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime. We may take a look at the explanations about “the secret of dependent-arising” set forth by Yogi C.M. Chen, a modern Chinese guru highly renowned within the Secret Mantra circle:

Now let’s speak about the dependently-arising secret of the wisdom and merits experienced in Buddhahood. All buddhas exude wisdom and compassion of supreme use, given that the wisdom of individual analysis and the wisdom of achieving activities are complete in the subsequent samādhi state of Buddhahood. Because the Dharmakāya of Buddhahood is the same entity as the mind of all sentient beings, all buddhas are fully endowed with the eighteen unshared buddha-attributes. They have complete knowledge of the deeds performed by all past, present, and future sentient beings, as well as of the virtues that these sentient beings have accumulated, the teachers that they have followed, and the doctrines that they have learned. The fundamental samādhi state of Buddhahood is perfectly undefiled and unobstructed by any ignorance and self-attachment. As a result, all buddhas are perfectly aware of every single detail pertaining to the Buddha-nature that all sentient beings equally possess within this noumenon and also pertaining to the ignorant karmic power of their deeds; they know these details as thoroughly as if they were fruits in the palm of their hands. Furthermore, based on the experience of Buddhahood, the buddhas have established all kinds of Secret Mantra methods, thereby

allowing for the cultivation of the Exoteric Buddhist path to be accelerated and the time duration required for this cultivation, which is three countless eons, to be shortened - hence the emergence of the Vajrayana Path. ... Now let us discuss the secret of dependent-arising consisting of the method of attaining Buddhahood in one single lifetime and established through the experience of Buddhahood. In the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna teachings of Exoteric Buddhism, the Buddha only spoke about the mental processes that enable a practitioner to become an arhat or bodhisattva. Only in the Secret Mantra teachings did the Buddha establish, through analogy and based on the dependently-arising secret related to His own experience of Buddhahood, the methods that lead to the attainment of the buddha bodies. In this way, from His own experience, the Buddha derived the meditational cultivation on the acts, speeches, and thoughts pertaining to deities, as well as visualization and mantra repetition, and compiled them into practices that encompass the fruition ground as the learning method - hence, the emergence of all kinds of methods such as the achievement of Buddhahood through the five signs, the generation and completion stages of deity yogas, and so forth. Given that the Liberation Path asserts that the noumenon is unexampled and unparalleled, it is necessary to switch the practice to that of the secret of dependent-arising. With respect to any realization experienced at the level of Buddhahood, the Buddha used Himself as an example and established the secret of dependent-arising, which includes the concordances (yogas)

with the threefold secret. His goal is to allow all Secret Mantra practitioners who aspire to attain the fruition level to follow His acts, speeches, and thoughts. Indeed, in the fundamental state of samādhi, the Buddha understands that the noumenon is unparalleled, that a buddha can **only** be understood by another buddha, that **Buddhahood can only be attained by buddhas**, and that all buddhas impart the same teachings. Taking into account the fact that all sentient beings possess the Buddha-nature and are all capable of attaining Buddhahood, the Buddha compiled the Secret Mantra teachings from each of the realizations He experienced in attaining Buddhahood and then conferred initiations and blessings upon His disciples. This all demonstrates that the Buddha is truly unparalleled by any other phenomenon. The teachings that posit one buddha as an example for other buddhas and that **rely on a buddha to teach other buddhas** are the skillful means that have given rise to the secret of the dependent-arising. ... Now let's consider the secret of dependent-arising based on forms and signs. The secret of the noumenon contains the secret about the Dharma-preaching activities of inanimate things. In other words, a secret based on forms and signs can be found in the secret of dependent-arising. Indeed, all inanimate things have forms and signs, given that they result from the presence and aggregation of causes and conditions. A common object like the **pestle** [male sexual organ] has the sign of a vajra, while the **bell** [female sexual organ] has the sign of a lotus; **the union of the two gives rise to the secret in the highest esoteric teachings**. Other

worldly objects like the convex and the concave, the shaft and the chisel, the pestle and the mortar, the lock and the key, the hook and the ring, negative electricity and positive electricity, the tenon and the mortise, the bag and the short flute, the pot and the lid, the sky and the ground, the mountain and the river, the sun and the moon, and so forth are all non-sentient, but they all teach us about the sentient. The Secret Mantra followers express all kinds of forms and signs with seals (*mudrā*, *phyag-rgya*), such as deities, Dharma-vessels, instructions, and actions. Each of these seals has marvelous functions, meaning that the practice and performance thereof can only be efficacious; nothing is done in vain.

Now let's talk about the secret of dependent-arising related to the un compounded dharmakāya. The un compounded dharmakāya should pertain to the secret of the noumenon. However, based on His experience of Buddhahood, the Buddha discovered all kinds of dependent-arising that can manifest the clear light of the noumenon - the Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*). Those dependent-arisings include the following states: drunkenness, sexual intercourse, reception of initiation, breath training, entry of winds into the central channel, unconsciousness, death-preceding state, and sleep. Please refer to the illustrations set forth in *The Completion Stage of Hevajra*. For its part, *Oral Teachings of Mañjuśrī* says, "The bliss of dharmakāya pervades the states of emptiness, death, unconsciousness, and sleep. It can be perceived in the instants of yawning and sneezing." However, given that this bliss **only exists at one instant of time**, sentient beings are

not aware of its existence. Having discovered how quick the clear light of sentient beings' dharmakāya appears and disappears, out of great compassion the Buddha prescribed a Secret Mantra method that allows practitioners to **practice the clear light of dharmakāya during dreamless sleep**. In fact, the entire Desire Path makes use of the copulation method [the skillful means consisting of sexual techniques], as well as of vital energies and the drops, to generate the four joys and four emptinesses in accordance with the secret of dependent-arising. [34: 15-19] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 15-19)

In the above text, the principles expressed in bold font contain great errors; I shall address them later.

In both of the above-mentioned secrets, the teachings that “take the fruition ground as the practice method,” which are said to lead to Buddhahood in one single lifetime, all pertain to the level of one's mental consciousness. In particular, during the copulation cultivated on the Desire Path, followers suppress their ejaculation and prolong the sensation of sexual bliss generated by orgasm through the control of wind-energies and the drops. Secret Mantra followers believe that their ability to experience “the formlessness and signlessness” of sexual bliss by abiding with a one-pointed focus in orgasm is tantamount to the realization of Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*, *Stong-pa-nyid*). Such an attainment is called the non-duality of emptiness and bliss. In addition, these followers hold that

the great bliss of the Buddha ground - the state of complete perfect enlightenment - is attained when their perceptive minds can generate a thought consisting of the resolve to no longer crave sexual bliss, as they dwell long-lastingly in an orgasm that pervades their entire bodies. Such is the Path to Buddhahood that is highly valued and closely guarded among Secret Mantra followers - the supreme teachings that “take the fruition ground as the practice method” for which they are very proud of.

Yogi C.M. Chen therefore says:

Now let's speak about the prostration to the entity of the five buddhas. There is the distinction of five pristine wisdoms and five buddhas based on their forms and signs: the aggregate of forms, which is the wisdom of the element of attributes (*dharmadhātu, chos kyi dbyings*) - vairochana; the aggregate of consciousnesses, which is the mirror-like wisdom - akṣhobhya; the aggregate of feelings, which is the wisdom of equality - ratnasambhava; the aggregate of discriminations, which is the wisdom of individual analysis - amitābha; and the aggregate of compositional factors, which is the wisdom of accomplishing activities - amoghasiddhi. This classification of the five buddhas, five pristine wisdoms, and five aggregates is based on the fundamental entity of the great bliss.

The fundamental entity of the great bliss refers to the perceptive mind that abides long-lastingly in sexual bliss. This signifies that Secret Mantra proponents regard the perceptive

mind enjoying sexual pleasure as the noumenon from which all sentient beings derive their lives. Moreover, they consider the “five buddhas and five pristine wisdoms” as authentic Buddhist realizations, while in fact they arise from the meditation performed within sexual contact. A close investigation into these attainments demonstrates that they pertain to the plane of one’s mental consciousness. Since those practitioners have no clue about where the seventh consciousness is, how could they know anything about the ālayavijñāna expounded by the Buddha? As such, no Secret Mantra followers have achieved the path of seeing, as they cannot realize the significance of prajñāparamita with their contorted and erroneous approach. Teachings that will never fulfill the path of seeing, no matter how long they are being cultivated, should not be proclaimed as the supreme way that “takes the fruition ground as the practice method.”

Secret Mantra devotees hold the visualization of the drops in the central channel and the vase breathing technique to be “the rightful way to cultivate the Buddha Dharma,” while in fact they are absolutely unrelated to Buddhism. Therefore, we may conclude that the teachings that “take the fruition ground as the practice method” are not credible. Furthermore, their assertions about the secret of the noumenon have nothing whatsoever to do with the noumenon. The non-duality of bliss and emptiness experienced during sexual union, which is the content of the secret of dependent-arising, is also completely unrelated to the Buddha Dharma. All these methods are based on deluded thoughts and are wholly irrelevant to the cultivation of the Buddha’s true teachings.

3. Secret Mantra - A Religion that Caught Up With and Even Surpassed its Peers?

Secret Mantra practitioners often boast that their doctrines are the most ultimate within Buddhism and that their religion has caught up with and even surpassed all its peers. Yogi C.M. Chen says:

Thanks to the Buddha, practitioners hear of the true Dharma, think over its meanings, and then make the right choices. Only then can they develop themselves in accordance with the truth, step by step, starting from the accumulation of merits and virtues; first to the path of preparation, second to the path of seeing, third to the path of meditation, and last to the path of no more learning. After completing the five paths and the ten grounds, they reach the stage of Equal Enlightenment and then the stage of Wondrous Enlightenment. Moreover, practitioners can accelerate these achievements by adopting the Secret Mantra doctrines - the last and highest-level teachings. These followers thus can fulfill their great aspirations of attaining Buddhahood in one single lifetime and with their current physical bodies so as to benefit other sentient beings. ... The value of life in this universe lies in the use which practitioners make of their days to advocate wholesome phenomena, quit evil phenomena, observe precepts, remove desires, repent their sins, gather their own merits and virtues, and thus improve their karmic fruition. Their future goal is either to ascend to the celestial worlds or to take refuge in the Buddhist community, learn the four selfless Noble Truths, practice the methods of tranquility and

insight, attain the Fourth Fruit, and become an arhat, which is the supreme achievement in the Small Vehicle (*Hināyāna*). On the other hand, in the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*), a practitioner who has acknowledged the selflessness of persons and eliminated all erroneous views, ignorance, and greed thanks to his Small Vehicle achievement has thus fulfilled the basic requirements of the Great Vehicle. According to the Secret Mantra Vehicle, a practitioner who is no longer defiled by the greed for mundane phenomena due to his realization of selflessness, who has attained the two kinds of selflessness in the Great Vehicle, and who has generated the three minds of enlightenment has thus satisfied the basic requirements of Secret Mantra. [34: 22-23] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 22-23)

If Secret Mantra followers, however, truly knew the basics of the Three-Vehicle practice and had any correct knowledge of the Buddhist doctrines, then they would not acknowledge any of the meditation methods as well as the theory about the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime found in their religion. The reason is that the Secret Mantra method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime stands in complete opposition with the true principles set forth in the Three-Vehicle Dharma. The deeper this method is cultivated, the further one will deviate in the complete opposite way from the Three-Vehicle doctrines. In reality, instead of being a set of skillful means that has caught up with and surpassed the other practices, the Secret Mantra methods **have never had anything to do with**

the Buddha Dharma. I shall leave their preposterous and erroneous teachings aside for now and analyze them later to demonstrate their fallacies.

Yogi C.M. Chen further says:

The Secret Mantra Vehicle has caught up with and even surpassed the other systems. The Buddhist disciples' assimilation of the Mahāyāna teachings has made them aware of the Thusness-dependent-arising. Contrary to the practitioners of the Small Vehicle, these Buddhist disciples no longer reject materiality, and contrary to the expedient Mahāyāna methods, they no longer cling to the Mind-Only doctrines. In fact, these Buddhist disciples have started to advocate the practice of Six-Element Yoga. The first five of the six elements consist of form phenomena: earth, water, fire, wind, and space; the sixth is a mental phenomenon consisting of consciousness. These form and mental elements inherently exist in perfect harmony within the noumenon, Thusness (*tathatā*). The Secret Mantra practice stipulates that conceptual phenomena have a tendency to return to the noumenon, Thusness, by interacting with each other the way perfectly harmonious phenomena would normally do. At the same time, **the Buddha-nature consisting of Thusness is also able to gradually recover its original state.** In light of these facts, practitioners have been advocating the correct Secret Mantra views in order to give instructions on and to accelerate the cultivation of the element of consciousness and of the five elements. These six elements - earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness -

are the seeds of countless characteristics; they eventually merge back into the entity of Thusness, the element of attributes. Earth's sustaining function is due to its solid nature; water's developing function is due to its hydrating nature; fire's radiating function is due to its ripening nature; wind's disseminating function is due to its motility; space's harmonizing function is due to its inclusion of the consciousness; and consciousness' discerning function is due to its permeating nature. Any of these natures will arise when their conditions are met, which will allow the "element of view" to exert its functions as best as it can. The supreme fruition consisting of the attainment of Buddhahood results from the dependent-arising of these seven elements, as well as from the Secret Mantra practices of the non-duality of the mind and wind-energies, the red and white bodhicittas, the inter-locking of the two channels [during sexual union, the lower end of the male practitioner's central channel and the conch-like channel located at the lower end of the female practitioner's central channel connect with each other; please refer to Section 9.6 for further details], and the melding of the two drops [the seminal fluid of the Secret Mantra male practitioner and the sexual fluid of his female counterpart mix together, as do the drops that they visualize]. From this supreme fruition will ensue deeds that can ultimately benefit humans and celestial beings. The universe and life of Buddhism will thus be successfully fulfilled. Not only will this supreme fruition allow the universe to become purified as the maṇḍala of Buddha-land, but it will also enable human lives to make good use of their

Buddha-nature and effectively attain supreme Buddhahood. As the highest value of human life, this supreme fruition is worth pursuing with reverence and emulation and by spending an entire life to fulfill it. The Secret Mantra practice has wondrous use, as evidenced by the extremely profound philosophy embodied by this fruition, as well as by the blessings bestowed by all buddha-deities through the ten powers and million deeds since beginningless time. ... [34: 22-25] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 22-25)

Yogi C.M. Chen's view is shared by all Secret Mantra practitioners and patriarchs, ancient and modern alike. According to them, "the later a Buddhist doctrine appears in the human world, the more supreme and ultimate it is. The Secret Mantra teachings were the last ones to emerge; hence, their utmost supremacy and most ultimate nature." Such exaltation of the esoteric and disparagement of the exoteric have proliferated in the discourses and works of Secret Mantra gurus since ancient times. In fact, Yogi C.M. Chen and other gurus' misunderstanding of the principle of the Thusness-dependent-arising, and that of the true meaning of the real and permanent Mind-Only pertaining to the ultimate Buddhahood, have led to their deprecation thereof. [I shall not elaborate upon the above-mentioned correct principle and meaning, as they are already articulated in Section 6.2 of *The Matrix of the Correct Dharma-Eye: A Collection about the Protection of the True Dharma*. Please refer to this publication for further details.]

None of the ancient and modern Secret Mantra gurus and followers are aware of the fact that their assertions and cultivation do not correspond to the Buddha Dharma. Surprisingly, they have been boasting that those teachings “take the fruition ground as the practice method” and have caught up with and even surpassed those of the other systems to become the most ultimate Buddhist doctrines. Furthermore, these devotees have even gone as far as presumptuously denouncing that the true and correct Dharma of Exoteric Buddhism includes practices that begin from the causal ground and that it will be very difficult to attain Buddhahood through them. It is pitiful to misunderstand the truth to such an extent.

4. The Principal Significance of the Secret Mantra Sūtras and Tantras

Although tantras are classified into four, six, or seven sets, their principal goal is to attain the union of bliss and emptiness through copulation. Each and every one of the Western Lamaist traditions adheres to this approach, which is euphemistically said to be taking the fruition ground as the practice method and permitting the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime.

All the various Secret Mantra methods that enable the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime are based on and revolve around the practice of sexual union. For this reason, the Complete Enjoyment Body of the buddhas in the five

directions is always depicted as embracing a buddha-mother in sexual union - “Complete Enjoyment Body” denotes the attainment of the great bliss fruition that consists of the fourth joy, which is the highest level of sexual pleasure. Practices such as Hevajra, Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, Vajrasattva Magical Net, Yamāntaka, clear light of bliss, Heruka, Highest Yoga, Vajrasattva, Kālachakra, Vajradhara [also known as Vajrasattva], and so forth all designate the same method despite showing some differences in detail. Even the so-called Complete Enjoyment Body buddhas in Secret Mantra, which are represented as embracing and enjoying sex with a “buddha-mother,” all regard the sexual bliss that is non-dual with emptiness as the ultimate bliss of Buddhahood. According to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the five buddhas welcome practitioners in the intermediate state (*antarābhava*, *bardo*) while embracing and enjoying sex with a consort. In brief, the so-called ultimate Buddha Dharma in Secret Mantra principally emphasizes the cultivation of the great bliss of sexual union:

At the tip of the pestle is the glans penis. The petals of the lotus hold it as tightly as if they were hooks. The upward and downward movements generate bliss. The perfect union of clarity and emptiness is akin to the refreshing autumn. My concentration skill is good enough to keep the pestle as firm as Mount Sumeru. The erection spans the past, the present, and the future. The practice of emptiness is the most joyful.

The turning of the supreme Dharma-wheel: “The fusion of the two secret places generates lustful enjoyment

on the axis. To lie like still water or dead bodies is not permitted. With lips kissing, necks embracing, and feet hooked together, the interaction is akin to the turning of the Dharma-wheel. (Note from Yogi C.M. Chen: During the practice, the upward and downward movements of the two bodies form the axis of the wheel of doctrine. While the centers of the two secret places are rotating, the up and down interaction, together with swinging left and right, constitutes the turning of the supreme wheel of doctrine.) [34: 305-316] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 305-316)

In the Secret Mantra teachings, even the theory on the construction of stupas is related to the practice of sexual union:

Although many methods can lead to the attainment of the Womb Realm, the principal one involves meditation on a five-wheel tower. Why is that so? It is because the five wheels - earth, water, fire, wind, and space - naturally exist in the element of attributes. Given that these five elements form a physical foundation, it is necessary to practice the following meditation: First, the body must be imagined as a tower featuring five wheels. ... This five-wheel tower is composed of earth, water, fire, wind, and space from the bottom to the top, respectively. ... The five-wheel tower made of stone is built by stacking stones [according to this theory], ... Other descriptions of the five elements include the following: Firmness involves earth; compassion involves water; warmth and bravery involve

fire; and the turning of the wheel of doctrine involves wind. The entity of Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) consists of space; therefore, space is the body, and the body is space. ... Hence, when you see earth, water, fire, wind, and space in things, each of them actually has a different function. Do you not think it is necessary to get these dependent-arisings right? Once you understand them all, you will be able to comprehend everything in the element of attributes. In reality, the practice of sexual union also involves these five elements. A man without the element of earth cannot possibly have an erection, as it involves the element of earth. Fluids that emanate from his penis consist of the element of water. The inside of a man's penis, which is normally cold, turns hot at that moment, demonstrating the existence of the element of fire. The withdrawals and thrusts consist of the element of wind, as does the pattern of nine shallow thrusts followed by a deep one. The element of space is embodied in his bliss. During the union, the protrusion of the woman's conch channel [please refer to Section 9.6 for further details] consists of the earth element. The liquids flowing out from her secret place are precisely the element of water. The itching and heat felt inside her secret place consist of the element of fire. The friction experienced by the woman involves the element of wind. The element of space is embodied in her bliss. When a woman has had too much sex, the penis is no longer able to penetrate her. This is an overdose of the element of earth, and the woman thus becomes barren. [32: 216-219] (*The*

Complete Works of Yogi Chen, Vol. 1, by Yogi C.M. Chen.
Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association,
1991, pp. 216-219)

As one can see, the Secret Mantra methods are all based on the theory of sexual union. Anyone who embarks in the actual practice thereof will, sooner or later, have to deal with this fact and cultivate himself the non-duality of emptiness and bliss. As a result, he will violate the precepts and become submerged in the sexual pleasure of the desire-realm, forever severing all chances of attaining the path of seeing in the Three-Vehicle Bodhi. Therefore, the Secret Mantra doctrines are absolutely and conclusively not the Buddha Dharma; the wise had better contemplate this fact before it is too late.

Those who aspire to cultivate sexual union may in fact not even get the chance to do it in their lifetime. Why is that so? As stipulated in Tsongkhapa's *Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, the practice of sexual union requires the completion of deity yoga and of the meditation on the drops and wind-energies. Those passages will be cited in Chapter Two. Moreover, *Naro's Six Dharmas* and all the other tantras have also established the completion of those exercises as a prerequisite for the reception of the secret initiation and the practice of sexual union. The problem is that the completion of those exercises is not within everyone's grasp. What is more, even if the practitioner is able to achieve the Secret Mantra's "fruition of Buddhahood," after his long-held, assiduous cultivation of deity yoga, wind-energies, and the

drops has allowed him to “legitimately” practice and attain the union of bliss and emptiness - the non-duality of bliss and emptiness - his realization will have absolutely nothing to do with the Path to Buddhahood. He will just have wasted his time to attain some impermanent, mundane desire-realm feats, and his erroneous views will have caused him to break his Secret Mantra vows. All his practice efforts will be irrelevant to the cultivation of either the Liberation Path or Buddha-Bodhi Path. For these well-founded reasons, we may conclude that the assertions of the type “catching up and even surpassing” - such as “the later a teaching appears, the more ultimate and supreme it is,” and so forth - are truly groundless.

5. The Pledges (Samaya) of Secret Mantra

In order to practice Secret Mantra, the practitioner must first undertake the Four Refuges: refuge to the Buddha, to the Doctrine, to the Spiritual Community, and to the guru. Moreover, he must uphold the vows and pledges unique to Secret Mantra. In addition, he must “confess and purify his sins” by reciting the one-hundred-syllable mantra at least a hundred thousand times. Only then will he be permitted to undertake the pledges of Secret Mantra. With respect to these pledges and the auxiliary “pure vows,” Tsongkhapa exhorts practitioners to maintain the purity of vows:

In my *Explanation of the Root Infractions* I have extensively indicated the vows taken at the time of conferring initiation [these being the Bodhisattva vows since the

tantric ones are limited to Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra]²², the root infractions of those vows, and so forth. Therefore, I will describe here the other pledges.

The ‘Chapter on Knowledge Mantra Discipline’ in the *Susiddhi Tantra* says:

I will explain the discipline
Of repeating secret mantra,
Through abiding in which repeaters
Will quickly attain the feats.

A wise practitioner does not despise
Any of the secret mantras
Or any of the gods or any
Great being of repetition.

A wise person does not fabricate
Secret mantra rites or secret mantras
And does not deride persons
Who have a bad disposition.

Even if the guru who reveals
The mandala becomes of bad deeds.
He never derides him
With speech or with mind.

A wise person does not use
Knowledge mantras in anger
For suppression or for binding,
Cutting, defeating, or fierceness.

²² Bracket is from Hopkins.

He does not assume a secret mantra
Unless another grants permission.
Though he knows the rite he does not give secret mantras
To one without reverence and respect.

One who is skilled in tantras does not give
Secret mantras, seals, the details of rites,
Or explanations of tantras and mandalas
To one who has not entered a mandala.

Do not eat or step over any
Of the varieties of seals,
All likenesses of weapons
And of sentient beings.

An intelligent practitioner
Does not deride the medicines,
He does not let filth touch them
Nor let his foot pass over them.

Those of the Manayana and the intelligent
Should not debate [out of competitiveness]²³.
Having heard [about]²⁴the strong Bodhisattvas
One should not disbelieve [their powers]²⁵. ...

A repeater should say a secret mantra
Without his mind's straying to anything else.
Without many thoughts and without
Thoughts of desire for the unclean.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Do not perform rites for [expelling]²⁶ demons
Nor protections or reversals.

A repeater should not perform poisonous rites,
With his own mantra or through others.

Except when they are needed for practice

Do not use secret mantras in other ways.

Do not use secret mantras for

Competition or for testing prowess.

The intelligent should repeat three times

And should bathe three times [every day]²⁷. (*The Yoga of Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, Vol. 2 and 3, by Tsong-ka-pa; intro. by H.H. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama; trans. & ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp. 70-74)

With respect to the pledges, Tsongkhapa says:

It is unsuitable to bestow a mantra on one who has not entered a mandala. The *General Tantra* says:

If one not having seen well
A mandala repeats a mantra,
He will not attain the feats and
After death will fall to a bad state.

Whoever shows to him
Rites of mantras and seals
Falls from his pledges and goes
To a hell of grieving beings.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

Therefore, it is in all ways unsuitable for one who has not entered a mandala of any of the four tantras and received initiation to achieve a deity and so forth based only on a rite of permission. It is also unsuitable for a mantra to be granted to such a person. With regard to the way to purify the sin if such is done, the same text says:

If you fall from the pledges
Just explained, you should repeat
Your essence mantra
A hundred thousand times.

Or it is suitable to repeat a thousand times
The retention mantra of mental non-obscuration,
Or perform a burnt offering of pacification,
Or it is suitable to enter a mandala.

You should make effort in these ways and purify [the sin]²⁸.

Ratnakarashanti's *Precious Lamp, Commentary on the Difficult Points of the 'Kṛṣṇayamari Tantra' (Kṛṣṇayamāripañjikāratnāpradīpa)* [a Highest Yoga Tantra]²⁹, after setting forth those pledges, says:

Though I have gathered these pledges from Action Tantras, yogis of the Great Yoga [Highest Yoga Tantra]³⁰ should keep whatever are suitable in accordance with their area, time, and thought. Those who say that they are yogis of the great yoga

²⁸ Bracket is from Hopkins.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

and wish to be unclean and unstrained are not right. For even Action Tantras say that in accordance with one's thoughts and so forth:

Being clean is suitable, being unclean is suitable,
Eating food is suitable, not eating is suitable,
Bathing is suitable, not bathing is suitable,
Through being mindful of one's deity, achievement comes.

Such statements of looseness occur, but mostly yogis of even the Great Yoga do not transgress the above-mentioned pledges.

Thus, not only are these to be kept by those who have received Action and Performance initiations but also by those engaging in Highest Yoga. Therefore, identifying these and the root infractions, one should strive to be totally unpolluted by root infractions, and even if one is polluted by other faults they should be confessed and purified. It is said that one should not be heedless of faults but at night amend those which occurred during the day and in daytime amend those which occurred at night. (*The Yoga of Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, Vol. 2 and 3, by Tsong-ka-pa; intro. by H.H. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama; trans. & ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, pp. 74-76)

Tsongkhapa has thus outlined four primary points of pledges to consider: (1) It is not permitted to bestow a mantra or any esoteric teaching on an unsuitable receptacle [one who

has not yet entered the maṇḍala and been conferred the secret initiation]; (2) initiates must restrain their minds while in the maṇḍala; (3) those who transgress the pledges must confess and purify their pollutions in accordance with the Secret Mantra doctrines; and (4) those who break the pledges by bestowing a mantra or esoteric teaching on an unsuitable receptacle will go to a hell of grieving beings. The denigration of the consort's great bliss also constitutes a root infraction. [34: 109] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, p. 109) The above sins pertain to the fourteen root infractions of Secret Mantra. [This book does not cite the fourteen root infractions. For more details, please refer to 34: 166-168 (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, pp. 166-168).]

Yogi C.M. Chen stipulated the following rule: Having sexual misconduct with Buddhist nuns, one's own mother and sisters, animals, and so forth entails the violation of the pledges. However, if a practitioner engages in sexual union with the above-mentioned counterparts according to the Secret Mantra rules, then his deeds do not constitute sexual misconduct and there is no infringement of the pledges. Consequently, many of the patriarchs renowned for their great Secret Mantra achievements have practiced sexual union with their sisters or female animals; some have even gone as far as kidnapping royal princesses for their cultivation.

For any Buddhist nun, mother, sister, or female animal to qualify as a counterpart for the practice of sexual union, she [or it] must be a dākinī endowed with the characteristics of a

lotus lady [for details about lotus lady mudrā consorts, please refer to Chapters Eight and Nine]. Those devoid of such characteristics must at least exhibit a manifest and stable attainment of the generation stage [these female practitioners must have completed the generation stage] in order to qualify as a legitimate counterpart. If they have not fully attained “the generation stage,” then their counterpart must have done so. In case neither of them has fully attained this stage, and if they have forced their counterpart to practice sexual union, then such a transgression will lead them to hell. These are the stipulations of the pledges.

Those who engage in sexual practice at an inappropriate time are violating the Samaya Precepts. However, those who act in perfect accordance with the rules of sexual union - who do not crave sexual pleasure during the copulation [who do not ejaculate with a view to enjoying orgasm] - are not breaking the pledges no matter what time they practice. As a result, the Secret Mantra patriarchs often practice with their consorts for an entire day and night, even for a few consecutive days and nights while the two bodies remain glued to each other. The practitioner who “does not crave for sexual pleasure” [who does not crave the tactile bliss generated by ejaculation] while abiding long-lastingly and unintermittently in the sensation of orgasm will not violate the pledges. Furthermore, he will “attain Buddhahood in one single lifetime and derive great functions and benefits from this practice.” In brief, the practice of sexual union constitutes the Secret Mantra pledge that enables the attainment of the ultimate Buddhahood.

Those who practice sex in inappropriate places are violating the pledges - for instance, in front of the Buddha's statue in a temple's main hall or in the maṇḍala. However, if two parties engage in sexual union in accordance with the conditions stipulated by this method, then not only will their union in front of the Buddha's statue in the temple's main hall or in the maṇḍala not violate the pledges, but will instead constitute the cultivation of the Highest Yoga Path to Buddhahood. Not only will such a "cultivation of the Highest Path of Buddhahood" not breach the pledges, but it will instead entail "great functions and benefits."

One of the pledges stipulates that followers will break the pledges if they do not complete some specific visualization prior to their sexual practice. This rule involves the "three boil-like openings." Indeed, during the cultivation of sexual union, the practitioner [taking the example of a male practitioner] regards the lower opening [vagina] as the main entrance for his practice. He must successfully visualize the female's lower opening as a lotus before being allowed to proceed with the actual copulation. He can also use the upper opening [the female's mouth], but this will not be the main part of the practice. In this case, before the copulation, he must visualize the female's mouth as the opening of nectar and the fluid secreted from the tip of his pestle as nectar. Another possible way of practice is via the female's anus. Under this situation, he will be breaking the pledges if he fails to visualize making offerings to "the goddess of the defense" before the copulation.

The Secret Mantra doctrines also stipulate that a Buddhist monk who inserts his vajra pestle [penis] into a female's lotus [vagina] is violating his vows. If the depth of insertion exceeds 1.2 inches, then it will be a full breach, for it constitutes a root infraction. However, the Secret Mantra "lamas" who cultivate sexual union by "inserting at full length" are not bound by the above prohibition. Nevertheless, before the union, they must visualize the penetration of the two sexual organs into each other as the insertion of the vajra pestle into the lotus. This meditation must be accomplished before the union can take place; otherwise, the practitioner will commit a root infraction. [Please refer to 34: 162-163 (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 162-163).]

During sexual union, if the male practitioner inadvertently leaks drops [ejaculates inadvertently], then he will violate the pledges. If he is able to enjoy sex with women without leaking drops [without leaking seminal fluid], then there is no breach of the pledges, as stated in the following passage:

Thus when I met Budaguda, a master with great achievement, in India, he conferred the Highest Yoga Tantra initiation upon me, and extensively taught me about the method of karma mudrā [a skillful means for the cultivation of sexual union]. He set up a maṇḍala in a quiet place and set out to chant a summoning mantra. After a while, an attractive girl who had just turned of adult age came by, wearing sumptuous garment and ornaments.

Then, sixteen other girls suddenly showed up and started to dance in a parade. As I had undertaken the precepts, I had to curb my wisdom of greed [the wisdom that allows practitioners to “attain Buddhahood” through sexual union]. Shortly afterwards, the girl took off her skirt and exposed her lotus [exhibited her vulva]. A maṇḍala appeared in the lotus [the vulva]. The master instructed me to have [sexual] union with her. I told him frankly, “I am a Buddhist monk. How could I ever do that?” The master replied, “This is an esoteric practice. You must definitely do it. If you are in doubt, you may take my pills and perform the exercise of the wind-energies. You do not need to leak your drops and may take any action to satisfy your desires.” I refused categorically, as I never dared to follow an order that would make me break the precepts and betray the teacher who taught me those precepts. The Master sighed and said, “How ignorant you are about the essential teaching!” After pronouncing those words, he took to having [sex] with the girl himself. After this, he made an offering [he offered his sexual fluid and visualized his offering of tactile bliss to “the Buddha”]. The girl then vanished on a snap of fingers. Later, I felt deep regrets. By not leaking the drops [seminal fluid], I would not have violated the precepts. My wisdom [of sexual union] would grow rapidly, which would only make my teacher very happy; how could there be any betrayal? Unfortunately, the opportunity had slipped away and I had missed the chance to practice the method of great dependent-arising. What a pity! Again, Master Budaguda granted me oral instructions

about the Desire Path [sexual union] and revealed the esoteric treatises to me. Here is a summary of their contents: “The practitioner must hold it with wisdom. Even if the drops on which wisdom relies are shattered [even if the practitioner has inadvertently ejaculated], there will be no violation of the ‘pledges on the prohibited acts.’ The only reason for which the drops must not be leaked is that the practitioner must rely on them to grow and officially generate wisdom. ... Occasionally, you may suspect that this practice will violate the bhiksu precepts. All you will need to do is drink a cup of tea and you will not think about it anymore. At that time, you may sing, enjoy women, or do whatever you like in unknown places.” [34: 608-609] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 608-609)

This passage highlights the fact that the pledges are not broken as long as the material drops [seminal fluid] are not leaked. In other words, the cultivation of sexual union will not constitute an infringement of the pledges as long as the practitioner is able to hold his ejaculation.

Those who have broken the pledges must purify their pollutions in the following way:

Regarding the yoga for purification [to be used]³¹ if your commitments are broken, *The Samantabhadra Sādhana* states:

³¹ Bracket is from Yarnall.

When a commitment is broken, then on your heart
center moon

Visualize a vajra-cross as the essence,
And with the yoga of Shrī Samayavajra,
Visualize that all states of life are naturally pure;

In the center of the petals of a multi-colored lotus
Thoroughly receive initiation by the above process.

As for what this means, Shrī Phalavajra states [in the
Commentary on (Jñānapāda's) *Samantabhadra Sādhana*]:

You should meditate that upon a mandala of great power
at your own heart center is a variegated lotus upon which
there rests a moon, at the center of which is a *HŪM* from
which there arises a vajra-cross seat [male genital organ],
upon which is a *KHAM* from which [there arises]³² a
sword that completely transforms into Amoghasiddhi, the
nature of art³³ and wisdom [the entity consisting of
the secret meanings of mother tantras and father
tantras]. ... Then, contemplating that all things are pure
by nature, ... visualize that the light rays of the seed
syllable at the heart of the intuition³⁴ hero [dākinī]
invoke the transcendent buddhas who dwell in space, and
that from their light rays arise the goddesses such as
Locanā, etc., holding in their hands vessels filled with
nectar with which they moisten your own subtle atoms
and confer initiation. This—the activities of Secret

³² Ibid.

³³ Also known as method.

³⁴ Also known as wisdom.

Mantra stated in the Tantras, such as first meditating the deity and then relying on the five nectars, etc.—is the remedy for the breaking of your commitments which you should keep.

Thus setting forth his own system, he rejects the others' systems, which claim that "You melt yourself, then arise in the form of the devotee being as Amoghasiddhi, and then receive initiation." [On the other hand, Dīpaṅkarabhadra's *The Mandala Rite of the Glorious Esoteric Community*,]³⁵ *The Four Hundred and Fifty [Verses]*³⁶ states:

Having broken your commitments, to take them [again]³⁷:
[You, possessing]³⁸ the excellent wheel of Amoghavajra,
Imagine an action-vajra [with a]³⁹ *KHAM* at your heart
And consecrate [it]⁴⁰ with universal purity.

And Shāntipa's *Commentary* on this states that you create yourself as Amoghasiddhi—as the lord of the mandala—and that in your heart you visualize a syllable *KHAM* upon a vajra-cross, and that you then confer the initiation yourself. Thus, you can do whichever of those two [methods]⁴¹ you want [either visualizing Amoghasiddhi at your heart, or visualizing that you yourself arise as Amoghasiddhi]⁴²; what

³⁵ Bracket is from Yarnall.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

is of foremost importance is that you cleanse any faults such as despising the mentor, etc. (*Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra (Sngags rim chen mo): (Critical Elucidation of the Key Instructions in All the Secret Stages of the Path of the Victorious Universal Lord, Great Vajradhara)*, Chapters XI-XII, *The Creation Stage*, by Tsong Khapa Losang Drakpa; introduction and translation by Thomas Freeman Yarnall; edited by Robert A.F. Thurman. The American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University Center for Buddhist Studies, Tibet House US, New York, 2013, pp. 278-280)

Those who transgress the pledges [for instance, those who do not believe in or denigrate the teaching of sexual union; Secret Mantra female practitioners who refuse to practice sexual union when a male counterpart asks them to; male practitioners who reject the request of a female practitioner for this practice] must offer a beautiful consort to the guru [a handsome male consort must be offered if the guru is a female]. Only when this guru is fully content will their sins be cleansed. The Sakya School teachings articulate the following principles:

Furthermore, the statement “the five *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* must be propitiated if the pledges are transgressed” has the following meaning: A full breach of the pledges must be remedied by propitiating the vajra *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs*. One must act in accordance with the correct significance of the

root *Lines*.⁴³ “With the wondrous enjoyments of the five sensory objects and so forth, one should please and so forth.”⁴⁴ Here, “wondrous enjoyments” points to the objects that can please the *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* and that are skillfully posited as meritorious and virtuous. The first “and so forth” refers to “the five outer sensory enjoyments,” namely objects of offering and possessions. The second “and so forth” designates “the five inner sensory enjoyments,” namely an exceptional female embodiment of pure awareness, adorned with ornaments and offered to the guru. It is only through these deeds that the practitioner can please the guru and thus make up for the coarse pollutions of the pledges. As for those who have broken the root infractions, they must receive the purification initiation once they have pleased their guru. [61: 326-327] (*Lamdré: Commentary on the Vajra Lines*, by Virūpa; explicated by Sakya Paṇḍita; translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa. Mahapitaka Culture Publisher, 1992, pp. 326-327)

These statements are perfectly consistent with Tsongkhapa’s teachings.

The sham “buddha” in *The Vairocanābhisambodhi Sūtra*, moreover, says:

⁴³ “The root *Lines*” refers to *Vajra Lines*, which consists almost entirely of mnemonic phrases written by Virūpa and which forms the basic teachings of *Lamdré*.

⁴⁴ The following publication served as a reference for the translation of this phrase: *Taking the Result as the Path: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdré Tradition*, translated and edited by Cyrus Stearns. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2006, p. 45.

Lord of Mysteries, the Tathagata's seals headed by these are born of the Tathagata's faith-and-understanding. They are equivalent to the insignia of a bodhisattva, and their numbers is immeasurable. Furthermore, Lord of Mysteries, you should know that [the activities of]⁴⁵ the limbs too, in motion or at rest, are all mystic seals, and you should know that the many utterances made by the tongue are all mantras. Therefore, Lord of Mysteries, bodhisattvas cultivating bodhisattva practices via the gateway of mantras should, after having generated the *bodhi-mind*, abide in the stage of the Tathagata and [only then]⁴⁶ draw a *maṇḍala*. If they do otherwise, it is tantamount to slandering buddhas and bodhisattvas, and they will transgress the *samaya* and certainly fall into an evil destiny. (*The Vairocanaḥśambodhi Sūtra*, translated from Chinese - Taishō Volume 18, Number 848 - by Rolf W. Giebel. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2005, pp. 117-118)

According to this passage, Secret Mantra learners must acknowledge that anything that is done, said, or thought either by their gurus or by themselves in the maṇḍala of practice constitutes a mantra or a secret seal. To doubt the holiness of those acts, speeches, or thoughts is to break the root infractions - the pledges. The violators will wind up in bad transmigrations and will be tormented by immeasurable agony. These are the teachings about the root infractions set

⁴⁵ Bracket is from Giebel.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

forth in *The Vairocanābhisambodhi Sūtra*.

6. The Completion of the Generation Stage as a Prerequisite for the Practice of Sexual Union

Practitioners kick off their cultivation of Secret Mantra by learning the three lower tantra sets of the generation stage: Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, and Yoga Tantra. Only after they have assimilated these teachings can they receive both the secret and wisdom initiations, and then further cultivate sexual union; otherwise, it will be a root infraction. Tsongkhapa says:

A practitioner must gain stability in the yoga of the generation stage in order to fully qualify for the subsequent practice of the completion stage. This concept has been asserted by all masters, as extensively stated previously. Chapter 12 of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* states:

One should regard
The wisdom nectar consisting of approximation⁴⁷ and
so forth
As methods that permit the cultivation

⁴⁷ For both supreme and common feats deity yoga is necessary, the initial process being called ‘approximation’ because through imagining the deity one is approaching closer to it. Without preliminary approximation, the feats of lengthening the lifespan, becoming youthful, gaining the five clairvoyances, and so forth cannot be achieved. (From *The Yoga in Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, Vol. 2 and 3, by Tsong-ka-pa; intro. by H.H. Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama; trans. & ed. by Jeffrey Hopkins. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975, p. 19)

Of all principles of mantras.

... *Compendium of Practice* also mentions about body isolation. Furthermore, this text says that from the generation stage through to the stage of union [union of emptiness and bliss experienced during sexual practice], prior meditation must be completed before the next one can take place. If the prior stages such as body isolation and so forth are not accomplished, then the next stage cannot occur, because the sequences of practice are determined. [21: 546] (*The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, by Tsong-ka-pa; translated into Chinese by Fazun. Wondrous and Auspicious Publisher, Taipei, 1986, p. 546)

Action Tantra and Performance Tantra principally focus on prostration, making offerings, conjuring deities, mantra repetition, confession, chanting, serving “all buddhas, bodhisattvas, dragons, gods and goddesses, and Dharma-protecting deities,” setting up maṇḍalas, and so forth. In Yoga Tantra, the four major yogas refer to deity yoga, emptiness yoga, wind yoga, and repetition yoga. Practitioners must complete the deity yoga and so forth of the generation stage in order to qualify for the practices of emptiness yoga, wind yoga, and so forth:

Although the meditation on the deity’s body can be performed through innumerable samādhis, the ultimate [body isolation] is the one great secret family of Vajradhara. There are countless mantras for this, and the supreme benefits generated from the repetition of those mantras are limitless. However, there is a distinction between mantras of definitive meaning and mantras of interpretable meaning.

The mantras of definitive meaning correspond to the method of vajra repetition through which one can control the root wind of speech. Therefore, only vajra repetition is praised as the samādhi of speech vajra - the most ultimate of all repetitions. As stated in *Compendium of Practice*, if one practices from the generation stage through to the body isolation [the stage in which one is no longer attached to the form body in the human world], and thereby attains a [visualized] deity's body, then one becomes an ultimate mantra repeater. One can then rely on the body to maintain ultimate repetition and gain mastery over the winds [the repetition of the seed-syllables through the vase breathing technique] - the cause of all speeches. Furthermore, one can stabilize the wind-energies and use them to guide the flow of [the four] elements, etc. [one can guide the movement of winds, seed-syllables, the pure parts of seminal fluid, and so forth in the channels of one's body through the vase breathing technique]. Therefore, if one meditates through the union with the external seal [in other words, the body seal - the consort], blazes a powerful fire [inner heat, *caṇḍālī*], and melts the bodhicitta, then one can hold the bodhicitta, prevent its emission, eliminate the eighty intrinsic conceptual minds, yield the exalted wisdoms of the three empty states, and attain the samādhi of the vajra mind. Thereafter, one can generate an illusory body. Through the creation of the perfect exalted wisdom of the great empty state, one can enter the clear-light all-empty state. Through the power of the illusory body generated from the perfection

of one's wind and mind, one can enter the all-empty state and then actualize the transformed body of the stage of union. Subsequently, by engaging in the changing process of the stage of union, one advances to [or abides in?] Buddhahood with the same continuum. ... In summary, anyone who aspires to cultivate this essential instruction should practice the first stage diligently and generate "the body isolation." He should then master the practices of "prāṇāyāma⁴⁸ and vajra repetition" - mainly the meditation on wind-energies [wind yoga]. [21: 552-553] (*The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, by Tsong-ka-pa; translated into Chinese by Fazun. Wondrous and Auspicious Publisher, Taipei, 1986, pp. 552-553)

Based on these assertions by Tsongkhapa, those who aspire to cultivate the sexual union that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime must first attain the visualized deity yoga [the visualization of vast and grand deity bodies]. They must then complement this practice with wind yoga [vase breathing technique], vajra repetition, and so forth. Only by thus completing the generation stage can one then commence the cultivation of sexual union;

⁴⁸ prāṇāyāma (*srog rtso!*). Three main types are discussed in this work: Meditation upon a mantra drop at the heart, meditation upon the light drop at the tip of the nose, and meditation upon the substance drop at the secret-area. Along with vajra repetition, prāṇāyāma makes up the stage of speech isolation in the completion stage. It is also the name or one or the six yogas or the alternate categorization of the completion stage. (From *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra*, by Tsongkhapa; tr. by Gavin Kilty. Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2013, p. 611)

otherwise, it will be a “root infraction.”

Tsongkhapa, therefore, says:

In the completion stage, prior to the attainment of the non-dual profundity and manifestation as well as innate bliss, one should meditate on the emanation drop, which refers to vajra repetition - meditation on wind-energies. In the Ārya (Noble) tradition, several divisions are noted with respect to this meditation. It is asserted that through the power of this practice, one can attain the state in which all phenomena are illusion-like, etc. Before this practice, one should meditate on the secret drop - i.e., cause the drop [the drop generated through visualization] to descend from the heart to the jewel [the glans penis] at the secret place and hold it there [generate bliss without ejaculating]. In this drop, one should meditate on the perfect habitat and inhabitant maṇḍala. One should stabilize one's mind on the drops located in the heart of the lord deity and practice various divisions of withdrawing and emanating [one must be able to retract the ejaculated drops - seminal fluid - back into the body while enjoying the tactile bliss generated through sexual union]. ... One must meditate on the three drops - the indestructible drop at the heart [drop generated through visualization], the secret drop at the jewel [in an orgasm, the seminal fluid that has reached the glans penis and is about to be ejaculated is called the secret drop], and the emanation drop at the tip of the nose - by following the sequence of joy, supreme joy, and joy of absence. Furthermore, after meditating on the supreme indestructible drop, a learner who practices withdrawing and emanating

according to the dissolving sequence [at the time of death] will experience innate joy [in Secret Mantra terms, this is known as the attainment of the ultimate Buddhahood]. In conclusion, based on the first two practices of drop yoga and on the third practice of wind yoga, and through his capacity of controlling the winds and the drops, a practitioner should gather these winds and drops following the forward and reverse processes and generate clear light. With frequent practice, one can accomplish the pure wisdom body of the non-dual profundity and manifestation. One can then continue to practice for the fruit through the similar-to-the-cause continuum. [21: 556-557] (*The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, by Tsong-ka-pa; translated into Chinese by Fazun. Wondrous and Auspicious Publisher, Taipei, 1986, pp. 556-557)

These are Tsongkhapa's assertions. The term "similar-to-the-cause" refers to "the similar-to-the-cause fruition," to which Secret Mantra followers have prescribed a meaning that differs completely from the significance it has in Exoteric Buddhism.

The three lower sets must be completed within sixteen lifetimes. Only then can the practitioner commence the cultivation of Highest Yoga. Those who fail to fulfill this requirement within sixteen lifetimes are forbidden to practice the method of sexual union that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime. Once a learner enters the practice of Highest Yoga, he must understand the principle of both the vajra and womb realms:

It is necessary to understand this Yoga Tantra. The first two

are the vajra and womb realms. He can attain Buddhahood only with these two yoga practices. ... The womb realm corresponds to the female's lotus [vagina], the vajra realm to the male's pestle [penis]. At the level of Highest Yoga, the yoga of the vajra and womb realms refers to the union of the pestle and the lotus - namely, the practice of sexual union. The lotus represents great compassion, and the pestle symbolizes great wisdom. The white bodhi [seminal fluid] stemming from the pestle is also endowed with great compassion, in addition to great wisdom; the red bodhi [sexual fluid] emanating from the lotus also possesses great wisdom, in addition to great compassion. The red and the white bodhi must blend into one another - white must be in the red, and red in the white. [32: 219-220] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 1, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 219-220)

A practitioner must possess the following three qualities in order to cultivate deity yoga in the generation stage: divine pride, clear appearance, and sustained firm stability. ... Next, you must practice the buddha wind. You will see a notable progress across all aspects of your practice of wind-energies. At first, it is all about external wind-energies - outside air. Later, you will be able to generate internal wind-energies through your practice of vital-energies. Secret wind-energies arise from the buddha wind; they correspond to dhyāna wind-energies. ... Secret wind-energies are the only ones located in the central channel; external wind-energies are found in the nostrils and in the lung. ... Those who practice

the buddha wind must make sure that the buddha wind they have obtained can move through the central channel; otherwise, it does not qualify as buddha wind. It is not sufficient to visualize the appearance of the central channel; practitioners must meditate on the effective opening of the central channel. When you see a cloudless clear sky, you will know that the central channel has effectively been opened. [32: 122-123] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 1, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, pp. 122-123)

A practitioner who has completed the meditation on the drops and buddha wind [vase breathing technique] is able to cause the drops to ascend and descend at will. Only then can he receive the secret initiation and cultivate the union of bliss and emptiness pertaining to Highest Yoga; otherwise, it instead becomes a Secret Mantra root infraction and this practitioner will end up “suffering in hell.” The reason is as follows: Without the ability to freely cause the drops and buddha wind to ascend and descend [in the channels], a practitioner is not capable of grasping his counterpart’s purified or defiled portion of drops during sexual union. He will just be using religious cultivation as an excuse for sexual misconduct. Therefore, followers who engage in sexual practice without completing the above-mentioned meditation are said to be transgressing the precepts.

7. The Circuitous, Devious, and Aberrant Nature of the Esoteric Teachings

The Secret Mantra methods are circuitous, devious, aberrant, and time-consuming. They are circuitous and devious for the following reasons: The real “Path to Buddhahood” is principally based on the realization of one’s own eighth consciousness - the mind of Reality [i.e., the Thusness-mind of future Buddhahood]. Once a practitioner realizes this true mind, he will be able to complete his cultivation path step by step. In contrast, the Path of Secret Mantra consists of embracing a great multitude of mundane, non-Buddhist methods, such as the deity yoga and the meditation on the drops and channels. Followers are required to complete them before being officially allowed to learn the Secret Mantra teachings. When they finally commence their cultivation, they find themselves practicing sexual union and enjoying lustful pleasure. These techniques have absolutely nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma, for they entirely pertain to the level of one’s mental consciousness and are completely unrelated to the Buddha-Bodhi Path and Liberation Path. In addition, the eighth consciousness realized by Secret Mantra proponents merely consists of drops obtained through imagination; those are not the real eighth consciousness - Tathāgatagarbha, ālayavijñāna. Sometimes, instead of the drops, Secret Mantra gurus regard the mind as the Tathāgatagarbha, yet both the drops and the mind are variants of one’s mental consciousness. This implies that the Secret Mantra teachings and practices are circuitous and have nothing to do with the Buddhist path.

The following facts underscore the aberrant nature of the Secret Mantra methods. The great seal of Highest Yoga, consisting of the union of awareness and emptiness, pertains

to the plane of one's mental consciousness and has nothing to do with the Buddha-nature, Thusness. However, Secret Mantra followers preach that the attainment of such a state is tantamount to the realization of the Thusness of Buddhahood. They further assert that the action seal of Highest Yoga, consisting of the union of bliss and emptiness, is an unsurpassed esoteric method that leads to the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime. In fact, the non-duality of emptiness and bliss that they have realized is nothing more than a state of one's mental consciousness. As they have not even found the Tathāgatagarbha of the causal ground, how could they have realized the Thusness of Buddhahood? Surprisingly enough, they claim to have attained Buddhahood with their current body in this lifetime. These facts demonstrate the complete nonsense and aberrance of the Secret Mantra practice.

The teachings found in the Secret Mantra scriptures are also characterized by their aberrance. For instance, they exhort followers to meditate on a moon disc at the heart center and to view it as one's own real mind:

Then the bodhisattva said to All the Tathāgatas, "World-honored Tathāgatas, I have understood it completely. **I see my heart to be like a lunar disc in shape.**"

All the Tathāgatas addressed him all together, saying, "Good sir, the mind is by nature radiant. It is just as, when you make extensive efforts, the result obtained is in proportion to the action, or when you dye a white garment, it changes color according to the dye."

Then, in order to increase his knowledge of the mind radiant by nature, All the Tathāgatas again commanded the bodhisattva, saying, “*Oṃ bodhicittam utpādayāmi* (*Oṃ*, I generate the mind of enlightenment),” and caused him to generate the mind of enlightenment with this mantra, which is effective by nature.

Thereupon the bodhisattva, having generated the mind of enlightenment in accordance with the instructions of All the Tathāgatas, again spoke as follows: “**That which was like a lunar disc in shape I again see to be [really]⁴⁹ like a lunar disc in shape.**”

All the Tathāgatas addressed him, saying, “You have already generated the mind of Samantabhadra of All the Tathāgatas. [In order to]⁵⁰ obtain firmness equal to that of a *vajra*, duly abiding in this generation of the mind of Samantabhadra of All the Tathāgatas, contemplate the form of a *vajra* on **the lunar disc in your heart ...**”

... Then the Bodhisattva and Mahāsattva Vajradhātu said to All those Tathāgatas, “World-honored Tathāgatas, **I see All the Tathāgatas as myself.**”

All the Tathāgatas addressed him again, saying, “Therefore, Mahāsattva, the whole *sattva-vajra*, perfect with all [excellent]⁵¹ forms, you visualize as yourself in the form of a Buddha with this mantra, which is effective of its own nature, reciting it at will: *Oṃ yathā sarvatathāgatās*

⁴⁹ Bracket is from Giebel.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

tathāham (Om, as are All the Tathāgatas, so am I).”

Having said this, the Bodhisattva and Mahāsattva Vajradhātu actually realized himself to be a Tathāgata, and after having made full obeisance to All the Tathāgatas, he said, “World-honored Tathāgatas, I beg you to empower me and make this actual realization of enlightenment firm.” When he had finished saying this, All the Tathāgatas entered into the *sattva-vajra* of the Tathāgata Vajradhātu. Then, at that very moment, the World-honored One, the Tathāgata Vajradhātu [attained by Bodhisattva Vajradhātu], actually realized the perfect enlightenment the knowledge of equality of All the Tathāgatas, entered the *samaya* of the knowledge of equality of All the Tathāgatas, was pure by nature, having realized the knowledge of the equality of *dharmas* of All the Tathāgatas, became the matrix of the knowledge of the natural radiance of equality of All the Tathāgatas, and [became]⁵² a Tathāgata, one worthy of worship (*arhat*), and a perfectly all-knowing one (*samyaksambuddha*). (*Two Esoteric Sutras: The Admantine Pinnacle Sutra* [and] *The Susiddhikara Sutra*, translated from the Chinese - Taishō Volume 18, Numbers 865, 893 - by Rolf W. Giebel. Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2001, pp. 23-25)

In the above passage, the lunar disc obtained from meditation is regarded as the real mind. If this meditation were truthful, then the real mind would have forms and signs,

⁵² Ibid.

which will contradict the Buddha's instructions. Given that such an assertion only originates from a person who has not yet attained the path of seeing, it is obvious that the "Tathāgata" set forth in this esoteric sūtra is not an authentic buddha. Furthermore, this text states that on "the lunar disc in [his] heart," a practitioner must be able to perceive the bodies of all ones-gone-thus as being identical to his own body, and that **Bodhisattva** Vajradhātu "actually realized himself to be a Tathāgata and attained the wisdom of Buddhahood" upon uttering a line of mantra. These falsehoods are not just articulated by *Admantine Pinnacle Sūtra*; in fact, *The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sūtra* also preaches that the ability to meditate on a deity's attainment of Buddhahood is tantamount to a practitioner's own achievement of Buddhahood. Yet a close look into these teachings makes us wonder: These Secret Mantra proponents do not even know the location of the eighth consciousness - the Tathāgatagarbha realized by the bodhisattvas of the seventh stay; how could they proclaim to have attained the ultimate Buddhahood? Such unparalleled nonsense has absolutely nothing to do with the Buddha Dharma. It is very unwise of Secret Mantra practitioners to believe in those esoteric sūtras. The above facts demonstrate that the meditation method found in the esoteric teachings is ludicrous and aberrant.

The Secret Mantra practice is very time-consuming. Indeed, the preparatory and application methods often require practitioners to repeat the same mantra as many as one hundred thousand times or a million times. Tongkhapa states:

In order to achieve the feat of revealing treasure and revealing essence, repeat the essence-mantra one hundred million times, the essence-of-essence-mantra three hundred million times, and so forth, while the burnt offering is performed whenever one-tenth of the mantras are repeated. *Commentary (on The Arisal of Samvara Tantra)* states that this teaching applies to an era where the world is perfect. The cited treatise also says, “The statement that one must repeat them one or two hundred million times applies to an era where the world is perfect. In the current era, the number of repetition should be doubled.” This instruction obviously applies to the meditation for the achievement of feats. [21: 171] (*The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, by Tsong-ka-pa; translated into Chinese by Fazun. Wondrous and Auspicious Publisher, Taipei, 1986, p. 171)

The learning of rituals is indeed very time-consuming due to their extreme complexity. Myriads of mantras exist in this religion, and practitioners are required to memorize every one of them. Moreover, it usually takes devotees many years to complete the practice of meditation, given its multifarious nature. The exercise of wind-energies is also time-consuming for the following reasons: Learners are required to prepare objects of worship and the maṇḍala prior to the practice itself. When they reach the last stage of this practice, they must find a female consort - buddha-mother - for the cultivation of sexual union. Unless these learners have accomplished the generation stage, not just any female can be their counterpart; finding the right one necessitates many causes and conditions.

In order to qualify for the third initiation and for the sexual union that allows “the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime,” followers must find a female [or male] consort suited to their guru’s tastes. This requirement is also not easily satisfied, given that most learners are now wise enough to know that this method does not correspond to the true Buddha Dharma. If those learners spend money on hiring a prostitute [or a male sex worker to be the female guru’s male consort], then the guru may not be willing to engage in this practice for fear of contracting AIDS. Therefore, in these modern times and locations, it has become very difficult to meet the conditions for the third secret initiation. As a result, many current Secret Mantra gurus bestow the secret initiation and the fourth initiation merely based on rituals instead of truly conferring it upon disciples. In brief, the contents and stages of the Secret Mantra methods are extremely intricate. The problem is that the results achieved after such a laborious undertaking that “accords with the truth” still have nothing to do with the Path to Buddhahood, as these practices just consist of games and diversions that generate non-Buddhist sexual pleasure.

Secret Mantra practitioners have taken the liberty to posit various states of compounded phenomena, which include some non-Buddhist realization contents and so forth, as fruition levels attained in the Buddha Dharma. For instance, the renowned master Padmasambhava teaches the following with respect to the union of bliss and emptiness cultivated during the stage of Highest Yoga:

Practitioners also heartily act in accordance with the six

perfections: To clearly manifest the deities of the male and female buddhas in union and offer the accumulation of merits is to practice almsgiving; to hold the drops [seminal fluid] to be as precious as life and protect them [from leaking] is to strictly observe the precepts; to deal with sufferings and consider them as bliss is to perform endurance; **to dwell securely in those principles is samādhi; to feel no fatigue and laziness in pursuit of bliss is zeal; and to understand bliss and master the non-duality of bliss and emptiness is wisdom.** Practitioners act in accordance with the four initiations: To clearly manifest the deities of the male and female buddhas in union is the vase initiation; to move the drops in the channels and generate warmth is the secret initiation; to purify the apprehending-subject that clings to the coarse and subtle conceptualization is the third initiation; and to manifest the wisdom and great bliss that transcend the mind is the fourth initiation. Practitioners act in accordance with the three precepts: To maintain [the tactile bliss] uninterrupted is to observe the precepts of individual liberation; to heartily [practice for the] benefit [of] other sentient beings is to abide by the bodhisattva precepts; and to clearly manifest the self-generated deity and not exceed the great blissful wisdom of emptiness and bliss is to adhere to the Secret Mantra precepts. Practitioners heartily act in accordance with the four paths: To resolve on one's cultivation, clearly manifest one's own and others' deities, and play in the state of great bliss and wisdom is to complete the path of accumulation; to dwell in the equal

state of the male and female buddhas in union and directly realize bliss and emptiness is the path of seeing; to abandon all attachment to the practicing-subject and practiced-object is the path of meditation; and to separate the original entity [clear entity] from the deeds of the mind is the path of no more learning [the attainment of the ultimate Buddhahood]. [34: 557] (*The Complete Works of Yogi Chen*, Vol. 3, by Yogi C.M. Chen. Buddha Samantabhadra-Raja Buddhism Association, 1991, p. 557)

It is preposterous to equate these achievements with the attainment of the path of seeing, the first ground, or even Buddhahood, etc. As they contradict the true Buddha Dharma in every way, they are said to be aberrant. However, ancient and modern Secret Mantra patriarchs have irrationally disparaged authentic Exoteric Buddhist practices and realizations with such aberrant esoteric teachings. Moreover, as evidenced by the reasons listed above, the technique that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime is circuitous, abnormal, devious, and ludicrous and is entirely unrelated to the realizations of the Buddha Dharma. Secret Mantra followers boast that this particular method supersedes those preached by Buddha Śākyamuni, that it is more supreme as it appeared later, and that it is superior to the Exoteric Buddhist doctrines. These claims are nothing but deceptions.

8. The Core of the Secret Mantra Thought: Realizing Lustful Bliss through the Practice of Sexual Union

Realizing lustful bliss through the practice of sexual union lies at the core of the Secret Mantra thought. Such a mistaken view connects the various esoteric methods from beginning to end - starting from the establishment of amiable relations, the reception of causal initiation while taking the refuges, and the practice of the vase breathing technique at the initial stage, passing through the meditation on one's affinity with the guru, on the drops, and on deity yoga, as well as the exercise of wind-energies in the middle stage, and finally through to the Highest Yoga method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime in the last stage. However, these practices have absolutely nothing to do with the true Buddha Dharma. Starting from Chapter Two, I shall refute each of them individually based on examples. In fact, Secret Mantra proponents drew such misconceptions and methods from Shaktism, which is one of the Brahmin schools. These followers subsequently subsumed them under the unsurpassed method that permits the attainment of Buddhahood in one single lifetime, while affirming that the World-Honored One Śākyamuni never taught about it. Furthermore, they euphemistically claim that their teachings "take the fruition ground as the practice method" and originate from dharmakāya buddhas, despite the fact that those contents have nothing to do with the Ultimate Truth.

The Buddha has already foreseen such a mistaken view and refuted it in the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra*:

Ananda, why do I call collecting one's thoughts the precepts? If living beings in the six paths of any mundane

world had no thoughts of lust, they would not have to follow a continual succession of births and deaths.

Your basic purpose in cultivating is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you don't renounce your lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

Even though one may have some wisdom and the manifestation of Chan samadhi, one is certain to enter demonic paths if one does not cut off lust. At best, one will be a demon king; on the average, one will be in the retinue of demons; at the lowest level, one will be a female demon.

These demons have their groups of disciples. Each says of himself that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

After my extinction, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound, spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust. Claiming to be good knowing advisors, they will cause living beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi.

When you teach people in the world to cultivate samadhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. This is the first clear and unalterable instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones. [Chapter Six] (*The Shurangama Sutra*, commentary by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua. Buddhist Text Translation Society, City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

<http://www.cttbusa.org/shurangama/shurangama23.asp>)

In brief, the Secret Mantra methods, views and

knowledge are erroneous from beginning to end - from the taking of the four refuges through to the cultivation of Highest Yoga. The core thought underpinning these methods consists of the practice of sexual union, which generates lustful pleasure and is viewed as a fully legitimate Secret Mantra technique. In the last stage of the Secret Mantra cultivation, practitioners fall into non-Buddhist states and utter grievous false speeches; none of those contents are related to the Buddha Dharma. Anyone who aspires to learn the Liberation Path and the Buddha-Bodhi Path must carefully distinguish right from wrong; otherwise, he will have to pay for the sins of breaking precepts and destroying the true Buddhist doctrines with the retribution of being tormented by nothing but all kinds of extreme sufferings for immeasurable lives during long eons to come. By that time, it will be too late to show any remorse.