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The Written Explanation to the Consonant Dohā

Kakhasyadohāṭippaṇa

· Toh 2267 ·

Degé Tengyur, vol. 52 (rgyud, zhi), folios 57.b–65.b

For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar's Edition

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

Vairocanavajra



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Summary

- s.1 *The Written Explanation to the Consonant Dohā* is a line-by-line autocommentary on Saraha's *Consonant Dohā*. Where the meaning of the dohā's verses is less esoteric in nature or adequately self-secret, the explanations in the commentary tend to be very clear and succinct. It does not, however, render esoteric instructions clear and accessible. Instead, the commentary provides synonyms and glosses, and illustrates obscure points with metaphors which are, at times, quite enigmatic.

Acknowledgements

- ac.1 This text was translated by the Subhashita Translation Group. The translation and introduction were produced by Lara Braitstein, Julia Stenzel, Benjamin Ewing, and Lowell Cook. We would like to thank Thupten Jinpa for elucidating several obscure passages and Pema Wangyal Rinpoche for granting us the reading transmission.
- ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. Jeremy Savage Manheim edited the translation and the introduction, and Ven. Konchog Norbu copyedited the text. Sameer Dhingra was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

- i.1 *The Consonant Dohā* and its commentary are two of twenty-four works attributed to the mahāsiddha Saraha (ca. ninth or tenth century CE) in the Tengyur. Saraha is listed as one of the eighty-four mahāsiddhas, or great accomplished tantric masters, renowned for their unconventional conduct and teachings. While little is known about Saraha's life for certain, a number of themes from his hagiography occur regularly: he is said to have been born into a brahmin family and is frequently referred to by the epithet of the Great Brahmin; he apprenticed as a fletcher to a female arrowsmith, famously drawing parallels

between arrow making and undertaking a life devoted to meditation; and the teacher who finally pushed him to attain his ultimate realization was his young female consort who, when he emerged after twelve years absorbed in *samādhi*, scolded him for asking for a radish curry out of season.

i.2 *Saraha* predominantly taught in the form of spontaneous song with pithy and often hilariously cutting verses. Eschewing the high literary forms associated with *kāvya* belles-lettres, *Saraha* favored *dohā* couplets with their vernacular rhythms and earthy imagery as the medium to convey his profoundly esoteric teachings. Though preserved as written text, it is highly likely that his songs were initially composed and transmitted orally. It was through *Saraha's* *dohās* that Marpa the translator famously transmitted *Saraha's* *mahāmudrā* (Tib. *phy-ag chen*) lineage to Tibet, transforming the lived religious experience of Tibetans and sparking new directions in Tibetan poetry expressing religious experience and insight.

i.3 *Mahāmudrā* is one of many terms *Saraha* uses to describe the final goal of the spiritual path, synonymous with the realization of emptiness, the clear light of great bliss, deathlessness, the ultimate, the natural mind, and *sahaja*. The literal translation of *mahāmudrā* is “the great seal,” alluding to the view that every moment of experience is innately sealed by awakening. Equally important in *Saraha's* work is the term *sahaja*, which is used both as a noun and an adjective: coemergence, coemergent. Alternatively translated as “born simultaneously,” “connate,” or “innate,” it refers to the inseparability of opposites: Every moment of ordinary experience contains the effervescent freshness of the awakened mind. All phenomena—outer and inner—are born simultaneously in each moment of awareness. Epistemologically speaking, this means that when awareness is perfected, so too is the experience of phenomena.

i.4 *Mahāmudrā* and *sahaja* can be realized in various ways. In this *dohā*, *Saraha* directs meditators to attain the four joys through practices belonging to the *Yoginī* or Mother tantras. Such practices are secret and the instructions we find in

the verses are therefore cryptic, the metaphors enigmatic. The *dohā* presumes that the audience has prior knowledge of these tantric practices. Following such instructions requires faith, devotion, a pure view, and above all the guidance of a qualified guru.

i.5 The supreme practice to bring about this highest realization is that of sexual union (*karmamudrā*), as Saraha asserts in the very first verse. It is superior to any type of conceptual meditation. In this *dohā*, the partners of the union practice are the yogi and his consort—a youthful low-caste girl, a *ḍombī*—who is regarded as a goddess in spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) her low caste. Because of this emphasis on union, we self-consciously use the gendered pronoun “he” in the translation when the consort is specified as female and the yogi male. When the text permits, we keep the pronouns ambiguous.

i.6 The verses of the *dohā* and this commentary describe the experience of sexual union in terms of the flows of subtle energies that circulate in the three main channels—the central channel (*avadhūtī, dbu ma*), and the right (*rasanā, ro ma*) and left (*lalanā, rkyang ma*) channels. The side channels are referred to in the *dohā* as being the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, the two most powerful and sacred rivers of India. The flow of energy therein, which in a dualistic, confused state is driven by basic afflictions such as attachment, aversion, and ignorance, comes to a complete stop when the experience of sexual union peaks. Through repeated union practice, the yogi masters the subtle energies and experiences great bliss. The progression toward this goal is based on the theory and practice of the four joys, stated in the commentary in the order of joy, supreme joy, joy-beyond-joy, and coemergent joy. There has been some debate over the position of coemergent joy. While Saraha’s *Body Treasury*¹ places coemergent joy as the penultimate, this commentary to his *dohā* places it in the ultimate position, but mentions that “you can also understand coemergent joy as being between supreme joy and joy-beyond-joy,”² which means the third position.

i.7

The experience of the four joys is brought forth by the yogi's mastery of his subtle psycho-physical aspects, namely the energy centers (*cakra*, 'khor lo), channels, winds, and drops. Through sexual union and meditation, *bodhicitta*, the vital essence that resides at the crown of the head, descends through the main channel in the form of drops, producing the experience of the four joys in descending order.³ The commentary explains that “bodhicitta is brought down, reversed, retained, and spread.”⁴ *Reversing* refers to the four joys in ascending order. *Retaining* refers to the control over the emission of semen, and thus, over sexual desire-attachment, while *spreading* describes the distribution of bliss throughout the body.

- i.8 The dohā also alludes to another set of four—the four moments—referred to as manifold appearances, maturation, consummation, and freedom from defining characteristics. They correlate with the four joys in the following manner: The first stage, joy (*ānanda*, *dga' ba*), is the blissful experience resulting from the first moment, called *manifold appearances* (*vicitra*, *rnam par sna tshogs*) because it involves manifold types of physical contact, such as embracing, touching, kissing, and so forth. At this first level of joy, the meditator produces blazing heat in the emanation-cakra at the navel, which in turn provokes the melting of bodhicitta at the crown, in the great bliss-cakra, which Saraha simply calls “sky” or “space” in the dohā. Supreme joy (*paramānanda*, *mchog dga'*), the second stage, is the experience of blissful awareness during the “yoga of churning,”⁵ i.e., sexual union, called the moment of *maturation* (*vipāka*, *rnam smin*). The third stage is joy-beyond-joy (*viramānanda*, *dga' bral gyi dga' ba*) and is associated with the moment of *consummation* (*vimarda*, *rnam nyed*). And, finally, the fourth, *coemergent joy* (*sahajānanda*, *lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba*), arises from the moment called *freedom from defining characteristics* (*vilakṣaṇa*, *mtshan nyid dang bral ba*). This joy should be understood as being qualitatively different from all the previous stages as it corresponds to the realization of mahāmudrā.

i.9

Typical for the coded language of *dohās*, *Saraha* gives a variety of metaphors that express the vibrant, energetic quality associated with the four joys and the realization of *mahāmudrā*. “Milking the sky” describes the experience of bliss while “dripping foliage in springtime” illustrates the movement of *bodhicitta* in the subtle body. The final realization of *mahāmudrā* is not static but “resounds with an indestructible sound,” and inspires the yogi to “dance with vigor.” The final realization is also personified as the “lady of the house.” Described as *Vajrayoginī*, this is the integration of emptiness and compassion. *Saraha* exhorts the listeners, “Do not abandon emptiness or compassion out of confusion!” thereby affirming the *Mahāyāna* basis of the sexual practices that he praises throughout this *dohā*.

i.10 As its title suggests, *The Consonant Dohā* was “composed,” or more likely sung, in a form of acrostic poetry known as *abecedarian*. This is a form in which the first letter of the words or verses of a poem follows alphabetical order, in this case approximating the Sanskrit alphabet. This poetic form appears throughout world literature ranging from the Hebrew Bible, to medieval Japan, to the work of the modern American children’s author Edward Gorey. Little scholarly work has been done on the subject of abecedarian verse in South Asia and it is hard to know exactly how prevalent this form is in that context. Nevertheless, our preliminary research has turned up a number of Indian Buddhist texts that employ the alphabet in a poetic manner. Perhaps the earliest of these are the second-century Gandharan birch-bark fragments containing praises to the Buddha that employ acrostic form with the Arapacana alphabet. Other notable appearances of alphabetic forms in Indian Buddhist literature are in *The Play in Full*,⁶ and in “The Garland of Letters” in the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. The abecedarian form would go on to exert a major influence on Tibetan poetics where acrostic forms like *ka rtsom* and *ka bshad* continue to be highly popular.

i.11 While *The Consonant Dohā* closely follows the order of the Sanskrit alphabet, it is not a perfect fit. In addition, the actual language of the text appears to be a

form of Apabhraṃśa, a late Middle Indo-Aryan language. Apabhraṃśa is derived from spoken languages and often used in Sanskrit literature to convey a colloquial or vernacular flavor. The connection to Apabhraṃśa is signaled by the absence of certain nasals and the interchangeability of others, such as the absence of *ṇa* and the conflation of *ṇa* with *ṇa*. At the same time, the alphabet represented begins with the consonants (*ka kha*) in the style of the Tibetan alphabet, instead of the vowels. This is a curiosity, and may suggest that the source language is a Himalayan hybrid instead of Apabhraṃśa.

i.12 Both *The Consonant Dohā* and its commentary were translated by Vairocanaṣṭra, an Indian master who traveled to Tibet in the twelfth century and is credited with the translation of six dohā texts in the Tengyur. Born to a royal family in the kingdom of Kośala in present-day Orissa, Vairocanaṣṭra left his home and traveled to the famed Nālandā University where he received transmission of the dohā songs from his teacher Surapela. Over the course of his life, Vairocanaṣṭra traveled throughout Tibet and is remembered particularly for establishing the dohā tradition in Tibet. Both of the texts translated here are described in their colophons as “self-translated” (*rang ’gyur*), meaning that Vairocanaṣṭra translated them on his own. That Vairocanaṣṭra translated these texts without the help of a Tibetan native speaker might explain some of the nonstandard language and usage of particles.

i.13 *The Consonant Dohā* and its commentary have received little modern scholarly attention and there are no Indic or Tibetan commentaries other than the one translated here. Quotes from the dohā on the *ka* and *kṣa* stanzas do, however, appear in the *Emanated Scripture of Pure Perception* (*dag snang sprul pa’i glegs bam*) of the famous Tibetan yogi Shabkar. While *The Consonant Dohā* has been translated into modern Hindi by Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963), it had not been translated into English until very recently. Three English translations have been independently produced: this one by the Subhashita Translation Group, who began work on this dohā and its commentary in 2020; one by Karl Brunnhölzl (*Sounds of Innate Freedom*, 2023), with whom the translators en-

gaged in lively discussions about these texts; and one by Roger Jackson (*Saraha: Poet of Blissful Awareness*, 2024).

- i.14 The English translation offered here is based on the version preserved in the Degé Tengyur with reference to variant readings found in other editions of the Tengyur. *The Consonant Dohā* and its commentary present unique challenges to translation because of their form as well as the inclusion of a number of transliterated Indic words. We chose to largely follow Vairocanavajra's translation in introducing each letter at the beginning of its verse rather than attempting to find an English word to match the Indic phoneme. We further followed Vairocanavajra's lead by preserving any Indic words that he left untranslated in his Tibetan translation. While we have been unable to find an extant version of these texts in any Indic language despite consultation with a number of scholars working on Saraha, dohās, and Apabhraṃśa, Sukumar Sen's *Etymological Dictionary of Bengali: c. 1000–1800 A.D.* included many of the mysterious Indic words that are not in any Sanskrit dictionaries.

The Translation

The Written Explanation to the Consonant Dohā

- 1.1 Homage to the glorious Heruka!
- 1.2 *Ka* is for “that which rests in the consort’s lotus.” *Ka* is for *kamala* or “the consort’s lotus.” *Ka* is also for that which rests there: *kakuliśa*, the vajra.⁷ This is the union of the vajra and lotus.
- 1.3 *Ka* is for *kāya*⁸ or “the body,” the bodies of method and insight. Bringing them together means embracing and the like. “Ambrosia drips” means that its power causes the moon to drip.
- 1.4 Because of whom? Because of a low-caste woman, the youthful *ḍoṃbinī*. Outwardly, the low-caste woman is the goddess. Inwardly, the low-caste woman is the aspect of insight. The embrace is the inseparability of method and insight.
- 1.5 *Ka* is for *kabur* or “camphor.” This refers to *bodhicitta*, the nature of the four joys. “Drips” refers to becoming inseparable from the continual bliss of the four joys. When that happens, there is “spring foliage.” To give an analogy, in the springtime⁹ trees burst forth with foliage and flowers, filling beings with joy. Here too, when coemergence, the last of the four joys,¹⁰ dawns in the yogi’s mindstream, he realizes the truth of suchness and thereby actualizes the clear light of great bliss.
- 1.6 That is the meaning of *ka*.
- 1.7 *Kha* is for *khasama* or “space.” Space is the nature of emptiness. Where is that emptiness? It abides in the forehead, in the cakra of great bliss.
- 1.8 *Kha* is for *khama* or “naked.” “Naked” refers to the naked ones. Here “naked” is in the sense of being without color, form, shape, divisions, or parts, just as, for

example, naked ascetics from other traditions are without any clothes, ornaments, and so forth. This refers to the coemergent mind.

1.9 Whoever is able to realize this naked yoga will have joy, bliss, and satisfaction. Others will not.

1.10 That is the meaning of *kha*.

1.11 *Ga* is for *gagana* or “space.” Space is the nature of emptiness. Emptiness pervades everything, like space. If you realize the meaning of such space, you will become stable, for other conditions will not disturb your mind.

1.12 *Ga* is for *gamana*,¹¹ or “space,” meaning emptiness that is like space. “Milking and milking” means familiarizing yourself with that over and over again, culminating in the realization of all phenomena as emptiness. The yogi who realizes such a truth will be content and satisfied, like a person tormented by thirst having a drink of water.

1.13 *Ga* is for the *Gaṅgā*. Like the analogy of the *Gaṅgā* and *Yamunā* merging to become one, here, in the continua of beings, the flows of *Akṣobhya* and *Amitābha* are blocked.¹² Having stopped them, if you are able to dissolve them in the body, you will not be affected by aging and so forth. Alternatively, having blocked the two individual trickles of *bodhicitta*, if you are able to spread them throughout the channels and so on, this is immutability. We can also say *Gaṅgā* is method and *Yamunā* is insight. “Bound” means they are merged indivisibly. When you are able to do so, you actualize the great seal.

1.14 *Ga* is for *gama* or “going.” *Agamana*¹³ is not “going or coming.” When you realize the great seal, going and coming will be severed by living in cyclic existence, that is, partaking in the five sense pleasures. This means that you will eliminate birth and death, and everything else.

1.15 That is the meaning of *ga*.

- 1.16 *Gha* is for *ghaṇṭā* or “bell.” “Bell” is the nature of insight, emptiness. On the outer level, “the glorious *Heruka*” refers to *Heruka* and, on the inner level, to the nature of one’s own mind. “Delights” means that he will be satisfied and delighted by emptiness, not by anything else. That is why you should habituate yourself to emptiness alone.
- 1.17 *Gha* is for *ghanahana* or “again and again.” On the outer level, “*Nairātmyā*” is the goddess *Nairātmyā* who embraces him around the neck. On the inner level, *Nairātmyā* means the indivisibility of emptiness and compassion. If you embrace that meaning, that is, habituate yourself to it again and again, you will attain the great seal. When this is realized, *gha* is for *ghanahana*, or “again and again,” in that sense.
- 1.18 Having habituated oneself to that again and again, the yogi’s winds and mind will both “transfer,” entering the *avadhūtī*.
- 1.19 *Gha* is for *gharani* or “lady of the house.” Both the winds and the mind become unmoving, like the hearth in one’s home. This is the natural mind, the nature of coemergence.
- 1.20 That is the meaning of *gha*.
- 1.21 *Ṇa* is associated with the retroflex *ṇa*. *Ṇa* is for *ṇaya* or “innate.” Reflexive awareness realizes that the innate nature of mind is empty. In other words, it is not made empty by a conceptual understanding.
- 1.22 *Ṇa* is for *ṇaya* or “innate.” When the innate lady of the house—the coemergent mind—is refined, she is not stained by the faults of virtue, nonvirtue, and so forth. That is, she cannot be disturbed.
- 1.23 *Ṇa* is for *ṇirantara* or “continuously.” That means, if the yogi is able to continuously sustain the coemergent state, there is bliss. That is to say, all concepts and mental elaborations are pacified. At that time, *ṇa* is for *ṇasi*¹⁴ or “night.” The

darkness of night is the suffering of ignorance. Since the perceptions of ordinary beings are no more, it says “ceases.” Suffering—that is, the perception of suffering—is extinguished and the yogi’s perceptions transform into the luminous nature of emptiness.

1.24 That is the meaning of *ṇa*.

1.25 *Ca* is for *cautha* or “four.” This is on account of the four joys—joy, supreme joy, joy-beyond-joy, and coemergent joy. You can also understand coemergent joy as being between supreme joy and joy-beyond-joy.

1.26 *Ca* is for *cautha* or “four.” Here it refers to the four extremes—the extremes of eternalism, nihilism, the real, and the unreal. Since the mind free from these is the nature of coemergence, it says “seize hold!” meaning this is what you should adopt.

1.27 *Ca* is for *cautha* or “four.” Here it refers to the four moments—manifold appearances, maturation, consummation, and freedom from defining characteristics. The moment free from defining characteristics “should be learned from the words of a guru.” This means you are to understand it from the speech of a genuine guru.

1.28 *Ca* is for *cautha* or “four.” As for the four drops, two are held and two are realized in the midst of experience. The deluded ones who are caught up in dualistic fixation fail to understand this.

1.29 That is the meaning of *ca*.

1.30 *Cha* is for *chaḍa* or “let go.” What has been let go of? Attachment to the objects of the five sense faculties. How? Apply the guru’s instructions to purify everything by means of “the pure nature.”

1.31

Cha is for *chaḍa* or “abandon.” Attachment to any of the five sense pleasures, conceptions of real and unreal—abandon it all.

1.32 *Cha* is for *chaḍa hūṇ*, or “cast away.” What is to be cast away? Nonsensical talk. This refers to all discussions, mundane distinctions, perverse tenets, and the like.

1.33 *Cha* is for *chaḍa*, or “let go.” What is to be let go? You should abandon the *rasanā* or taste—in other words, all craving and desire. This means that you should abide in the coemergent mind, the sky-like nature.

1.34 That is the meaning of *cha*.

1.35 *Ja* is for *jari*, or “old age.” The absence of that is *amari*, deathlessness. Since the deathless mind is like the sky, when you realize it, you will not be harmed by anything at all.

1.36 *Ja* is for *jājha* or “wherever.” Wherever you look there is only sky. Just as the sky is everywhere, once you have seen the nature of emptiness, fleeting thoughts are nowhere to be found.

1.37 *Ja* is for *jiseṇ* or “whatever.” Whatever you think, it is nothing other than suchness. That is why it says “suchness.”

1.38 *Ja* is for *jo* or “whatever is perceived.” Whatever is perceived, form and so forth, it is all the ultimate, it is emptiness.

1.39 That is the meaning of *ja*.

1.40 *Jha* is for *ṇa* as in *ṇabahuli* or “many.” When you enjoy many flowers—*kusuma*—your mind feels happy and satisfied. In the same way, if you enjoy the flower of natural presence at all times, you will gain benefits—*jhaseva jhana*¹⁵—the various physical benefits such as the absence of aging, frailty, gray hair, wrinkles, and so on.

- 1.41 *Jha* is for *ṇa* as in *ṇase* or “nose.” If you were able to drink both honey and oil through your nose, then *jha* is for *ṇihina* or “without,” which is to say that, without delusion, you would certainly live for a long time. Alternatively, “nose” can refer to the tip of the secret nose. If you are able to bring the two aspects of bodhicitta downward to the tip of the secret nose, reverse them, retain them, and then spread them, “you will, doubtless, live for a long time.”
- 1.42 That is the meaning of *jha*.
- 1.43 As for *ñā*, it is the same as *ṇa*.
- 1.44 *Ṭa* is for *ṭala* or “descend.” What will descend? The drops or the moon. What will cause it to descend? The instructions of the guru. This means that you come to understand coemergence as such.
- 1.45 *Ṭa* is for *ṭalī*, or “tremble.” What trembles? The aggregates, elements, and sense sources. As they tremble and shake, the drops drip. Moreover, “from the sky” refers to the drops dripping from the great bliss syllable *ham* in the crown of your head. When that happens, you will come to understand the ultimate truth, emptiness.
- 1.46 *Ṭa* is for *ṭalamala*, or “babble nonsense.” Once you have understood the sky-like truth, do not babble nonsense, that is, nurturing thoughts and the like. Then the verse calls out, “Hey yogis!” Why? *Ṭa* is for *ṭamala*, or “babble nonsense.” This means that even though yogis may meditate on conceptual mind and mental factors, they will not attain awakening.
- 1.47 That is the meaning of *ṭa*.
- 1.48 *Ṭha* is for *ṭhaṭha* or “churning and churning.” Recite the mantra with the *slap* of the churn and you will understand coemergence. This mantra is not recited outwardly.

1.49

Ṭha is for *ṭhaṭha* or “churning and churning.” Embrace the coemergent joy that comes from the yoga of churning as supreme and you will find the ground of authenticity, the great seal. In what way is it embraced as supreme?

1.50 *Ṭha* is for *ṭhaṇa*, or “properly.” If you know how to practice properly, samādhi will unfold. The proper method is the unexcelled oral instructions and the unfolding is realizing the samādhi of simplicity.

1.51 *Ṭha* is for *ṭha* or “space-like and all-encompassing.” Through the instructions of the authentic guru, you should understand space-like emptiness, the nature of coemergence. That is how you will reach awakening, nonabiding nirvāṇa.

1.52 That is the meaning of *ṭha*.

1.53 *Ḍa* is for *ḍoṃbinī* or “low-caste woman.” Once you take up with the low-caste woman, recite the mantras. These mantras, imbued with the experience of union with the low-caste woman, the union of method and insight, are praised as supreme.

1.54 How does it “blaze”? The inner heat incinerates the aggregates, elements, and sense sources. Following that blaze, “the fluids¹⁶ come trickling down,” meaning bodhicitta drips from the *haṃ* and is restored.

1.55 *Ḍa* is for *ḍamaru* or “the nature of insight.” Insight is indestructible. When *aṃ* and *haṃ* are brought together, the sound of emptiness resounds.

1.56 *Ḍa* is for *ḍamaru* or “insight.” The nature of insight, emptiness, is the yoginī.

1.57 The emanating sound reveals emptiness.

1.58 That is the meaning of *ḍa*.

1.59

Ḍha is for *ḍhaliya* or “flow.” What flows? The droplets flow. Body, speech, and mind flow down like droplets. Those three melt together and become indivisible.

1.60 *Ḍha* is for *ḍhaliya* or “flow.” What flows? The mind with thoughts flows. It blends indivisibly with the nature of the coemergent mind and they become one.

1.61 *Ḍha* is for *ḍhaliya* or “flow.” The five sense faculties and their five objects also flow. Where do they flow to? They integrate with the ocean-like coemergent mind and become inseparable from it.

1.62 *Ḍha* is for *ḍhaḍha* or “hidden” and “concealed.” What is hidden? The “lady of the house,” the coemergent mind. Although she is present within the mind-streams of all beings, she is veiled by thoughts. As such, she is hidden because her nature goes entirely unseen. If, through the instructions of the guru, you experience the conceptual mind and mental factors as inseparable from the coemergent mind, you will see her.

1.63 That is the meaning of *ḍha*.

1.64 *Ṇa* is for *ṇaya* and *ṇija* or “natural mind.” That natural mind is primordially uncreated and unfabricated by causes and conditions. Thoughts are, by their nature, clear light. The nature of such a mind is, in essence, emptiness; it cannot be emptied by anything else.

1.65 *Ṇa* is for *ṇiyamana* or “natural mind.” At the moment you realize the nature of the natural state, there is no such thing as virtue and nonvirtue, and so forth. Without thinking, you are untainted.

1.66 *Ṇa* is for *ṇayaghari* or the “natural lady of the house.” It says “she will be moistened¹⁷ by coemergence,” meaning that she will be delighted. She will not, however, be pleased or delighted by conceptual forms of meditation.

- 1.67 And with regard to coemergence, *ṇa* is for *ṇivara* or “constantly.” If you constantly abide in its nature, you will not experience birth, old age, or death, for here cyclic existence is total bondage.
- 1.68 That is the meaning of *ṇa*.
- 1.69 *Ta* is for the *ta* in *traya* or “three bodies.” That is the maṇḍala, the nature of body, speech, and mind. The three scriptures are the limits of body, speech, and mind. Relying on the three limits means you should understand the inseparability of these.
- 1.70 *Ta* is for *tri* or “three” letters. The three letters are the epitome of the three vajras, indivisible. They are the words of *Saraha*. You should therefore meditate according to *Saraha*’s oral instructions.
- 1.71 *Ta* is for *tulla* or “equality.” What is equal? The mind is equal. This means that you should find equality in a concentration that makes no distinction between the mind of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.
- 1.72 *Ta* is for *tattva* or “suchness.” “Looking at suchness” means you should look at just the meaning of suchness. What is the point of explanations about anything else? It would not lead to realizing suchness.
- 1.73 That is the meaning of *ta*.
- 1.74 *Tha* is for the *tha* in *thira* or “stabilize.” What is to be stabilized? “The moon in the sky.” That is, you should stabilize the bodhicitta abiding in the *haṃ* in the sky-like *cakra* of great bliss. On the outer level, the moon in the sky is the compassion of emptiness.
- 1.75 *Tha* is for *thana* or “stable.” If you cannot keep the bodhicitta stable, but instead lose it, how will you attain the excellent body resulting from joy-beyond-

joy and the other joys? Furthermore, how could you accomplish the aggregates, accomplishments, or miraculous powers? You could not.

1.76 *Tha* is for *thira* or “maintain.” What is to be maintained? The stillness of bodhi-citta is to be maintained. If you have the capacity to do so, “the winds will be thinned”¹⁸ which means that the thinned winds will enter the avadhūti.

1.77 *Tha* is for *thira* or “stability.” Maintaining stability means to stabilize the drops through meditative absorption. If you have the capacity to stabilize the four joys, lifespan and the like will be increased.

1.78 This is the meaning of *tha*.

1.79 *Da* is for *daha* or “incinerate.” What is incinerated? The aggregates, elements, sense sources, and so forth are all completely incinerated by inner heat. It also means that they are incinerated by Saraha’s instructions. To “bring immortality” means that if you have what it takes to burn such things up, old age, death, and so forth will all fade away.

1.80 *Da* is for *duli* or “tortoise.” On the outer level, you offer ablutions to your deity with milk and other substances such as the three whites, the three sweets, and ambrosia. On the other hand, just as the milk of the tortoise is a nonexistent impossibility, the yogi performs ablutions by pouring the milk of emptiness onto Great Bliss—the nature of method and insight—uniting them indivisibly.

1.81 *Da* is for *dui* or “two.” What does that refer to? The two drops, the nature of method and insight. If you are able to understand them as inseparable, they become the nature of the joys. When that happens, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa become indistinguishable. At that time...

1.82 *Da* is for *duḥkha*, or “terrible suffering.” “Terrible” refers to concepts of real and unreal. At the time that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa become indistinguishable, there is no conceptualization of real or unreal whatsoever.

- 1.83 This is the meaning of *da*.
- 1.84 *Dha* is for *dhadoṃbi* or “washerwoman.” The washerwoman washes people’s clothes and such things, making them clean. In a similar way, the wisdom of coemergence, like the washerwoman, purifies all concepts.
- 1.85 *Dha* is for *dhavanta*, or “washes.” “Though she washes she cannot be seen” means that the coemergent mind, which is like the washerwoman, is present in the mindstream of all beings. When her nature is realized, the negativities, obscurations, and concepts that are present in beings’ mindstreams will all be purified. “She cannot be seen” means that although she purifies, her coming, going, and abiding is unseen. This is because beings themselves lack an intrinsic nature.
- 1.86 *Dha* is for *dhaḍombi* or “washerwoman.” How should you welcome her into your experience? “According to Saraha’s words.” This means you should know how to do so according to the instructions of the genuine guru.
- 1.87 *Dha* is for *dhuta* or “deception.” Deception is to engage in negativities, concepts, and afflictions. You should know this type of mind to be space, that is, the nature of the great seal.
- 1.88 This is the meaning of *dha*.
- 1.89 *Na* is for *nana* or “variety.” The mind is singular, yet unfolds as a multiplicity, as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Since they unfold from a singular mind, all concepts will be extinguished if you are imbued with the oral instructions of the genuine guru.
- 1.90 *Na* is for *nabuche* or “not understanding.” What do they not understand? The dripping of the drops, that is, the natural mind. Without an understanding of this, worldly beings posit a multitude of things. If you do understand the mean-

ing of *na*, nothing whatsoever is intrinsically existent; neither the singular nor a multitude appears within the ultimate.

1.91 *Na* is for *nase* or “be free of.” What are you freed of? You are freed from fear. What frees you from that? This is answered with “pay the toll.” For example, when travelers travel upon a long road, they pay a toll in order to be free from the hassles of kings or bandits or others and travel with ease. Similarly here, the yogi, as long as he has the aggregates, will experience disease, suffering, afflictions, and the fears of saṃsāra. In order¹⁹ to be liberated from all that, he contemplates the words that destroy sickness, that is, the meaning of birthlessness. If he does that, he will vanquish the four māras, not grasp the aggregates again, and arrive at great awakening with ease.

1.92 *Na* is for *namu* or “nonexistent.” What is not existent? Neither saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa exists when you realize the above points. Nothing else could possibly exist either, because all phenomena are devoid of intrinsic nature.

1.93 This is the meaning of *na*.

1.94 *Pa* stands for *pañca* or “five,” as in the five ambrosias. If you are able to drink the five ambrosias through the nose, you can undermine such things as old age and frailty. Alternatively, if, through the power of meditative absorption, you are able to reabsorb the five ambrosias that drip from within your body itself, undefiled bliss will dawn in your mindstream.

1.95 *Pa* stands for *pauma* or “lotus.” By bringing the lotus and vajra into union, the taste of all-encompassing simultaneity will be achieved. Alternatively, if you understand this through bringing method and insight into union, you will achieve great awakening.

1.96 *Pa* stands for *pauma* or “lotus.” Where it says, “honor the vajra throne with the lotus flower,” the “vajra throne” is the nature of method, Vajrasattva. When honored with the lotus, the flower of emptiness, Vajrasattva will be delighted.

As such, if you realize method and insight as nondual, you will attain the accomplishment of the great seal.

1.97 *Pa* stands for *pauma* or “lotus.” Without understanding the truth of the lotus, would you ever realize the king of great bliss? You would not. If you understand the truth of the lotus, you will actualize the level of the great seal.

1.98 That is the meaning of *pa*.

1.99 *Pha* is for *phira* or “emanating and reabsorbing.” What is it that emanates and reabsorbs? The maṇḍala of gods and goddesses emanates out and then is reabsorbed into suchness, over and over again. Alternatively, great bliss emanates everywhere and then is reabsorbed into the nature of emptiness.

1.100 *Pha* is for *pharanata* or the “unseen” mind. Why is it unseen? It is unseen because it is the ultimate, the nature of emptiness, which is like the sky. It is not within the domain of the five senses or observation, thus it is unseen.

1.101 *Pha* is for *phaṭkara* or the syllables *phaṭ* and *hūṃ*. How do they unfold? They unfold within the space of emptiness. In unfolding, they unfold into emptiness. In absorbing, they absorb into emptiness.

1.102 *Pha* is for *phari* or “unfold.”²⁰ How, then, do they unfold? In the same way that the wishes of beings emerge from the wish-fulfilling tree—they emerge in a natural and spontaneous manner, yet they are without reference point.

1.103 That is the meaning of *pha*.

1.104 *Ba* is for *bana* or “forest.” Take the metaphor of Brahmā flowers in the forest. In the springtime, their blossoming leaves and petals bring delight and happiness to people. In this same way, your aggregates, elements, and sense sources resemble a forest within which the flower-like drops of method and insight

bring the four joys and so forth when cultivated. “Laden with tens of millions” are its immeasurable qualities.

1.105 *Ba* is for *baja* or “vajra.” If you clutch such a wisdom vajra and cultivate it, the fruits of desire will become the path of awakening. Just as the boughs and leaves of a tree grow in the springtime, so too will joy and bliss be generated in the mindstream of the yogi.

1.106 *Ba* is for *basa* or “mastery.” Over what do you gain mastery? Mastery over longevity and so forth, the ten forces. By gaining mastery over them you dance in the nature of joy.

1.107 *Ba* is for *biharanahi* or “moving about.” Who is it that is moving about? It is the yogi. When the yogi embraces the yoginī, who is the nature of emptiness, with his body, he is “moving about.” In other words, he is reveling in the space of emptiness.

1.108 That is the meaning of *ba*.

1.109 *Bha* is for *bhaga* or “the queen’s lotus.” The nature of *bhaga* is the aspect of emptiness. This means you should meditate on the meaning of emptiness in that way. If you know how to do so, you will realize the truth of the *bhaga*.

1.110 *Bha* is for *bhanai*, or “speaker.” Who is speaking? Saraha is speaking. What does Saraha say? “If you realize the truth of the *bhaga*, emptiness, you will not be tainted by the stains of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and so forth.”

1.111 *Bha* is for *bhuñca* or “enjoyment.” What is it that you enjoy? You enjoy the five sense pleasures. Moreover, you should enjoy them as the guru has instructed. This means enjoy the five sense pleasures without craving or attachment.

1.112

Bha is for *bhati* or “confusion.” It says, “Don’t!” Your own mind is space-like emptiness; don’t be confused about this! Do not let it become contaminated by language and labels and the like.

1.113 That is the meaning of *bha*.

1.114 *Ma* is for *maya*²¹ or “mead.” Mead stands for *bodhicitta*. Crazed at the time of his musth, the lord of elephants drips mead from his nine gates and nothing enters his mind. This is just like the yogi who uses the guru’s instructions to cause the bodhicitta to descend and then spread throughout his body. If he is able to do this, his mental afflictions will vanish and naturally transform into great bliss. Sickness and suffering will disappear. He will no longer conceive of things, whether inner or outer.

1.115 *Ma* is for *mūla* or “root.” The root of what? The root or ground of all phenomena—that is the nature of the coemergent mind. You should realize this through delighting the holy, glorious guru. You will not realize it through anything else.

1.116 *Ma* is for *mūla* or “root.” The root of what? The root of awareness and the mind. Whoever is able to unify awareness and the mind inseparably is known as a “yogi.” What perishes? All of the mind’s thoughts subside, that is, they perish. What happens then? All thoughts of self and other are severed and there is only oneness.

1.117 That is the meaning of *ma*.

1.118 *Ya* is for *yaviṇ* or “when.” When you mingle the *nāda*²² and the drops, they become one. At that moment, there is the yoginī, coemergent wisdom. It says “sound” because you directly realize coemergent wisdom.

1.119 *Ya* is for *yeseṇ* or “whatever.” Whatever thoughts arise, they are suchness—there is nothing beyond that.

- 1.120 *Ya* is for *yama* or “rebirth.” At that time, you will be free from all fears of birth, death, and so forth.
- 1.121 This is the meaning of *ya*.
- 1.122 *Ra* is for *ravi* or “sun.” This and *śasi*, or “moon,” are the two types of bodhicitta. When the sun and moon mingle to become one, you will realize the meaning of coemergence. That moment is “beyond death, like space,” meaning you attain the great seal beyond birth and death.
- 1.123 *Ra* is for *ravi* or “sun.” When the sun and moon are of equal taste, bliss dawns. Out of that,²³ nonconceptual wisdom arises. It is “utterly captivating” because you realize the way things are.
- 1.124 *Ra* is for *rasanā*, the channel of the right nostril. It is the purity of the consonants, the sun, red bodhicitta, the nature of method, and the flow of vital winds. It is the right channel. *Lalanā* is the channel of the left nostril, the purity of the vowels, the moon, white bodhicitta, the nature of insight, and the flow of the vital essence. It is the left channel. When the vital winds and the red and white bodhicitta are brought upward and reach the cakra of great bliss, they mingle with the moon to drip forth once more, expanding to fill the entire body down to the tiniest pores.
- 1.125 When great bliss dawns like that, *ra* is for *ratrin* or “night.” Out of that bliss, nonconceptual wisdom—the natural state—naturally dawns in your mind-stream. “Day and night in the natural mind” means you should focus on the natural mind alone and you will actualize the great seal.
- 1.126 That is the meaning of *ra*.
- 1.127 *La* is for *le hūṃ* or “bring them!” What is brought? The winds, which are like the lady of the house, are brought. Where to? They are brought home, where home is the body. The winds and mental activity that flow out of the nine gates

of the body should be stopped together. At that time, the winds will enter into the avadhūtī.

1.128 *La* is for *le hūṃ* or “bring them!” What is brought? Both the *nāda* and the drops. When these two dissolve indivisibly into the *haṃ*, it is said that you will realize the meaning of reality.

1.129 *La* is for *lalanā* or the “left channel.” *Rasanā* is the right channel and *avadhūtī* is the central channel. Although the channels in the bodies of beings are said to be countless, these are the three principal ones. If you are able to make the two winds enter the avadhūtī, what happens?

1.130 *La* is for *lambhi* or “to descend.”²⁴ What descends? The drops, the moon, descend. As for the command to drink, drink the bodhicitta! If you know how to drink, then joy and bliss dawn in your mindstream. Drink playfully! “Playfully” means the bodhicitta is brought down, reversed, retained, and spread.

1.131 That is the meaning of *la*.

1.132 *Va* is for *vara* or “supreme.” What is supreme? That is mead, bodhicitta. If you know how to drink it “with enjoyment,” that is, with joy and bliss, you will realize coemergence. Alternatively, “with enjoyment” means with the play of method and insight.

1.133 *Va* is for *vajra* or “Vajrayoginī.” *Vajrayoginī*²⁵ is the embodiment of emptiness and compassion. “Flourish” means abiding with indivisible body, speech, and mind.

1.134 *Va* is for *vira* or “the yoginī, difficult to realize,” who is your own mind. When you are able to please and satisfy the yoginī with coemergent joy, you will come face to face with the truth of suchness.

1.135

Va is for *vabaji* or “resounds.” What resounds? The *ḍamaru*, the indestructible sound, resounds. It is indestructible because method and insight, blended into one, cannot be separated.

1.136 That is the meaning of *va*.

1.137 *Śa* is for *śaya* or “reflexive awareness.” Such reflexive awareness cannot be destroyed by anything.

1.138 *Śa* is for *śasāhara* or “drops,” in other words, white bodhicitta. When it drips—when method and insight are unified—you will be the master of the yoginī, that is to say, you will realize *coemergence*.

1.139 *Śa* is for *śītakara*²⁶ or “cooling.” Let me give you an example for “cooling.” The suffering of sentient beings in *saṃsāra* is similar to how, in the relentless heat of the summer months, beings suffer day and night from the agonies of hunger and thirst. What can soothe that suffering is the descent of bodhicitta. This is because, when bodhicitta descends, you come to realize *coemergence*, the last of the four joys. At that point, sickness, suffering, and conceptual thinking will all be soothed.

1.140 *Śa* is for *śasādhara* or “moon.” To “drink” that means to experience bliss in body, speech, and mind as the bodhicitta descends from the “sky,” which is the crown of the head. Here, “milk” refers to the act of milking using *inner heat* and so forth. Alternatively, “sky” is the nature of emptiness, and “drinking” means to familiarize yourself with that again and again.

1.141 That is the meaning of *śa*.

1.142 *Ṣa* is for *sahaja* or “*coemergence*.” When you are able to satisfy the mind, which is “when you are delighted by supreme *coemergence*,” then *ṣa* is for *ṣavara avara* or “self and other,” meaning that the habit of concepts reifying self and other will cease.

- 1.143 *Ṣa* is for *sama* or “sameness,” whereas *asama* is “nonsameness.” The yoginī is without thoughts of sameness or nonsameness, and there is no doubt about accomplishing great awakening.
- 1.144 *Ṣa* is for *saraha* or “the archer.” What does the archer say? He announces himself, saying,
- 1.145 “Hey! I...” He then goes on to say “I have no doubt” that you will accomplish the great seal when you realize the meaning of coemergence.
- 1.146 That is the meaning of *ṣa*.
- 1.147 *Sa* is for *saya* or “all without exception.” “All without exception” refers to all things. When you analyze subjects and objects through scripture, reasoning, and pith instructions, they are equally the nature of suchness.
- 1.148 *Sa* is for *sunya*²⁷ or “emptiness.” This means that all phenomena are emptiness and compassion inseparable. Do not separate them out of confused misunderstanding! If you do so, you will be trapped.
- 1.149 *Sa* is for *sahaja* or “coemergence.” Coemergent joy reveals all things without exception as the nature of coemergence.
- 1.150 *Sa* is for *sahaja* or “coemergence.” When yogis experience supreme coemergence, they cannot be bound by anything at all. It is conceptual thinking that does the binding, so without it, you cannot be bound at all.
- 1.151 That is the meaning of *sa*.
- 1.152 *Ha* is for *hāsa* or “laughter.” Why do you laugh? Because at the moment you realize suchness, joy and bliss arise in your mind and you feel content.
- 1.153 *Ha* is for *hariya* or “snatch away.” What is snatched away? Conceptual thinking is. Conceptual thinking arises from the mind and is reabsorbed in the essence

of mind. You may be satiated with projecting and withdrawing, but there is no enjoyment. However, since all that is the nature of emptiness, clinging to happiness and suffering is absent. What is snatched away? All negativity is.

1.154 *Ha* is for *harahara* or “great lord.” The great lord is the coemergent mind. Such a mind is beyond color, shape, and parts. This is what you should bind in your body. When it is inseparable from your mind, what qualities will you have?

1.155 *Ha* is for *hele* or “jokes and games.” You will thoroughly accomplish the unexcelled state simply by way of jokes and games, without needing to undergo ascetic practices and the like. You will accomplish the great seal.

1.156 That is the meaning of *ha*.

1.157 *Kṣa* is for *kṣāle* or “objects.” The objects are the lotus and so forth. If you lose your bodhicitta through the nine gates, it will go to waste. That is, wisdom and the like will not dawn.

1.158 *Kṣa* is for *kṣakṣa* or “to exhaust.” What is exhausted? The ocean of saṃsāra or the entirety of conceptual thinking. How does this happen? You will be able to exhaust it through wisdom-emptiness if you are able to make the sound of *kṣakṣa*. Thinking of things as real will only replenish the ocean of saṃsāra, not exhaust or dry it up.

1.159 *Kṣa* is for *kṣarasa*, or “sharpening stone.” For example, whatever is sharpened on a whetstone can cut. The guru’s instructions are like a sharpening stone; take joy in the absorption resulting from them. Once you have exhausted all concepts, you will actualize great awakening.

1.160 *Kṣa* is for *kṣamana* or “nakedness.” This refers to the coemergent mind. Since it is free from thought, negativities, obscuration, color, form, divisions, and parts, it is naked. With such nakedness, you trick saṃsāra and all confusion. “Trick-

ing” them means that you will remain unclothed by their faults and accomplish the great seal.

Colophon

- c.1 *The Written Explanation to the Consonant Dohā* of the glorious Saraha, the crowning jewel among all the great yogis, was translated by the glorious Vairocanavajra alone, the great lord of yogis who was born in India, the southern land of Kośala.

Abbreviations

D Degé

N Narthang

Q Kangxi (Peking late 17th c.)

Notes

1. Saraha's "Body Treasury," verse 95, in Braitstein 2014, p. 143.
2. See the verse that begins "*Ca* is for *cautha* or 'four,' " etc. The implications of the different positions have been explained at length by Harunaga Isaacson, Francesco Sferra, and Klaus-Dieter Mathes in Isaacson and Sferra 2014.
3. Note that the meaning of "bodhicitta" here in this tantric context is not to be confused with the more general meaning of the term in mahāyāna sūtras.
4. See the commentary on the dohā verse of the letter *la*.
5. See the commentary on the dohā verse *tha*.
6. *The Play in Full (Lalitavistara*, Toh 95), 10.16-10.23.
7. Reading *de na gnas* from Y and N instead of *de nas*.
8. Reading *kA ya* from Y and N instead of *ka ya*.
9. This word "spring" (Skt. *vasanta*, Tib. *dp̣yid*) could refer to Vasanta, a particular form of Heruka, who is a personification and the god of spring. The section 6.63 from *Emergence from Samputa* suggests such a connection: "He is called Vasanta because, like spring, He brings joy to the hearts of embodied beings."
10. Saraha is usually known for the system of the four joys that places coemergent joy at the third rather than the fourth position. See the introduction for a detailed explanation of the four joys.
11. *Gamana* here should likely read *gagana*, since it is commenting on the word "space" (*gagana*). This is perhaps a scribal error.
12. In the *Hevajra Tantra*, Akṣobhya is wrath and Amitābha is passion (ch 2.2, "The Certainty of Accomplishment," vv. 54–55). Toh 417, 2.2.54-2.2.55.
13. Reading *agamana* from Q and N instead of *āgamana*.
14. This is probably *ṇisi*, which is attested in Apabhraṃśa for "night," whereas *ṇasi* is not.
15. According to Karl Brunnhölzl, this term could be read as *se ba dz+ha na*. Pkt. and Skt. *seva* means "prosperity," "happiness," and "service," while Pkt. *jhāṇa* means Skt. *dhyāna*. According to this interpretation, the benefit here appears to be to continuously remain in *dhyāna*.
16. Reading *chu* in place of *cha*.
17. We are reading *bangs* ("moistened") in the place of *spangs* ("driven out").
18. Translation tentative. The Narthang root verse reads *ni* instead of the instrumental *gis* of the Degé edition and the commentary. We chose to give preference to the Narthang root verse and not translate the instrumental. This reading helps to clarify that the winds are the subject of the verb *skem* instead of bodhicitta. This reading is based on the explanations of Dr. Thupten Jinpa.
19. Reading an absence of *na* from Q and N.

20. The root text has *'phro* but the commentary uses *spro*. We opted to follow the root text.
21. See Sen 1971, s.v. *mayamatta*, “an elephant in rut.” Literally “intoxicated by wine.”
22. Inserting “the *nāda*” based on the root verse.
23. Reading *de las* from N and Q instead of *de la*.
24. While the root verse reads *'dzag pa* (“drip”), the commentary reads *'bab pa* (“descend”). This apparent inconsistency is reflected in our translation.
25. Reading *ma* following N (*Pedurma*, p. 1114).
26. *Śītakara* reflects Q and N (*Pedurma*, p. 1115), as opposed to D which reads *śītatakara*.
27. Reading *su nya* from Q and N instead of *su mya*.

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Glossary

accomplishment

dnegos grub

དངོས་གྲུབ།

siddhi

The mundane and transcendent abilities that are conferred through the perfection of yogic practices.

aggregates

phung po

སྤུང་པོ།

skandha

The constituents that make up a being's existence: form, sensation, perception, formation, and consciousness. Along with the elements and the sense sources, one of the three major categories in the taxonomy of phenomena in sūtra literature.

Akṣobhya

mi bskyod pa

མི་བསྐྱོད་པ།

akṣobhya

Akṣobhya is one of the buddhas of the five families, usually the vajra family.

Amitābha

snang ba mtha' yas

སྣང་བ་མཐའ་ཡས།

amitābha

Amitābha is one of the buddhas of the five families, specifically the lotus family.

avadhūtī

a wa d+hU tI

rtsa dbu ma

ཨ་ཕ་དུ་ཏི།

རྩ་དབུ་མ།

avadhūtī

The body's main subtle channel (Skt. *nāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa*), running along the spinal column.

bhaga

b+ha ga

ཐ་ག།

bhaga

cakra

'khor lo

འཁོར་ལོ།

cakra

Circle; wheel; energy center in the subtle body—a vortex of channels.

channel

rtsa

རྩ།

nāḍī

The channels are subtle psycho-physical routes which run vertically in the body. There are typically 72,000 channels said to reside in the body. Of these, however, the most important are the three main channels: the central channel

(Skt. avadhūtī, Tib. dbu ma), the right channel (Skt. rasanā, Tib. ro ma), and the left channel (Skt. lalanā, Tib. rkyang ma).

coemergence

lhan cig skyes pa

ལྷན་ཅིག་སྐྱེས་པ།

sahaja

The final state of realization or wisdom, achieved through the tantric practice of the four joys, notably through sexual union practice. Tantric adepts equate it with the realization of mahāmudrā, emptiness, or suchness and describe it as transcending all dualistic conceptualizations.

coemergent joy

lhan cig skyes pa'i dga' ba

ལྷན་ཅིག་སྐྱེས་པའི་དགའ་བ།

sahajānanda

The fourth of the four joys.

drop

thig le

ཐིག་ལེ།

bindu

Also translated as “sphere” or “essence,” in tantric yogic practices, these are the nucleus or seed of the awakened mind. They are said to have correlates on the physical plane as white and red fluids.

elements

khams

ཁམས།

dhātu

Eighteen collections of dharmas, under which all compounded and uncompoundd dharmas may be included: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; their objects: visible forms, sounds, smells, flavors, tactile objects and dharmas; and the consciousnesses corresponding to each of the first six. Along with the aggregates and the sense sources, one of the three major categories in the taxonomy of phenomena in sūtra literature.

five ambrosias

bdud rtsi lnga

བདུད་རྩི་ལྔ།

pañcāmṛta

The five ambrosias typically include feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, and brains/marrow/phlegm, though this can vary according to tradition.

five objects

yul lnga

ཡུལ་ལྔ།

pañcārtha

The five objects that correspond to the five sense organs, namely forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects.

five sense faculties

dbang po lnga

དབང་པོ་ལྔ།

pañcendriya

The five sense faculties are the eye faculty (Skt. cakṣurdhātu), ear faculty (Skt. śrotradhātu), nose faculty (Skt. ghrāṇadhātu), tongue faculty (Skt. jihvadhātu), and body faculty (Skt. kāyadhātu).

five sense pleasures

'dod yon lnga

འདོད་ཡོན་ལྔ།

pañcakāma

The five sense pleasures are pleasing visual objects, sounds, fragrances, tastes, and tactile sensations.

four drops

thig le bzhi

ཐིག་ལེ་བཞི།

caturbindu

The four drops correspond to body, speech, mind, and wisdom.

four extremes

mtha' bzhi

མཐའ་བཞི།

catuṣkoṭi

While there are several classic enumerations of the four extremes, here the four extremes are eternalism, nihilism, the real, and the unreal.

four joys

dga' ba bzhi

དགའ་བ་བཞི།

caturānanda

The four joys are joy (ānanda, dga' ba), supreme joy (paramānanda, mchog dga'), transcendent joy (viramānanda, dga' bral), and coemergent joy (sahajānanda, lhan cig skyeg dga').

four moments

skad cig ma bzhi

སྐད་ཅིག་མ་བཞི།

caturhksaṇa

The four moments are manifold appearances, maturation, consummation, and freedom from defining characteristics.

four māras

bdud bzhi

བདུད་བཞི།

caturmāra

The deities ruled over by Māra are also symbolic of the defects within a person that prevent awakening. These four personifications are (1) devaputramāra (lha'i bu'i bdud), the divine māra, which is the distraction of pleasures; (2) mṛtyumāra ('chi bdag gi bdud), the māra of the Lord of Death; (3) skandhamāra (phung po'i bdud), the māra of the skandhas, which is the body; and (4) kleśamāra (nyon mongs pa'i bdud), the māra of the afflictive emotions.

Gaṅgā

gang gA

གང་གླ།

gaṅgā

The most important holy river in India, more commonly known in English as the Ganges.

Great Bliss

bde mchog

བདེ་མཆོག་

Saraha uses this term with a double valence to possibly refer to both the deity Cakrasaṃvara (Tib. 'khor lo bde mchog) and the experience of that deity which is the nature of great bliss.

great seal

phyag rgya chen po

ཕྱག་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmudrā

The “great seal,” or mahāmudrā, is an advanced form of meditation practice that is said to encompass or “seal” all phenomena of saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and the path.

Heruka

he ru ka

ཧེ་རུ་ཀ་

heruka

A general term for wrathful deities. Also a specific way of referring to Cakrasaṃvara.

inner heat

gtum mo

གཏུམ་མོ།

caṇḍālī

The term has a number of connotations including an outcaste woman, one of the female deities in the retinue of Hevajra, and the mystic heat below the navel, personified as a goddess. Tantric literature often plays with these to create multiple levels of understanding.

joy

dga' ba

དགའ་བ།

ānanda

The first of the four joys.

joy-beyond-joy

dga' bral

དགའ་བྲལ།

viramānanda

The third of the four joys.

Kośala

ko sa la

ཀོ་ས་ལ།

kośala

The region in India where Vairocana vajra was born. Known today as Orissa.

lalanā

la la nA

ལ་ལ་ན།

lalanā

The subtle channel (Skt. *nāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa*) on the left side of the body, parallel to the *avadhūtī*.

miraculous power

rdzu 'phrul

རྩུ་ཤྲུལ།

ṛddhi

The ability to make manifest miraculous displays evident to ordinary beings.

Nairātmyā

bdag med ma

བདག་མེད་མ།

nairātmyā

Nairātmyā literally means “no-self.” She is Heruka’s consort personifying the absence of self.

nine gates

sgo dgu

སྒོ་དགུ

navadvāra

The nine gates are the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, the mouth, the secret gate, and the anus.

nāda

nA da

ནྟ་ད།

nāda

rasanā

ra sa nA

ར་ས་ནྟ།

rasanā

The subtle channel (Skt. nāḍī, Tib. rtsa) on the right side of the body, parallel to the avadhūtī.

samādhi

ting nge 'dzin

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

A state of mental absorption or one-pointed concentration.

Saraha

mda' bsnun

sa ra ha

མདའ་བསྐྱུན།

ས་ར་ཧ།

saraha

One of the eighty-four mahāsiddhas, known for his dohās. Lived circa ninth century ce.

sense sources

skye mched

སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

āyatana

Sometimes translated “sense fields” or “bases of cognition,” the term usually refers to the six sense faculties and their corresponding objects, i.e., the first twelve of the eighteen elements. Along with the aggregates and the elements, one of the three major categories in the taxonomy of phenomena in sūtra literature.

suchness

de kho na nyid

དེ་ཁོ་ན་ཉིད།

tathātā

tattva

The ultimate nature of things, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms.

supreme joy

mchog dga'

མཆོག་དགའ།

paramānanda

The second of the four joys.

ten forces

dbang bcu

དབང་བཅུ།

daśavaśītā

In the context of Unexcelled Yoga tantra, the ten forces are the power over life (Skt. āyuh, Tib. tshe), samādhi, materials (Skt. upakaraṇa, Tib. yo byad), action (Skt. karma, Tib. las), rebirth (Skt. jāti, Tib. skye ba), intention (Skt. adhimukti, Tib. mos pa), aspirations (Skt. praṇidhāna, Tib. smon lam), miracles (Skt. ṛddhi, Tib. rdzu 'phrul), wisdom (Skt. jñāna, Tib. ye shes), and Dharma (Skt. dharma, Tib. chos).

three bodies

sku gsum

སྐུ་གསུམ།

trikāya

The Buddha is often described in terms of three bodies: the dharmakāya, the saṃbhogakāya, and the nirmāṇakāya.

Vairocanavajra

bai ro tsa na badza+ra

བེ་རོ་ཙ་ན་བཟླ།

vairocanavajra

Vairocanavajra was an Indian paṇḍita from South Kośala who was active in Tibet during the twelfth century. He is remembered by the Tibetan tradition for translating and transmitting many dohās and their commentaries.

Vajrasattva

rdo rje sems dpa'

རྡོ་རྗེ་སེམས་དཔའ།

vajrasattva

Used as a proper name, Vajrasattva is one of the principal deities of the esoteric Buddhist pantheon, regarded as both a source of the Buddhist tantras and the exemplar of the awakened state. As an adjective, the term vajrasattva, literally

“vajra being,” can also be applied to other esoteric Buddhist deities, particularly Vajrapāṇi.

Vajrayoginī

rdo rje rnal 'byor ma

དོ་རྟེ་རྣལ་འབྱེར་མ།

vajrayoginī

A Buddhist goddess.

wind

rlung

རླུང་།

prāṇa

vāyu

A subtle form of energy that travels through the body’s channels (Skt. *nāḍi*, Tib. *rtsa*). It is manipulated in tantric practices to achieve high levels of realization.

Yamunā

ya mu na

ཡ་མུ་ན།

yamunā

A river in North India, still called by the same name today.

yoga of churning

srub pa'i sbyor ba

སྒུབ་པའི་སྟོར་བ།

manthānayoga

A method of generating a deity in visualization (out of male and female sexual fluids mixed in the vagina).

ḍamaru

Da ma ru

ཌམ་རུ།

ḍamaru

A small two-headed drum played with one hand.

ḍombī

DoM bi

ཌོ་བེ།

ḍombī

A low-caste woman of the washer caste.