Restricted Dzogchen Teachings, Part 3: The Sharp Vajra of Conscious Awareness Tantra

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Lesson 2: Cutting Through: Buddhamind and the Continuum of Consciousness

Reading: *Perfect Conduct: Ascertaining the Three Vows* “Secret Mantra,” and “How to Practice The Three Vows Together Without Conflict,” pages 100-147
C. Chapter Four: Secret Mantra, an explanation of the third root, the vajra vehicle of secret mantra, the training of all the vidyādharas, and the progressive stages of the samaya words of honor.

The vajra vehicle is taught in three divisions.

1. An explanation of how the doctrine of the vajra vehicle originated:

The sovereign teacher, the vajra-holder Samantabhadra, taught the ocean-like classes of tantra in the great Akaniśṭha. Later, at Dhānya-katāka and elsewhere, the teachings were once again revealed…

Originally, the Buddha revealed the tantras through the mode of the five fully endowed circumstances. The fully endowed teacher, our own Lord Buddha Śākyamuni, has remained from beginningless time as the foundational, originally pure sphere of the primordial wisdom of intrinsic awareness. In this state of actual awakening, spontaneous presence and primordial wisdom are one. From within this, the one taste of the enlightened intentionality of all the buddhas of the three times remains as the appearance of the embodiment of complete enjoyment, the sambhogakāya.

All objective appearances are in actual nature the self-expression of primordial wisdom, the pure primordial buddha (Samantabhadra). The nonconceptual state, free from grasping and clinging, is the “vajra.” The indivisibility of the sphere of truth and primordial wisdom is the “holder.” The pure sovereign ruler of all maṇḍalas is the teacher. Thus, the fully endowed teacher is the vajra-holder, Samantabhadra.

The fully endowed place is self-awareness, exceedingly pure and understood as the Akaniśṭha pure realm. The fully endowed assembly, one’s own self-projection,
appears as the immeasurable maṇḍalas of peaceful and wrathful deities. The fully endowed Dharma is the inexpressible nature of the lucid radiance of primordial wisdom’s enlightened intentionality. The fully endowed time is the unchanging sphere of spontaneous, self-originating purity.

Within these five endowments, the ocean-like classes of tantra were unceasingly taught through symbolic indication in the Akaniṣṭha pure realm. Accordingly, only bodhisattvas on the eighth and ninth levels were able to hear the teaching. At this same time, for the benefit of extremely unruly beings, the Buddha manifested as the glorious Heruka (in wrathful aspect) and displayed the entire supporting maṇḍala of wrathful deities in the five pure realms of manifestation, nirmāṇakāya, and in the pure and impure ordinary worldly realms in order to tame the minds of sentient beings. Similarly, Buddha Vajradhara sent many mind-emanations to the realms of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, and others to reveal and propagate the tantras. Specifically in our human realm, the supreme emanation Lord Buddha Śākyamuni, while meditating for six years in austerity, sent his mind-emanations to the peak of Mount Meru and beneath the ocean in order to reveal the doctrine of secret mantra. Again returning to his body, he completed his display of the twelve miraculous deeds. In general, all of the secret mantra tantras were compiled by Vajrapāṇi and transcribed primarily into the languages of Sanskrit, Prākrit, Apabhraṃśa, Dākiṇi, those of barbarians, and others.

When the king of Oḍḍiyāna,54 Indrabhūti, saw the Buddha and his assembly of śrāvakas flying in space, unsure of what he was seeing he called his ministers to observe the phenomenon and asked them if it was a flock of red-colored birds. They replied that it was the Buddha and his disciples. The king, wishing very much to see the Buddha, prayed to him to come down. The Buddha then appeared to him and asked him this question: “Can you firmly maintain the three precepts of total renunciation?” King Indrabhūti replied, “In this pleasure grove of the southern continent it is easy for me to take rebirth as a lowly fox if need be. However, to abandon desirable objects in order to achieve liberation—this, Lord Gautama, I cannot do.” At these words, the assembly of śrāvakas disappeared. Then a voice was heard from space, saying, “What appeared to be śrāvakas and pratyekas was actually the great miraculous display of bodhisattvas.” After this, the Buddha revealed the primordial wisdom maṇḍala and bestowed empowerment upon King Indrabhūti, who later accomplished the kāya of nonduality.

The Buddha manifested to reveal the Vajrayāna maṇḍalas at other power spots, such as in eastern China at Parvata Pakkhipāda, in central India at the Śmaśāna Śītavana charnel ground, and in Śrī Lāṇkā at Dakpo Dradrok, and so forth. In addition, Lord Buddha taught many of the tantras in unknown places at uncertain times. At times, Lord Buddha himself manifested as the principal deity, and at other times he bestowed empowerment as the Buddha himself. After revealing all three vehicles in this world, the Buddha then manifested at Dhānyaakataka Caitya, where he opened the great maṇḍala of the Kālacakra and revealed the tantras to the assembly of male and female yogins and yoginis. On
other occasions, he appeared as a fully ordained monk to reveal the outer tantras, including most of those of the kriyā and upa classes. When revealing to King Indrabhūti the Guhyasamāja-tantra, and to Vajragarbha the Hevajra-tantra, he manifested as the principal deities of those maṇḍalas surrounded by the entire assembly of deities. In this way, just as the tantras had previously been fully revealed in the great Akaniśṭha, they were also introduced in their entirety into many other realms and world systems.

2. After the teachings were compiled, the manner in which they were practiced and upheld:

...and compiled by Vajrapāṇi and the retinue of recipients, and elaborated upon by the eight great mahāsiddhas and scholars of India and Tibet.

The manner in which the tantric teachings were compiled and propagated began in the celestial palace of Vajrapāṇi known as Alakāvati. Vajrapāṇi convened with nine hundred and ninety-six million bodhisattvas to teach all the tantric classes and categories without exception. The disciple Candrabhadra compiled the root Kalacakra-tantra, and Vajragarbha compiled the Divīparikṣā, and so forth. Although the retinue of recipients compiled various tantras that appeared to be distinct from their teacher, Vajrapāṇi, from the ultimate point of view they were nondual.

The secret Vajrayāna vehicle was not predicted to enter the world of human beings until a later time. According to prophesy, Vajrayāna entered this world in the following way. In the original translation school of the Nyingma there are two tantric distinctions, those of tantra and accomplishment. The coming of the tantra class was clearly prophesied by Lord Buddha Kṛṣṇa. Twenty-eight years after he passed into parinirvāṇa, five great sages—Deva Yaśasvi Varapala of the gods’ realm, Nāgarāja Taksaka the nāga king, Yakṣa Uklāmukha of the yakṣas, Rakṣa Matyupāyika of the cannibals, and Vidyādhara Vimalakirti the Licchavi of the human realm—convened through their clairvoyant powers on the peak of Mount Malaya. In twenty-three verses, they made heartfelt prayers to receive the tantric transmissions. It was then that Vajrapāṇi directly appeared to them and revealed the essence of secret mantra, just as he had revealed it before in Akaniśṭha, in Tuṣita, and in the thirty-third gods’ realm. Rakṣa Matyupāyika of the cannibals wrote the teachings down on golden parchment with lapis lazuli ink and buried them in the expanse of space.

Then, by the force of these blessings, King Ja of Sahor had seven auspicious dreams, indicating that all the scriptures of the tantric class would descend into this human world; and, in fact, shortly thereafter, all the scriptures of the tantric class of mahāyoga descended upon the roof of his palace. The kriyā class descended in Varanasi, the yogatantra class descended on the peak of Akniparvata Ujjvala
mountain, and the anuyoga class descended in Śrī Laṅkā in the Singali forest. These teachings then progressively spread into the countries of India, Nepal, and Druṣṭa.

Later, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe accomplished these tantras under the guidance of the great pañḍitas of these various countries and brought them into Tibet, where they were propagated. The atiyogatantra class was received in the country of Odḍiyāna by Garab Dorje through his direct visions of Vajrasattva. Compiling the teachings into volumes of scriptures, he then passed the lineage on to his disciple Mañjuśrīmitra. Mañjuśrīmitra passed it to Śrī Simha, and Śrī Simha passed it to the second Buddha, Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava passed the teachings to Vimalamitra, who then passed them to the translator Vairocana. Thus, the atiyogatantra was extensively propagated through this line of great realized beings.

The second category of the Vajrayāna vehicle, the accomplishment class, came into the human world in a manner similar to the way in which it was originally revealed in the Akaniṣṭha pure realm. Through the wrathful manifestation of divine presence and with the speech of the natural sound of the nature of truth, Vajra Dharma, a manifestation of Vajrapāṇi, revealed his own self-nature as nine maṇḍalas. The teachings were revealed and the scriptures were compiled. Five commentaries were then written by Vajra Dharma: Thukje Jang Thakne Kyi Lung (Thugs-rJe dPyangs Thag-gNas Kyi Lung), Dzepa Chötrul Hlayi Lung (mdzad-Pa Chos 'Phrul Lha-Yi Lung), Trinley Tharchin Druppai Lung (Phrin-Las mThar-Phyin sGrub-Pa'i Lung), Sang-Ngak Ngepa Döngyi Lung (gSang-sNags Nges-Pa Don-Gyi Lung), and Sangwa Goje Drönmai Lung (gSang-Ba sGo-'Byed sDron-Ma'i Lung).

As it was not yet time to bring these teachings into the human world, they were given over to their caretaker, Ďakiṇi Lekyi Wangmo (las kyi dbangmo; Mahākarmendrāṇī). The Ďakiṇi then placed the five general tantras of the eight herukas as one maṇḍala in a small case made of eight precious metals and jewels. She placed the ten individual tantras in ten separate little caskets, sealed them, and hid them in the stūpa called Ukhakara Ityasyastupa in the charnel ground known as Śmaśāna Śitavana (Cool Forest). Then, at the appropriate time, through their clairvoyant powers of awareness, the eight great mahāsiddhas were gathered together at this stūpa. By the force of their strong invocation in meditative absorption, Ďakiṇi Lekyi Wangmo appeared directly before them. She then brought out the individually sealed cases and distributed them in the following way: The golden case containing the cycle for the accomplishment of Mahā Uttama Heruka was given to Vimalamitra; Hūṃkara received the silver case of Samyak Heruka; Mañjuśrīmitra received the iron case of Yamāntaka; Nāgārjuna received the copper case of Hayagriva; Padmasambhava received the turquoise case of Vajrakīla; Dhana Saṃskṛta received the golden case of Saṃskṛta Preṣaka; Rambuguhya received the multicolored gem case of Lokapāṭa Stotra; and Śaṅtigarbha received the stone case of Vajra Mantrabhūra. This distribution was according to prophecy, and each went off to practice and fully realize their individual accomplishments. The small case made of eight precious jewels and metals containing the Sugatasaṃnipāta (Gathering of all the Sugatas), the combined maṇḍala of
the eight herukas, along with the secret essential instructions, was not revealed but was instead resealed and prophesied to be discovered and revealed at a later date.

Later, the great vidyādhara Padmasambhava, according to his own prophetic indication, came to the land of Tibet, where he bestowed all the empowerments and essential instructions upon his own nine heart-sons and the twenty-five disciples. They in turn were prophesied to reincarnate over the centuries to reveal the empowerments and instructions to the karmic aspirants of future times. Moreover, the tantric teachings were extensively propagated throughout India and Tibet through the kindness of many realized mahāsiddhas and scholars.

3. Establishing the main subject, in two divisions:

a. Briefly revealed:

Although the original translation tradition is known for the lineages of kama and terma, and though the latter tradition has boundless systems, a general explanation of the samaya of the tantric classes will be explained here.

The earlier translation school is well known for its two traditions of kama and terma. The kama is the “distant” tradition, whereas the terma is “near.” Both originate through the three extraordinary lineages of mind-to-mind transmission, symbolic indication transmission, and oral transmission. The terma tradition also has three additional lineages: prophetic indication, empowerment through aspiration, and the lineage sealed and entrusted to the dakini.

The later translation school teachings were placed into scriptures by the king of Oḍḍīyāṇa, Indrabhūti. By introducing these teachings to his kingdom, it came to pass that every living being within Oḍḍīyāṇa without exception achieved spiritual attainment and vanished in the rainbow body. Later, the country became a great lake filled with serpent beings. Vajrapāṇi traveled there, taught the doctrine, and gradually ripened the minds of the serpents. Eventually they took rebirth as human beings living around the banks of the lake and, through their efforts in practice, later achieved realization. All of them becoming dākas and dākiniṣ, they flew here and there throughout space so that the place became known as Oḍḍīyāṇa Khandro Ling, the land of space travelers. Later, when the lake evaporated, a self-originating palace of Heruka arose that was filled with the original treasury of scriptures. Later still, each of the great mahāsiddhas, such as King Bipukawa, Nāgārjuna, Đomʿi Heruka, Kukkuripā, Lalita Vajra, the mahāsiddha Tilopa, and others propagated the teachings. Other great realized beings propagated the teachings in other pure realms, such as Śambhala. In short, the eight great and eighty minor mahāsiddhas and countless other scholarakra and realized beings composed commentaries and extensively propagated the doctrine. The boundless descriptions of their enlightened deeds will not be presented in detail here. However, readers may refer to the many translations of
their inspiring lives and the accounts of their liberation. In this commentary, a
general description of the morality practiced by the outer tantric traditions will
be given, along with a detailed explanation of the inner practice of morality.

b. Extensively explained, in seven subdivisions:
   1. The essential nature of the mantra words of honor
   2. The distinctions
   3. Obtaining the unobtained
   4. Guarding the obtained from deterioration
   5. The support for generation
   6. The methods of restoration
   7. The benefits of guarding the words of honor

1. The essential nature of the mantra words of honor:

   The essential nature is to maintain awareness of method and wisdom
   with the three doors and the morality of the vows according to the
   individual traditions.

The objective of the words of honor is to guard the mind from discursive grasping
at the concept of inherent existence, including all subtle habitual propensities aris-
ing through the three doors. The way of enacting the words of honor is to maintain
the skillful application of the method of great bliss and the wisdom of emptiness.
The words of honor are dependent upon receiving empowerment, at which time
the initial discipline of the practice is received. Maintenance of primordial wisdom
awareness during the blissful experiences of gazing, smiling, joining hands, and
union is taught according to each of the four individual tantric distinctions.

2. The distinctions, in two divisions:

   2.a The general distinctions of the four tantric classes:

   The distinctions are four: kriyā, upa, yoga, and anuttara. Each has indi-
   vidual enumerations of the fourteen root downfalls. These are explained
   in the Kālacakra-tantra and elsewhere.

The divisions of kriyā, upa, yoga, and anuttara yoga each have their individual
enumerations of the fourteen root downfalls, which are elaborated extensively in
the Śrī Kālacakra-tantra. Briefly, the fourteen root words of honor of the
kriyātantra are the following: faith in the Three Jewels, faith in mantra, regard for
the Mahāyāna, respect for the lama and vajra family, never despising another
worldly or wisdom deity, making offerings to one’s own deity at the appropriate
times, not offering to other traditions, making offerings to uninvited guests,
ever forsaking love, making effort to accomplish the purpose of others, perse-
verance in mantra recitation, maintaining all words of honor according to one’s
own capacity, not giving secret mantra teachings to immature recipients, and guarding one’s own words of honor and realizing their meaning. If one opposes these fourteen, they become root downfalls.

In upa tantra the fourteen root words of honor are to abandon the ten non-virtues and the four roots. The four roots are the rejection of Dharma, the rejection of bodhicitta, a lack of generosity due to avarice, and harm to other sentient beings. In yogatantra the words of honor correspond to the five buddha families. The buddha family words of honor are the three vows of refuge. Those of the vajra family are to maintain a vajra, bell, mudrā, and the vajra master. Those of the ratna family are to never forsake the four generosities: the giving of love, material aid, protection from fear, and Dharma. Those of the padma family are to maintain the Dharma in its entirety. Those of the karma family are to maintain all vows and words of honor received and to persevere in making offerings. To persevere in the training and maintenance of these fourteen is to uphold samaya, the words of honor. To oppose any of them is to commit a root downfall.

2.b The specific distinction of the anuttara tradition:

The anuttara tradition adheres to the twenty-five uncontrived activities, the vows of the five families, the fourteen root downfalls, the major transgressions, and the tradition of the Great Perfection.

The principal subject and explanation given here are for the words of honor of the anuttara yoga tradition. They are distinguished as the common twenty-five uncontrived activities, the specific words of honor of the five buddha families, the fourteen general root words of honor, the eight auxiliary major transgressions, and the root and branch words of honor of the atiyoga Great Perfection tradition.

3. Obtaining the unobtained mantra words of honor, in two divisions:

3.a Briefly revealed:

First, to explain the manner for receiving the unobtained:

When empowerment is received for the first time, it is characterized as the “causal” initiation. Afterwards, when one receives empowerment from a lama, or if self-initiation occurs, it is the “path” initiation. By purifying the subtle habitual propensities so that the teacher and assembly are realized to be nondual, the “resultant” empowerment occurs. Here, an explanation of the causal and path empowerments will be discussed.

In order to receive empowerment, one must meet with a spiritual master who has the necessary qualifications. Mainly, the teacher must have great respect for his or her teacher and no deterioration of samaya. The teacher must have unflagging love and compassion for all parent sentient beings, as well as the potential
and strength to unfailingly uphold the Buddha’s doctrine. In addition, the disciple must have faith, diligence, wisdom, generosity, meditation experience, pure samaya, a joyful attitude toward practice and meditation, constant faith in the lama, the ability to make offerings to the lama during the three times, and noble, excellent qualities. In order to bestow empowerment upon such a suitable disciple, the teacher must be skilled in the knowledge of how to unmistakenly arrange and bestow empowerment.

3.b The extensive explanation, in five subdivisions:

3.b.1 A description of maṇḍalas:

The four types of maṇḍalas are those of colored sand, the bhaga, relative bodhicitta, and absolute bodhicitta.

In order to reveal the outer maṇḍala of characteristics to beginning disciples, an external maṇḍala is created. For those of superior scope, the maṇḍala is made of mounds; for those of middling scope, it is drawn on cloth; and for those of inferior scope, it is made out of colored sand. All these are in accordance with the instructions given for the particular deities to which they correspond. The inner empowerments and maṇḍalas are revealed without elaborations. The second empowerment corresponding to the essential nature of mantra is bestowed by drawing the bhaga syllable to indicate the secret center of the consort. (The ultimate bhaga is the sphere of truth.) The third empowerment is the essential nature of the deity as relative bodhicitta, the essence of the male deity. The fourth empowerment is the essential primordial wisdom as ultimate bodhicitta, the essence of which is the maṇḍala of primordial wisdom vital air. Empowerment is bestowed in dependence upon these four maṇḍalas.

3.b.2 A description of the four empowerments:

The vase, secret, wisdom, and fourth empowerments are progressively bestowed upon qualified disciples.

The vase empowerment is preceded by the ritual for preparing the place, the vase, the deities, and, finally, the disciples. In order to prepare the disciples so that they are suitable vessels to receive the empowerment, they are initially allowed to enter and then must promise to keep all commitments and words of honor. As the actual empowerment begins, the initiating master is recognized to be indivisible with the meditation deity and maṇḍala. After the master invokes the primordial wisdom maṇḍala, the primordial wisdom deities dissolve into the disciples and the empowerment substances, consecrating them with blessings. Then the empowerments for each of the five buddha families are bestowed. These are the water, diadem, vajra, bell, and name empowerments. The sixth
empowerment is the vajra method, and the seventh is the source of the method, the vajrācārya empowerment. The vase empowerment includes these seven parts (with auxiliary concluding sections), through which the nondual primordial wisdom of appearance and emptiness is experienced.

The second, secret empowerment is bestowed by the vajra master in his sambhogakāya presence in union with the wisdom consort. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas are invoked to dissolve into their union, from which the red and white bodhicitta nectars are received and experienced by the disciples. Otherwise, the nectar may be taken from the face of a small mirror and placed upon the tongue of the disciples so that it dissolves down into their hearts. From this, they experience the inexpressible primordial wisdom of clarity and emptiness.

The third, primordial wisdom empowerment is bestowed by the vajra master who resides in the vajra nature of the dharmaññāka mind. With the support of the disciples in union with consort, the four joys are realized through the descent and ascent of the wisdom nectar as it moves through the networks of wisdom channels. Here, the nondual primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness is experienced.

The fourth empowerment of the precious ultimate word is bestowed as the vajra master remains in the actual nature of vajra-like primordial wisdom and, through the use of the method, perfects all sixteen joys in order to realize spontaneously arising primordial wisdom.

Introduction to empowerment through rhetoric is the introduction to primordial wisdom through words, whereas the ultimate empowerment is the development of the supreme meditative absorption of the primordial wisdom of great bliss. The experience derived through dependence on the mudrā of union is the support-based empowerment. Meditating upon this is the path, and perfection is the result.

Whoever bestows these four empowerments must have the personal power of these accomplishments so that others are inspired with faith, as well as the power to accomplish the purpose of others with great diligence. In addition, the vajra master must have the power to use, without accepting or rejecting, the specific samaya substances such as the five meats and the five nectars. Finally, the four empowerments may be bestowed individually if necessary. For example, only the outer vase empowerment may be given at one time.

3.b.3 A description of separating and obtaining:

During the four periods of wakefulness, dreaming, deep sleep, and meditative absorption, subtle stains arising in the three doors are cleared. During generation stage and tummo (gtummo; caṇḍāli) [mystic heat] practice, the potency to meditate on both illustrative and definitive primordial wisdom and to realize the four kāyas occurs.

The bestowal of the four empowerments also corresponds to four periods of time. The first is wakefulness, when appearances are coarse or rough. The second is the dream state, when appearances are subtle due to the distribution of the
essential fluid by the vital air. The third is the state of deep sleep, devoid of thoughts, which is the sole experience of the nonconceptual essence of the mind. The fourth is the state of meditative absorption, when all discursive thoughts are arrested within bliss. These four periods correspond first to the body when appearances are rough, second to the speech, third to the mind, and fourth to the extremely subtle, all-pervasive foundation. Otherwise, the four empowerments correspond to the four māras and their elimination. The māra-demon of the aggregates corresponds to the coarse (body), the demon of delusion corresponds to the subtle (speech), the demon of death corresponds to the very subtle (mind), and the demon of grasping at objects corresponds to the extremely subtle (all-pervasive foundation). In addition, obscurations categorized as karmic, deluded, subtle, and extremely subtle habitual propensities are cleansed, and the potential to fully purify them is awakened.

When the vase empowerment is received, this authorizes the initiate to practice the generation stage. The secret empowerment corresponds to the completion stage, tummo, and so forth. The wisdom empowerment introduces illustrative primordial wisdom, whereas the word empowerment introduces ultimate primordial wisdom. The result of all four empowerments is as follows: The vase empowerment ripens as the nirmāṇakāya, the embodiment of manifestation; the secret empowerment ripens as the sambhogakāya, the embodiment of complete enjoyment; the wisdom empowerment ripens as the dharmakāya, the embodiment of ultimate truth; and the word empowerment ripens as the svābhāvikakāya, the embodiment of the essential nature. The potential to realize these four kāyas is ultimately actualized.

3.b.4 A description of how the words of honor are received:

First, give rise to the three places as the three vajras. Later, at the time when the four empowerments are fully complete, the words of honor of a vidyādhara are received.

The very moment that the mantra words of honor are obtained occurs when the disciple visualizes the three doors marked by the three vajra syllables. The three vajra syllables are a white OM (嗡) in the crown, a red AH (阿) in the throat, and a blue HUM (吽) in the heart. This blesses and transforms the ordinary three doors into the three vajra states. As the empowerment begins, the vase and other empowerments are progressively bestowed. At the conclusion of all four empowerments, the vidyādhara words of honor are obtained in their entirety. From that point on, one should recognize that all the words of honor are received and that they must therefore be guarded and maintained.

3.b.5 A description of the margin of receiving:

Thereafter, persevere in the training of commitments and words of honor.
After obtaining the words of honor of a secret mantra vidyādhara, the disciple must clearly discern what to accept and what to reject.

4. Guarding the obtained from deterioration, in three subdivisions:
   4.a Briefly revealed
   4.b Extensively explained
   4.c Summing up

4.a Briefly revealed:

   In the interim, an explanation of the methods through which to guard the vows from deterioration is as follows:

   Just receiving mantra words of honor is not sufficient. Thereafter, one must guard the mind from any deteriorations. All Vajrayāna training is dependent upon the purity of the words of honor. If they are allowed to deteriorate, all further training becomes meaningless. As an analogy, if one’s life force is lost, all other sense organs become dysfunctional. Because the methods through which to guard the words of honor are crucial to one’s success and development on the mantra path, this is the principal subject of this chapter.

4.b Extensively explained, in five subdivisions:
   4.b.1 The twenty-five uncommon activities
   4.b.2 The vows of the five buddha families
   4.b.3 The fourteen root downfalls
   4.b.4 The major branch downfalls
   4.b.5 A specific explanation of the words of honor taken according to the Nyingma tradition of the Great Perfection

4.b.1 The twenty-five uncommon activities, explained in two further subdivisions:
   4.b.1(a) Briefly revealed:

   First, according to the Kālacakra, the uncommon activity is as follows:

   According to the Śrī Kālacakra-tantra, the basis for all mantra training is the practice of the twenty-five uncommon words of honor of Vajrasattva.

   4.b.1(b) The twenty-five are explained in groups of five each:
   4.b.1(b.1) The five to abandon:

   Killing, lying, stealing, adultery, and drinking liquor are the five basic actions to avoid and abandon.

   Within the context of mantra, killing means to take the life of even the smallest insect and includes harboring, even for one instant, any harmful intent toward
another living being. Lying means to deceive someone else because of one’s own desire or needs. Stealing means to take the wealth or possessions of another, even if it belongs to animals. Adultery means to take the wife or husband of another for oneself. Finally, drinking liquor is seen as the basis for the development of all faults. Any activity or thought that even comes close to these five must be abandoned. Guarding oneself with the vajra lasso of awareness so as not to become ensnared in the trap of saṃsāra, one should recognize that broken words of honor naturally destroy all virtue.

4.b.1(b.2) The five to avoid:

Gambling, eating unwholesome food, engaging in negative speech, and training in the spiritual traditions of elementals and titans are the five activities to avoid.

Gambling means to spend one’s time using dice, cards, or other methods to squander money and time in the pursuit of meaningless pleasure. Eating unwholesome food refers specifically to any food that is acquired through non-virtuous means: for example, food that has been stolen or animal meat that has been butchered for one’s own consumption. Engaging in negative speech means to unnecessarily discuss subjects that have to do with war, killing, harming others, and so forth. Following the rituals of spiritual traditions that make sacrificial offerings and training in the philosophies of titans or barbaric spiritual traditions comprise the fourth and fifth activities to avoid. Any of these five activities causes one to be diverted from the path of virtue and thus produces harmful, negative karma.

4.b.1(b.3) The five killings:

The killing of cows, children, men, and women and the destruction of stūpas are known as the five killings.

These five killings are meant to be abandoned, as specific words of honor, because of the beliefs employed by non-Buddhist schools of thought. In certain non-Buddhist Hindu traditions it is believed that, in order to be reborn in heaven, these killings are performed as offerings that please the gods and thereby cause one’s wishes to be fulfilled. They are the following: the sacrificial killing of cows in order to obtain higher rebirth, the killing of children in order to offer their blood to the deity Kāli, the killing of men in order to be reborn as a man, and the killing of women in order to be reborn as a woman. The fifth “killing” is to destroy, desecrate, or otherwise put an end to the supports or images of enlightened body, speech, and mind such as stūpas, temples, statues, and so forth due to holding a barbaric view. These five killings must be completely rejected.
4.b.1(b.4) The five not to have aggression toward:

The five to avoid feeling aggression toward are virtuous friends, elders, the buddhas, the saṅgha, and one’s spiritual mentor.

This category involves any expression of anger or aggression directed toward five specific objects: a virtuous friend with whom either a worldly or spiritual relationship has been established, someone who has greater qualities than oneself and is therefore worthy of veneration, enlightened beings, fully ordained monks, and one’s own teacher or khenpo. Feeling anger toward any of these five must be abandoned.

4.b.1(b.5) The five nonattachments:

The five nonattachments are to have no attachment with the five organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) toward form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. These are the twenty-five uncommon activities.

These remaining five correspond to form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, the five objects of the five sense fields or consciousnesses, which, when experienced with attachment, are the condition through which the five mental afflictions arise. If one allows attachment and compulsory attraction to occur, the experience of cyclic existence is intensified. It is an objective of generation stage practice to transform objective appearances into awareness of the primordial wisdom deity. At the completion stage, all objective appearances dissolve into oneself and are no longer pursued externally. One must persevere in the antidote of mindfulness and mental alertness so as to prevent the deterioration of any of these twenty-five words of honor that correspond to the Buddha Vajrasattva.

4.b.2 The words of honor of the five families, in two divisions:

4.b.2(a) The common words of honor
4.b.2(b) The specific words of honor

4.b.2(a) The common words of honor, in two subdivisions:

4.b.2(a.1) Briefly revealed:

According to the common explanation, there are five words of honor for the five families.

The relative explanation of these words of honor is common, whereas the specific, definitive understanding is extraordinary. Here there is a strong foundational emphasis on the training in aspirational and practical bodhicitta, as well as on the three moralities that are general Mahāyāna practices, thus qualifying them as common. Although all upholders of the Vajrayāna must maintain all words of
honor of the five buddha families, it is particularly important to take special care in maintaining the words of honor of the family of one’s own tutelary deity.

4.b.2(a.2) Extensively explained:

The practice of the buddha family is to train in aspirational and practical bodhicitta and the three moralities. The practice of the vajra family is the vajra, bell, mudrā, and reliance upon the lama. The practice of the ratna family is the giving of wealth, Dharma, fearlessness, and love. The practice of the padma family is to maintain the outer, inner, and secret vehicles. The practice of the karma family is to maintain offerings, torma (gtorma; bali), and the stages of action.

Each of the five buddha family words of honor will be explained in progressive order. The words of honor of the buddha yoga or central buddha family include the development of aspirational and practical bodhicitta, the three moralities, and training in the practice of refuge. According to the hidden meaning, the Three Jewels are recognized as the originally pure nature of the awakened mind of the indivisibility of emptiness, bliss, and the nature of the mind. Since the lord of the buddha family is Buddha Vairocana, this family corresponds principally to the body. It is upon this body that all realization depends. It is the support, as well, for the noble qualities that arise from pure morality. Thus, refuge is taken in this physical support.

The words of honor of the vajra family are to keep in one’s possession the samaya objects of vajra and bell and to maintain awareness of one’s nature as the deity with the great mudrā. According to the hidden meaning, the vajra is the nature of the method, the wish-fulfilling jewel of the male. The nature of wisdom is the lotus of the female, symbolized by the bell. The mudrā is the joining of these two into union. When the secret elements of the white and red bodhicitta mix together through the heat and melting, the unchanging nature of great bliss, indivisible with the nature of emptiness, is meditated upon. This experience of nondual primordial wisdom is the great mudrā. One must maintain tremendous respect for the lama who reveals this nature as it is. The vajra family of Buddha Akṣobhya corresponds primarily to the mind, whose nature is illustrated by bringing together the outer objects of vajra and bell, as well as by the secret union of method and wisdom, which introduces the nature of mind.

The words of honor of the ratna family are the four expressions of generosity: the giving of material wealth, spiritual teaching and assistance, protection from fear, and the root perfection of generosity, the giving of great love. These four must be practiced six times during the day and night. According to the hidden meaning, during union practice, when the mystic heat ignites to melt the white bodhicitta which then descends and ascends through the major networks of channels, the experience of the four joys is the generosity of primordial wisdom. Buddha Ratnasambhava is the source of all noble qualities, so this is known as
the ratna or jewel family. The nature of generosity is that it is the source of both material enjoyments and endowments.

The words of honor of the padma family include all words of honor of the three outer vehicles of characteristics and the three inner tantric vehicles. According to the hidden meaning, by maintaining the vital air in the central channel, perpetual, unobstructed enlightened speech is accomplished. Buddha Amitābha represents speech as the essence of the lotus family. In addition, Dharma itself is of the nature of speech.

The words of honor of the karma family include maintaining all words of honor previously mentioned, as well as regular outer, inner, and secret offerings, torma and fire offerings, and the activation of the four concerned activities. According to the hidden meaning, all vows are sealed in the nondual union, and through the bliss of the descent of the bodhicitta, all the deities residing in one’s aggregates, elements, and organs are satisfied through this offering. Buddha Amoghasiddhi is the essence of all concerned activity, and action is thus the essence of the samaya of this buddha family.

4.b.2(b) The specific words of honor of the five buddha families:

The specific words of honor of the vajra family are the taking of life with the ten prerequisites, authorization, and realization established. Taking what is not given belongs to the ratna family. It is taught that with the pure intent to accomplish the purpose of oneself and others, one may steal wealth, another’s wife, or the profound Dharma of the Mahāyāna. For the padma family it is taught to rely upon a female for action, Dharma, samaya, and mudrā. For the karma family it is taught to speak what is untrue, indicating the nonconceptual lack of true existence of self and sentient beings. The cakka (buddha) family must rely upon liquor, the five meats, and all objects. Upholding pure conduct of the outer, inner, and secret stages of the vehicles is the tradition of the unsurpassed (anuttara).

According to the uncommon, extraordinary words of honor of the five buddha families, first, in terms of the generation stage commitment that corresponds to relative truth, killing is required of those who possess the specific power acquired through the depth of meditative realization, or who have received permission from the deity or the lama, and who have the certain motivation of compassion. With these prerequisites, it is the samaya of the generation stage to then perform the activity of killing and liberating the consciousness of an entity who is seriously obstructing the propagation of the Dharma. If a practitioner does not have these prerequisites, the way of understanding this samaya changes. This is why this category of samaya is termed “specific.” Otherwise, without the full potency to actually maintain the specific samaya, the practitioner must bring the understanding of
each of the five words of honor onto the level of the three inner empowerments and the completion stage level of practice. For example, literally and from the relative point of view, the first vow of killing corresponds to the purified nature of hatred as the samaya of the vajra family, the Buddha Akṣobhya. With the complete ten prerequisites, wrathful concerned activity is activated in order to liberate the consciousness of an obstructor who is unable to be benefitted or tamed through peaceful means. Not only is there no fault, the purpose is a profound expression and actualization of immeasurable mercy. From the ultimate point of view, life is understood as the vital air that moves through the two principal side channels. The method to cut off or obstruct this flow so that it will enter into the central channel and ascend to the crown cakra is the meaning of “to kill.” Otherwise, the mind is the very life essence of discursive thoughts. By cutting off or “killing” the mind, the unborn nature of mind is actualized in the sphere of truth.

The second word of honor is the purified nature of pride as the samaya of the ratna family. This word of honor requires one to steal and is understood according to both relative and ultimate truth. Relatively speaking, so that others may accumulate merit and with the objective of alleviating the suffering of poverty, one may take the wealth of another, either physically or through the power of mantra. Such an expression of generosity brings no harm because of its greater purpose. From the ultimate point of view, in order to realize primordial wisdom through mantra practice, one steals the female of another through the method of summoning and receives the bodhicitta through the strength of one’s vital air. Otherwise, according to ultimate truth, the meaning of “consort” is the ultimate meaning of the greater spiritual pursuit, the nature of emptiness. Stealing the essence refers to realizing the nondual primordial wisdom nature through the strength of one’s meditation. This gives one the power to accomplish the two purposes, those of self and others.

The purified nature of desire is the essence of the samaya of the lotus family. An individual who has accomplished the depth of meditative realization and who maintains the view of recognizing nonduality must maintain the “three recognitions” during the practice of union. Both male and female are recognized as wisdom deities, the two secret places are recognized as the vajra and lotus, and great bliss and wisdom are recognized as the Dharma. By meditating with the three recognitions, the methods of the three modes of conduct are employed. These three are the ability to cause the essential fluid to descend, ascend, and be evenly redistributed through the networks of channels throughout the body. The action mudrā is a physical consort, while the Dharma mudrā is a visualized consort. The samaya of practicing tummo is the samaya mudrā, through which the bodhicitta melts to realize illustrative as well as primordial wisdom. Ultimately, the term “to rely upon a consort” means to realize the union of unchanging great bliss and the nature of emptiness as the great mudrā.

The fully purified nature of jealousy is the nature of the samaya of the karma family. According to relative truth, a lie may be spoken in order to bring benefit
to another. From the ultimate point of view, the liberator and the object to liberate, the sentient being, are both realized to be nonconceptual. Within that nonconceptual nature all sentient beings are understood to have no true inherent existence. With that understanding, one aspires to liberate them from cyclic existence. As it states in the *Guhyagarbha*, “All dharmas are like an illusion. Names, words, and mental labels are false. To make use of that which is a lie is itself a label, and not really true.”

According to ultimate truth, when the vital air dissolves into the heart cakra and the unceasing perpetual nature of sound arises, this is the sound of the ultimate nature. Otherwise this is perceived from the point of view of relative truth as the simultaneous revelation of the various Dharma entryways through which all sentient beings are brought to the path.

The fully purified nature of delusion is the samaya of Buddha Vairocana, the cakra family. According to relative truth, this means to drink liquor without the fault of intoxication and, in order to eradicate caste or class arrogance, to partake of the five types of flesh from animals that are usually not killed for consumption. If these five types of animals die a natural death, their flesh becomes a suitable samaya substance. The five are human flesh, elephant flesh, ox flesh, dog flesh, and horse flesh. Similarly, the five nectars are to be partaken of as samaya substances without repulsion or attraction. The five nectars are feces, urine, menstrual blood, marrow, and semen.

From the ultimate point of view, to partake of the five meats is to maintain the pure essence of the five organs. Drinking liquor refers to the descent of the fluid and the experience of coemergent bliss without emission. Partaking of the five nectars refers to maintaining the pure essence of the five elements and to melting the essential fluid to fully purify even the subtlest molecules. The pure essence of the essential fluid must be maintained and brought up to the navel center.

By maintaining these practices as a support, all discursive proliferations are experienced as the one taste of the sphere of equality.

In short, all of these words of honor are to be engaged in the order they are given. Initially, one must maintain and depend upon the twenty-five words of honor corresponding to uncommon activity. The first five words of honor correspond to the abandonment of harming others. The final five correspond to not becoming attached to the objects of one’s sense fields by knowing the cause for the development of delusion. These are the outer characteristics that are practiced in the three outer tantric schools of kriyā, upa, and yogatantra. Then, in dependence upon these common words of honor, the specific words of honor of the anuttara-yoga are embraced. Here, one begins the practice of maintaining the specific extraordinary samaya of the five families. Understanding the two distinctions of relative and absolute is specific to the tradition of the unsurpassed secret vehicles.

In order that all beings with karmic affinities may engage on these stages of practice without suffering from damaged samaya, they are led upon the path according to the level they can maintain.
4.b.3  The explanation of the root downfalls, in two divisions:

4.b.3(a)  Briefly revealed:

The fourteen root downfalls are explained as follows:

The fourteen root downfalls are likened to the trunk of a fruit-bearing tree. In dependence upon the trunk, all the branches and leaves develop. If the trunk deteriorates, the entire tree will tumble down. Likewise, the root vows are like the trunk, and if they are guarded it is through them that all the noble qualities of the path develop. Otherwise, if the trunk is damaged, this becomes the root cause for falling to the lowest hell realm, where there is no chance for liberation and where unbearable suffering is endured. To avoid this, it is necessary to carefully guard against these fourteen.

4.b.3(b)  An extensive explanation of the fourteen:

4.b.3(b.1)  Disrespecting the vajra master:

The first concerns heartfelt disrespect for the vajra master who has been kind in the three ways. To belittle him or disturb his mind is the first downfall because of its weight.

The vajra master is one who has bestowed empowerment, transmission, and pointing-out instructions. These are the three expressions of kindness because they make transmission complete according to inner tantric practice. In addition, the vajra master is one who has given a direct introduction to the nature of the mind. Being disrespectful to such a master, either directly through body and speech or indirectly through one’s mind, or opposing the advice given by him or harming or disturbing those who are in the lama’s immediate retinue, qualifies as the first and heaviest downfall. This is the first of the fourteen root downfalls because of the strength of the weight of negative karma it carries.

The vajra master should be cherished as the essential nature of all buddhas and should, therefore, be the principal object of one’s devotion, admiration, and respect. Moreover, in dependence upon one’s relationship with the vajra master, all noble qualities of the path, as well as the resultant qualities, are developed. If one allows the precious relationship between oneself, as the disciple, and the irreplaceable vajra master to deteriorate in the ways mentioned above, then whatever meditation one aspires to accomplish will only be the cause for rebirth as a rudra.59 One must therefore be extremely careful.

4.b.3(b.2)  Contradicting the Buddha’s words:

The second concerns the utterance of the sugatas, who reveal what to accept and what to reject. This includes the lama’s speech. To knowingly contradict it by engaging in unwholesome conduct is the second downfall.
The words of the sugatas clearly reveal the path of what to accept and what to reject in accordance with the advice given by one’s lama. The Tripitika and the four tantras all qualify as the sugatas’ utterance. Ignoring these teachings, acting in opposition to the three trainings (prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, and Vajrayāna), and displaying such conduct in front of others trangresses the Buddha’s speech. This downfall is second in weight to directly disrespecting the vajra master.

4.b.3(b.3) Expressing contempt toward the vajra family:

The third is becoming angry toward general, distant, close, and immediate relatives; holding a grudge; and showing jealousy, disrespect, and so forth.

In general, all sentient beings are considered to be our relatives. Even closer are those who have entered the path of Dharma. Closer still are those who have entered the Vajrayāna, since those who have the same lama are considered to be children of the same father. Those who have received empowerment together at the same time are children of the same parents. Those who received empowerment first are the elders, and those who have received it at the same time are likened to twins born into the maṇḍala simultaneously. To express or to hold anger in one’s mind toward any of these near or distant vajra relatives, or out of jealousy to harm them with body and speech, to speak harshly to them, or to argue with them and express their faults, constitutes the third root downfall. It is especially important to be careful toward the innermost vajra family, because to fight with or abuse them in any way accrues extremely negative karma that is very difficult to remove.

4.b.3(b.4) Abandoning love:

The fourth is wishing that any sentient being should be separated from happiness and losing heartfelt love for them.

To wish that any sentient being should be separated from happiness and to stop feeling heartfelt love for them is the fourth root downfall. The object can be one sentient being or many. To wish for them to be separated from happiness and to meet with suffering or misfortune, thus forsaking them and giving up any love for them at all, constitutes the fourth downfall.

4.b.3(b.5) Abandoning bodhicitta:

The fifth is, with a desirous mind and at an inappropriate time, intentionally emitting semen, thus forsaking the bodhicitta generated for sentient beings.
The appropriate times to allow seminal fluid to leave the body are during the secret empowerment as an offering to the deities, when increasing the family line of ancestral heritage, and when making special pills or other medicines.

Otherwise, and especially out of desire, to ignore the words of honor and training and emit semen for one’s own personal satisfaction outside the context of higher anuyoga practice constitutes the downfall. This also includes the abandonment of bodhicitta for any sentient being, because bodhicitta and the essential fluid are seen as one on the level of generation stage practice (of inner tantra). If aspirational bodhicitta is abandoned, practical bodhicitta is automatically forsaken.

4.b.3(b.6) Disrespecting other religious philosophies and doctrines:

The sixth is criticizing the philosophical doctrines of heretics searching for a path, śrāvakas and pratyekas on the path, and the great path of Mahāyāna.

The first aspect of this downfall is to disrespect any Buddhist or non-Buddhist, especially if they are searching for a spiritual path and are practicing methods through which they can achieve spiritual understanding or freedom and if one has no intention of guiding them to a higher pursuit. The second is to disrespect those who have entered upon the path that renounces cyclic existence, such as the śrāvakas and pratyekas. In addition, this sixth root downfall concerns those who are on the great path of Mahāyāna, which eliminates the two extremes. To claim that the philosophies of these spiritual pursuits are untrue and pointless, and to then show blatant disrespect toward their practices, constitutes the root downfall.

4.b.3(b.7) Revealing secrets:

The seventh is openly revealing secret teachings to unsuitable vessels, to those with incomplete and unperfected ritual, or to those with deterioration or who fear the profound.

Teaching certain aspects of secret mantra to spiritually immature individuals is a root downfall. Spiritually immature individuals are those who have not completed prerequisite training; who have not been empowered; who have incomplete practice; who have not received the three higher initiations; who, although having received empowerment, have allowed the words of honor to deteriorate; who are afraid of the profound path; and who, like the śrāvakas and pratyekas, are not mature enough to receive the secret teachings. To intentionally expose such individuals to the uncommon substances and materials of secret mantra and their secret meaning so that they lose faith constitutes the seventh downfall.

4.b.3(b.8) Disrespecting the aggregates:
The eighth is physically abusing oneself out of disrespect for the five aggregates, which are in actuality the five buddhas.

In inner Vajrayāna practice, the five aggregates are viewed as the five buddhas. At the time of empowerment, the body itself becomes a support for the offering of all desirable objects and the increase of bliss. In dependence upon the body, primordial wisdom is actualized. Not knowing this and so maintaining the view that the body is a source of suffering, and further belittling the body verbally or physically—such as by actually severing one’s own limbs and so forth—constitutes the eighth downfall.

4.b.3(b.9) Doubting the Dharma:

The ninth is explained as doubting the innate purity and liberating nature of the foundation, path, and result.

The foundation, path, result, and all meanings are explained as the natural, perfectly pure nondual clear light bodhicitta, which is the originally pure fundamental essence of the sugatas. To believe that this path of Dharma is merely meant to lead one to a happier state but does not have the ultimate potential to bring about full awareness of one’s buddha nature, and to then doubt it so that faith and confidence are lost, constitutes the ninth root downfall.

4.b.3(b.10) Failing to liberate if the ten prerequisites are met:

The tenth is failing to liberate or express love when there is potential and when the ten prerequisites are complete.

This word of honor concerns that which brings harm to the doctrine, namely the physical enemies of the Three Jewels and more specifically the physical enemies of one’s own lama, those who have failed to restore deteriorated words of honor, those who have embraced the view and conduct of mantra and who have then developed incorrect view or have rejected the view and conduct, those who have hatred or anger toward the lama or the vajra family, those who have entered the secret teachings without authorization, those who have brought harm to sentient beings or who are harming pure upholders of samaya, and those who continue to accumulate extremely negative karma. Such individuals qualify as objects of liberation through profound compassion. Any one of these nine causes for suffering must be present, along with the fact that these individuals will surely fall to the three lower realms and experience unendurable suffering as a result of their conduct. Including the point that the results of their negative karma will surely be fatal constitutes the ten prerequisites. If any of these ten are complete, and especially if the potential to liberate exists, failure to accomplish this constitutes the tenth downfall.
4.b.3(b.11) Measuring the Dharma through logic:

The eleventh is intellectualizing the understanding of substantiality, lack of substantiality, and mental labels as the truth.

This downfall occurs if one attempts to measure or realize the uncontrived, fundamental nature of emptiness, with or without substance, only through the conceptualizing intellect. Believing intellectual understanding to be absolute understanding, when it is only the measure of one’s own conceptualizations and mental limitations, constitutes the eleventh downfall.

4.b.3(b.12) Causing someone to lose faith:

The twelfth is failing to accomplish the needs of any sentient being who possesses the three levels of faith, failing to guard one’s own mind, and being deceitful.

The three levels of faith are these: inspired faith, which arises upon recalling the noble qualities of the lama and the Three Jewels; emulating faith, which is the wish to achieve those same qualities; and convinced faith, which is single-pointed devotion. If someone who possesses these three levels of faith needs or asks for spiritual assistance, to then ignore them when one has the potential to help them constitutes the twelfth downfall. In addition, failing to guard one’s mind and acting immorally, speaking unkindly, or deceiving someone so as to impair, damage, or reverse their faith also constitutes the twelfth downfall.

4.b.3(b.13) Failing to rely upon the appropriate samaya substances:

The thirteenth is failing to rely upon necessary word of honor substances at the required time.

During Vajrayāna ceremonies, such as at the ganacakra feast and on other specific occasions, the gathered disciples are seen as ḍākas and ḍākiṇīs. Those ḍākas and ḍākiṇīs possess mantra materials such as the vajra and bell, partake of the five meats and five nectars, sing special songs of invocation, and dance according to the samaya requirements. Holding the view of the śrāvakas or pratyekas during these times, and thus failing to partake or participate because of that view, constitutes the downfall.

4.b.3(b.14) Disrespecting a wisdom female:

The fourteenth is both generally and specifically disrespecting a wisdom female, directly or indirectly, in such a way that the female comes to know about it.
This downfall occurs if one tries to trick or blatantly disrespects any female or disrespects one’s own wisdom consort. To do this directly or indirectly, to feel satisfaction about it, and for it to then be heard by the woman concerned constitutes the fourteenth downfall.

These fourteen root downfalls are delineated according to gravity. The first carries the heaviest karmic weight, with each decreasing in weight thereafter. However, since they are all root downfalls, the consequence of a break or deterioration is considered to be a failure of mantra morality. The way that these precepts relate to the four levels of mantra empowerment is as follows: the thirteenth relates to each of the four empowerments and the substances that one promises to utilize during each empowerment respectively; the fifth corresponds to the secret empowerment; the fourteenth corresponds to the wisdom empowerment; the ninth and eleventh correspond to the fourth empowerment; and the remaining nine correspond to the vase empowerment. After one receives the vase empowerment, these nine root precepts must be guarded, or they constitute root downfalls. However, if only the vase empowerment has been received, the remaining five, if allowed to deteriorate, do not constitute downfalls. After the remaining three secret empowerments are received, all fourteen root precepts must be guarded.

4.b.4 An explanation of the major branch downfalls, in three divisions:
   4.b.4(a) Briefly revealed
   4.b.4(b) Extensively explained
   4.b.4(c) Summing up

4.b.4(a) Briefly revealed:

Now the major auxiliary transgressions are explained:

Although similar to the root downfalls in weight, these transgressions do not qualify as causes for the loss of the words of honor. They do, however, create obstructions to the swift accomplishment of spiritual attainments. It is for this reason that they are called major transgressions. For example, if the main branches of a fruit-bearing tree fall, this affects the ability of the tree to bear fruit and may in fact be fatal to the tree.

4.b.4(b) Extensively explained, in two subdivisions:

4.b.4(b.1) The eight major transgressions:

Relying upon a consort who has not matured through empowerment and samaya; physically or verbally fighting during the gañacakra; receiving the nectar of an unauthorized consort; failing to reveal the secret mantra to a qualified recipient; teaching something other than what has been requested by a faithful aspirant; staying seven complete
days together with a śrāvaka; proclaiming oneself to be a tantric adept when the yoga of primordial wisdom has not been realized; and teaching unsuitable recipients. These are the eight auxiliary transgressions.

The first transgression is relying upon an unqualified consort. An unqualified consort refers to one who has not received the necessary empowerments, who does not purely uphold the words of honor, or whose mind stream is not properly matured. The second transgression occurs if during the gaṇacakra feast or other special Vajrayāna ceremonies one argues with or physically abuses any members of one’s vajra family. This transgression occurs even if one does not feel strong aggression or hatred toward them. Displaying any animosity, even in jest, constitutes the transgression. The third transgression refers to reliance upon a consort who does not possess the necessary qualifications, as stated in the scriptures, and who is therefore only an ordinary male or female. Relying upon such a consort without the specific purpose of making relics or realizing the nature of bliss according to sūdhana practice, but merely using the power of one’s vital air to receive the nectar for making pills and so forth, constitutes the downfall. The fourth transgression occurs if, due to avarice, one fails to reveal the secret mantra teachings to a disciple who is a suitable vessel and who has a strong interest to learn. The fifth transgression occurs if a faithful and sincerely interested disciple asks a question about the Dharma, and one not only fails to answer but gives an unrelated or incorrect answer. The sixth transgression occurs if one stays as long as seven days together with someone who blatantly disrespects and disregards Vajrayāna view and conduct, whether this is a śrāvaka or merely one who is a logician.

The seventh transgression occurs if one claims to be a tantric adept when in fact one’s self nature has not been actualized as innate primordial wisdom. The eighth and final transgression occurs in the circumstance of a teaching given either to a public gathering or privately to a few disciples. In either case, the transgression occurs if there are students present who are not suitable vessels to receive secret explanations and yet, as the teacher, one openly reveals these explanations regardless of who is present to receive them.

4.b.4(b.2) An explanation of the other enumerations:

Bestowing empowerment without performing the root recitation; consecrating and engaging in action; showing the body mudrā to someone interested in the outer Dharma; and unnecessarily transgressing the two words of honor based on rules.

There are other faults that qualify as major transgressions. The first is giving empowerments to disciples before one has performed and accomplished both the
root and accomplishment mantra recitations of the deity. The second is consecrating supports of the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind (such as statues, prayer wheels, stūpas, and so forth) before one has fully accomplished the mantra of the deity and then engaging in spiritual activities such as fire-offering ceremonies and other rituals when one’s personal qualifications and requirements are not complete. Moreover, it is a fault to openly reveal secret physical mudrās, postures, and exercises to others who, though unafraid of the profundity of mantra, have a stronger aspiration toward the outer causal vehicle of characteristics, the Sūtrayāna. If one has received prātimokṣa precepts, bodhisattva vows, and Vajrayāna words of honor, it is a major transgression to ignore the first two vow categories such as those prohibiting drinking liquor and eating meals after midday. (The exception to this is a specific Vajrayāna occasion, such as the gaṇacakra feast.)

4.b.4(c) Summing up:

Although there are many enumerations of major transgressions, the Kalacakra explains them as minor faults.

According to this system, there are many other enumerations of the major transgressions. Except for the eight specifically mentioned, the rest are all considered to be less weighty and equal to the degree of harm caused through the deterioration of words of honor. The reasons for this are explained in detail in the great Kalacakra commentary. This completes the explanation of the common words of honor of the Nyingma and Sarma traditions.

4.b.5 A specific explanation of the words of honor according to the Nyingma tradition of the Great Perfection, in two divisions:

4.b.5(a) Briefly revealed:

Specifically in the earlier translation tradition of the Great Perfection,....

“Specifically” refers to the Great Perfection tradition, which is virtually unknown in the tantric systems of the later translation schools. Thus, this explanation of words of honor belongs exclusively to the early translation lineage of the Great Perfection. Generally, “words of honor” means that one is literally bound by the honor of verbal commitment. A word of honor is also described as that which brings ultimate benefit through honorable maintenance and which brings ultimate destruction through deterioration. As is stated in the Heruka Samcayatantra, “If upheld, it is a cause of the greatest honor; if allowed to deteriorate, it is a cause for one to burn in hell.” The uncommon divisions of the Nyingma tantric system are presented according to the tantra class, the transmission class, and the essential oral instruction class. Words of honor, samaya, are further defined in terms of being general, specific, and extraordinary.
First, the general samaya is to guard and maintain all the words of honor that correspond to the prātimokṣa and bodhisattva paths and to the three outer tantras of kriyā, upa, and yoga.

The second, specific samayas are the five root and ten auxiliary words of honor, explained according to the root tantra Māyājāla (The Net of Illusions). The five root vows have already been included in the explanation of the fourteen root downfalls. The ten auxiliary vows are explained within the context of the twenty-five words of honor. Specifically, these are the five that are not to be abandoned and the five that are to be practiced.

According to the root text of the transmission class Samdhisamnipāta, there are three root and twenty-five auxiliary words of honor. This enumeration has already been incorporated into this (Ngari Panchen’s) system. The principal focus of this commentary is to reveal the third, uncommon division, the essential oral instruction class of the atiyoga words of honor. This is the third category of extraordinary samaya, which will be the principal subject of the following explanations.

4.b.5(b) Extensively explained in two divisions:
4.b.5(b.1) The root words of honor:

...concerning the root lama’s body, speech, and mind, each of these three has nine categories, totalling twenty-seven.

The samaya of the Great Perfection includes two divisions: the simultaneously arising samaya of “nothing to guard” and the progressive stages of samaya maintenance. The first, the simultaneously arising samaya, refers to the primordial nature of all dharmas having transcended the need to accept or reject, an object to protect from, the activity of protecting (vows), and a protector. In the expanse of great bliss where samsāra and nirvāṇa are the very nature of equality, this profound awareness of the all-pervasive equality is actualized, and all appearances are nothing more than the play of the great primordial wisdom. Accordingly, there is nothing to guard, since all words of honor are simultaneously perfected.

The second division concerns the progressive stages of samaya maintenance, which are necessary because, although one may have received the profound pointing-out instructions, in order to fully realize the depth of the view and meditation, a faithful, diligent, and wise aspirant must enter the common door of knowing how to guard body, speech, and mind through the stages of progressive development on the path. In this way, the words of honor correspond exactly to the levels of progression as taught in the tantras.

The root words of honor correspond to the root lama’s body, speech, and mind. For body, speech, and mind there are outer, inner, and secret words of honor respectively, bringing the total to twenty-seven.

In actuality, the essence of these root words of honor is to realize the indivisibility of one’s three doors with the condensed essence of all the buddhas. This is likened
to realizing the root lama’s body, speech, and mind to be nondual as the three vajras. The very word “guru” implies weight, which can be interpreted here as the weight of the words of honor corresponding to the guru and how, if they are allowed to deteriorate, they will be difficult to restore. The Tibetan equivalent of the word “guru” is “lama,” which means “unsurpassed.”

Of the nine words of honor that correspond to the body, the first three are outer: to abandon stealing, sexual intercourse, and killing. The three inner words of honor are to abandon abusing one’s vajra family, as explained earlier, including one’s own body; abusing the Dharma and other individuals and striking one’s own body; and forcing oneself to undergo unnecessary hardship, such as extreme ascetic discipline. The three secret words of honor are to abandon striking, or even attempting to strike, the body of a vajra relative (this includes verbal abuse or criticism of ornaments or adornments they may be wearing); making sexual advances toward the lama’s consort; and walking on or over the lama’s shadow or acting unconscientiously with body and speech in the presence of the lama.

The nine words of honor that correspond to speech begin with the three outer: to abandon speaking falsehoods, slander, and harsh words. The three inner words of honor are to abandon verbally disrespecting a Dharma teacher, anyone who contemplates the meaning, and anyone who meditates upon the fundamental nature. The three secret words of honor are to abandon disrespecting the speech of the vajra family, speaking negative words about the conduct of the lama, and disregarding any of the lama’s teachings or advice as well as the words of those in his immediate entourage.

There are nine words of honor that correspond to the mind. The three outer are to abandon craving, ill will, and incorrect view. The three inner are to abandon any unconscientious and incorrect activity, to abandon incorrect meditation practice (practice distorted by dullness, agitation, mental wandering, and other obscurations), and to abandon the incorrect views of eternalism, nihilism, and grasping at the view. In addition, the secret words of honor include the abandonment of failing to maintain awareness of the view, meditation, and conduct throughout the three times of the day and night, as well as of not recalling one’s own meditation deity and maintaining deity awareness, not practicing guru yoga, and not striving to develop loving-kindness toward the consort and vajra family.

These are the twenty-seven root words of honor corresponding to body, speech, and mind on the outer, inner, and secret levels.

4.b.5(b.2) The auxiliary words of honor are explained, in two subdivisions:

4.b.5(b.2.1) Briefly revealed:

The twenty-five auxiliary words of honor are the following:

The auxiliary words of honor are methods through which the root words of honor are guarded and maintained on the path. This is why they are auxiliary or
branch supports. They are divided into five groups of five vows each, totalling twenty-five.

4.b.5(b.2.2) Extensively explained, in five divisions:

(1) The five actions to practice:

liberating, union, stealing, speaking untrue words, and idle speech are the five actions to practice. Concerning each of these five actions to practice, one must be unbound by any personal attachment or grasping. If one has realized the depth of the view arising from meditation, these actions will be performed solely to accomplish the purpose of others. Directly revealed, these five actions called liberating, union, stealing, and speaking untrue words are all performed to bring the minds of those who are extremely unruly and wild to the true spiritual path so as to restore awareness of their inherent buddha nature. This is also the outer meaning of utilizing idle speech. The hidden meaning is that the erratic flow of subtle air is set free as it is sent into the central channel. The desirous conduct of union ignites the heat and melts the essential fluids, which then descend through the major networks of channels to bestow the accomplishment of unchanging great bliss and emptiness. Stealing means to take the nectar from the consort. Speaking untrue words means to give explanations according to relative truth in order to avoid the extreme of nihilism. Idle speech means to speak openly about inexpressible realization.

(2) The five that are not to be rejected:

Desire-attachment, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy are the five not to reject. Desire, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy are well known as the five mental afflictions. Unlike on the path of Hinayâna, here they are not viewed as threatening, so it is not necessary to reject them. Just as the nature of all dharmas is empty, since an object to reject is unestablished, likewise one need not erect a fence around a mirage of water. As it says in the Vajra-tantra, “The nature of all mental afflictions is that they are empty like an illusion. Recognizing the nature of impure awareness is to be liberated. If the method is skillfully maintained, it is not necessary to be bound by the mental afflictions. One can proceed directly on the swift path where rejection itself is unnecessary. If water penetrates inside the ear, adding more water will flush it out.”

The primordial nature of the five mental afflictions is in actuality the nature of the five buddhas, expressed as the five primordial wisdoms. There is no need to reject their nature. If sesame oil is needed, one must first acquire sesame seed. Likewise, delusion is the samaya of Buddha Vairocana in that lack of awareness is...
not to be rejected, just as pure awareness cannot be accomplished, since in the
sphere of truth they are both of one taste. Here, the hidden meaning is to un-
derstand the pure nature of the five mental afflictions. Similarly, the pure nature of
delusion means to realize the nature of equality of all dharmas so that there is no
partiality in the view and thus nothing to accept or reject. Desire then means
attachment to the pursuit of nonconceptual loving-kindness and compassion.
Aggression or hatred means the destruction of incorrect understanding concerning
one’s own pure primordial wisdom nature. Pride means uncultivated realization of
the view of the nature of equality. Jealousy means the truth that dualistic view and
conduct cannot be contained in the vortex of total equality. These are the five
samayas of nonrejection.

(3) The five to accept:

Feces, urine, blood, marrow, and semen are the five to accept.

According to direct revelation, if urine, feces, menstrual blood, marrow, and
semen are accomplished according to the nature of truth, the essential nature is
naturally accomplished, along with the potency of strength and blessings. These
five substances also serve as medicines to remove the five illnesses and are the
substances through which the mundane and supreme attainments are achieved.
Individually, it is understood that feces is Vairocana, urine is Amoghasiddhi,
menstrual blood is Amitābha, marrow is Ratnasambhava, and semen is Akṣobhya.
The five buddhas are the nature of the five primordial wisdoms, and
through these substances the nature is revealed and realized. The hidden mean-
ing is to realize that these five are the pure, inexhaustible, essential nature of the
five aggregates, which qualifies them as the five to accept and utilize.

(4) The five objects to recognize:

The five aggregates, five elements, five objects, five organs, and five
colors are the five to be recognized as the deity.

All dharmas primordially exist as the Buddha: the five aggregates are the five
male buddhas, the five elements are the five female buddhas, the five objects are
the five female bodhisattvas, and the five sense organs and the five corresponding
consciousnesses are the five male bodhisattvas. The five colors are the awareness
of the five primordial wisdoms. All appearances are the arising of the deity in
that all kāyas (pure embodiment) and qualities of primordial wisdom are recog-
nized as the maṇḍala. Recognizing these five objects severs all doubt concerning
pure awareness.

(5) The five to accomplish:
The buddha, vajra, ratna, padma, and karma families are the five to accomplish. At the appropriate time, practice by embracing the enlightened intention.

By ascertaining the certainty of the view of the five objects to recognize, and by combining this realization with meditation, one must experience one’s own mind as the nature of the buddha, vajra, ratna, padma and karma families. The direct understanding of these five, as well as their enactment, depends upon whether or not one is a beginner, has some degree of experience, and has realized the depth of the view. This would determine how to proceed, in terms of conduct, if one is in a group of people or in isolation. Otherwise, according to the hidden meaning, one must ascertain the enlightened intention and maintain conduct with skillful awareness.

Additional words of honor correspond to those times when an upholder of general and specific words of honor is proceeding with accomplishment practice or participates in an accomplishment ceremony. There are twenty additional words of honor, explained in indirect analogies, that must be maintained during such times. As it says in the *Mṛtyu-tantra*, “According to the scriptural explanation of the additional words of honor, guard them as extraordinary additions to the samaya!”

“Do not destroy the throne of the king of wild animals” means to never harm the body of the vajra master or disobey his or her words. “Do not pour poison on the rare Zamotok flower” means to not have intercourse with the lama’s consort. “Do not cut down a precious new bush” means to not disillusion a faithful new aspirant. “Do not drink boiling lava” means to not use offerings made to the Three Jewels or to scholars and to not drink intoxicating beverages. “Do not expose the pollen heart of a lotus flower” means to not have intercourse with a vajra relative’s consort. “Do not pour the essence into a bottomless pot” means to not rely upon a consort with negative characteristics. “Do not rely upon meaningless substances” means to not utilize unqualified and impure substances for practice. “Do not insert a crystal into mud” means to not abuse the noble qualities of the wise. “An impure vessel is not to be considered pure” means to not reveal the secret Dharma to immature recipients. “Do not cut a wish-fulfilling jewel” means to not abandon a qualified consort and suitable qualified disciples. “Do not separate the wings of a *garuda*” means to never be separate from the sign of bliss and emptiness (the union of male and female). “Do not strike with a sharp meteorite weapon” means to not fight with one’s vajra brothers and sisters, even in jest. “Do not eat the leftovers of wild animals” means to not partake of the leftovers of others. “Do not destroy a great vajra rock” means to not aspire to control the lama’s position or seat. “Do not cross the boundary of the corral” means to not enter into the boundaries of another’s retreat or leave the boundaries of one’s own retreat. “The wind cannot extinguish a butter lamp” means to not allow dullness or agitation to overpower one’s meditative absorption.
“Abandon cutting off the flowing river of primordial wisdom” means to not cut off the flow of mantra or sādhana practice by speaking ordinary words. “Do not openly disclose the utterance, indications, and mudrās” means to not transgress the mudrā signs of empowerment or express the indications. “Do not destroy the diamond house” means to not disturb the maṇḍala of a mantra practitioner. “Do not bring the wish-fulfilling crown down to a low place” means to never lose awareness of carrying the vajra master upon the crown of one’s head.

The activity of guarding all of these is the maintainance of the additional, extraordinary words of honor.

4.c Summing up:

Although these and many other descriptions of words of honor have been taught, there is nothing that is not condensed into the root and branch words of honor described herein. In brief, if the three vajras are understood as one’s own nature, then all one hundred thousand million classes of mantra samaya are complete.

According to the Māyādāla, there are fifteen root and auxiliary words of honor, from which three hundred and sixty are derived. According to the Ākhyāta-tantra there are ninety-seven words of honor. In the Samānya-sūtra there are four basic words of honor, twenty-eight common words of honor, four additional words of honor, twenty-three of uncontrived conduct, twenty to accomplish, four corresponding to behavior, the abandonment of the five demonic forces, the destruction of the four enemies, and further elaborations of the words of honor that correspond to the view. In addition, each tantra elaborates on individual root and branch words of honor to be guarded.

Further, there are words of honor corresponding to meditative equipoise, behavior, the partaking of food, objects from which never to be separated, and many other countless enumerations. However, concerning all of those root and branch words of honor, there is nothing that has not been condensed into the system of explanations described herein. (The two categories of root and auxiliary refer to that which constitutes the loss or total failure of one’s mantra vows and that which causes deteriorations.)

The fourteen root words of honor of the Sarma and Nyingma traditions do not conflict with the specific words of honor of the Nyingma. The fourteen root words of honor are already inherent within the specific root words of honor, so there can be no conflict. The essence is to realize that the innate nature of one’s body of channels, winds, essential fluids, and primordial wisdom is originally indivisible as the three vajra states of body, speech, and mind. Self-nature remains as vajra-like primordial wisdom. Recognizing this with wisdom awareness severs all traces of doubt. Here, all of the one hundred thousand million classes of mantra words of honor are spontaneously accomplished, and all faults are purified in the nature-as-it-is.
5. An explanation of the suitable support for the development of the words of honor:

The support for development includes those who murder a Brahmin daily, those who commit the five heinous nonvirtues, and all others. Those who qualify as suitable supports for the development of the vidyādhara words of honor are primarily those human beings with all six sense faculties complete. To compare the path of mantra with that of sūtra is like comparing a sharp ax to a dull one. If one wishes to cut down a tree with a dull ax, it will take quite some time to complete the task. On the other hand, if one’s ax is very sharp, it is possible to cut the tree down instantly. The sūtra path of characteristics takes many countless lifetimes of merit accumulation before the ultimate result is obtained. On the path of mantra, not only is it unnecessary to first perform the two accumulations of merit, but one can engage in mantra without first specifically engaging in other vehicles. Even those who have killed human beings of high status on a daily basis or who have committed any of the five heinous nonvirtues still qualify as suitable vessels for the development of mantra vows. In particular, through the profound methods found in mantra, individuals with sharp sensibilities, great mental strength, pure fervent regard, and keen aspiration will be able to realize buddhahood in one lifetime.

In addition, those who possess fortunate karmic conditions do not necessarily need the basis or support of a human body. In the tantras it clearly states that devas and titans may also qualify as suitable vessels. When the secret mantra was first brought into this world by Vajrapāṇi, who appeared to the five sages convening on the peak of Mount Malaya, four of those sages were nonhuman beings. In the land of Oḍḍiyāṇa, mantra was broadly propagated to all the nāgas residing there, and even arhats of extraordinary attainment must eventually enter the path of mantra. Therefore, it is taught that all beings with fortunate karmic causes inherently possess the cause for the development of the secret mantra words of honor.

6. If the words of honor deteriorate, the mode of their restoration is explained in two divisions:

6.a Briefly revealed:

Later, if the words of honor are allowed to deteriorate, the manner of their restoration is taught.

After receiving mantra empowerment, one must persevere in guarding the words of honor from deterioration. If the cause for losing the words of honor results in the deterioration of samaya, the mode of their restoration must be clearly understood.

6.b Extensively explained in two subdivisions:

6.b.1 The methods for restoration
6.b.2 The faults of failing to restore broken words of honor

6.b.1 The methods for restoration are fivefold:

6.b.1(a) An explanation of the antidotes to be applied to the causes that produce downfalls:

Not knowing what qualifies as a downfall, disrespecting the lama and others, unconscientious behavior, and an abundance of delusion are the four causes of downfalls, as explained by Asaṅga. The antidotes are to train in the words of honor, to develop respect for all, to constantly rely upon mindfulness and awareness, and to diligently train in the antidote for whichever delusion is predominant. In addition to the four actions to abandon, forgetfulness and dullness are included, bringing the total to six causes of deterioration. This is clearly taught in the Śrī Saṃvāra-tantra.

Although one may have every good intention of maintaining the words of honor, if there is no study or understanding of the limits of what to accept and what to reject in order to avoid a downfall, downfalls will be difficult to avoid. If one has disrespect for the lama and others who hold the words of honor, one’s own samaya will have no basis from which to develop. Even if one has respect, if one fails to see one’s own faults, one will lack mindfulness and will thereby become careless and conduct oneself unconscientiously. Because of this, deteriorations will occur. Furthermore, although one may be careful, if one allows oneself to be overwhelmed by delusion, deteriorations will again occur. These are explained as the four root causes for deteriorations or downfalls according to the bodhisattva Asaṅga. Therefore, one must know the antidotes to apply to these four causes.

First, if one clearly understands the meaning of the words of honor and thereafter knows what to accept and what to reject, one can train accordingly. By developing joy in the beneficial qualities of both the lama and the disciples, respect for all of them will arise. Like knowing the threat of danger when confronted by enemies, by fearing one’s faults and taking control of the mind one must consistently depend upon mindfulness, alertness, and conscientiousness. If one’s mind stream becomes deluded in any way at all, immediately recognize this and apply the appropriate remedial force to transform it. Since forgetfulness and mental dullness are both strong causes for the deterioration of samaya, they are included with the four to total six root causes, as taught in the Śrī Saṃvāra-tantra. The antidotes for the final two are to know and to clearly recall what is permitted and prohibited. One should be able to discern whether words of honor have been transgressed and should have a strong sense of personal shame and concern for how others will react if one allows the words of honor to deteriorate. Furthermore, all of the bodhisattvas of the past, as well as one’s root lama, possess extraperceptive powers through which they are able to know what we do.
and think, so it is very necessary to be careful about faults and to have a sense of shame while in the presence of others, as well as when alone. As it says in the *Samvardodaya* (*Source of the Vows*), “If the supreme attainment is truly desired, it will be easy to forsake one’s life to achieve it. If the words of honor are pure, the transition of death will be easy as well.”

6.b.1(b) The degree of the weight of the downfall:

A defeat is defined as a combination of object, intention, action, and ultimate deluded motivation; as knowingly contradicting any words of honor; as physically and verbally contradicting the actual practice with clearly recognized behavior and with no remorse; and as exceeding the time for confession. If all these prerequisites are incomplete, it is defined as a “downfall of exceeding the session,” which is similar to a remainder. A stage below that is called a major transgression. A fault should be understood to be like a reflection of a downfall.

Here, the difference between a downfall and that which does not qualify as a downfall is explained. A defeat must have four branches to be complete. These four are the object through which the downfall occurs, the intention, the actual activity, and the ultimate fruition of the action, whether this occurs through body, speech, or mind. The three additional prerequisites are to possess a very deluded motivation, such as the certain knowledge that one’s physical or verbal action will contradict the words of honor; performance of the action (either physically or verbally) until the nonvirtue is fully established; and clear recognition of the nonvirtue with no regret, thereby allowing the time for confession to pass. If these seven are complete, this constitutes a root defeat, as well as a total loss of samaya. With regard to all root downfalls, if one does not apply antidotes throughout the six times of the day and night, the obstacle of the “duration of the session” will occur. Failing to confess the downfall and allowing the time of the session to pass constitutes a defeat. This means that all antidotes for nonvirtue will have been destroyed or defeated.

A root downfall is defined as the loss of a root word of honor and a confession that is not performed before the session passes by. This is similar to a remainder, according to the prātimokṣa. Next to a defeat, a downfall carries the heaviest accumulation of nonvirtue. The next heaviest karmic negativity is a major transgression. This is defined as a deluded act without all branches complete. All branch failures are similar to downfalls, and all minor faults are similar to the fault category of prātimokṣa. For example, if one expresses anger toward a vajra relative with a truly beneficial intent, this is a mere reflection of a downfall.

6.b.1(c) An explanation of causes that do not constitute a downfall:
Illness, loss of control, involvement in other activities, an important purpose, firm realization of the unborn nature, an important reason, finding potency, receiving permission, being under command, and avoiding an obstacle: these are all without fault according to the Garbhālaṅkāra.

These causes include ill health such that practice cannot be maintained, being overpowered by someone else, becoming involved in an activity that is great and necessary for accomplishing the purpose of others, firm accomplishment of the unborn absolute nature of truth, being led by others to accomplish something extremely meaningful, having accomplished power through meditative realization, having special permission granted by the meditation deity or another extraordinary object such as the root lama, having been given special orders by one’s own lama, and avoiding a life-threatening obstacle. According to the Garbhālaṅkāra, if what seems to be a downfall occurs, and the cause was any of those mentioned above, this does not even constitute a fault.

6.b.1(d) Exceeding the time allowed for confession:

Therefore, six times during the day and evening sessions, one must strictly examine the discipline of the words of honor of acceptance and rejection. If one of the six times passes, it is said that the duration of the session has expired. If one day, one month, one year, or two years pass, this is called a contradiction, a deterioration, a transgression, and a tear. However, in all cases, if confession is made from the heart, restoration is possible. The last category is the heaviest. If three years pass, restoration is impossible.

The six times refer to three times during the day and three times during the night. During each of these, one should examine to see whether or not one has contradicted the words of honor concerning what should be accepted and rejected. If any of these six times passes without checking and applying the remedial power if necessary, this qualifies as a transgression of the session. If a downfall occurs and remains unconfessed for one day, this is called a contradiction. If one month passes, this is called a deterioration. If one year passes, this is called a transgression. And if two years pass, this is called a tear. The more time passes, the heavier the negative karma becomes. Still, if any of these are truly confessed from the heart, restoration is possible. However, if three years pass with no confession, restoration is impossible. It is taught that if an individual with broken samaya comes to a teacher after three years and tries to confess the downfall, and if the teacher accepts the confession, both will be reborn in the lowest hell realm to endure endless suffering.

6.b.1(e) The actual restoration has four divisions:
6.b.1(e.1) The restoration method that relies upon the four empowerments:

If one has received the seven empowerments, each deity’s mantra is repeated thirty-six thousand times to purify. If one has received the vase and secret empowerments, if deterioration occurs, first purify through the appropriate method. Afterwards enter the maṇḍala and receive the four empowerments. If one has received the wisdom and word empowerments, if deterioration occurs, except for the generation stage, impeccable morality, the completion stage, and blessing of the mind stream, other methods will not purify.

According to the *Kalacakra-tantra*, for each individual empowerment there are different methods for purifying downfalls, each corresponding to the requirements for that particular empowerment. Within the vase empowerment alone there are seven categories, all of which contain the same antidote to be applied if a downfall occurs. The mantra of each deity in the maṇḍala must be recited thirty-six thousand times. If the words of honor deteriorate after one receives the vase or secret empowerments, then along with the mantra recitations mentioned above one must follow the specific advice for purification given by one’s lama. If a deterioration occurs after one receives the fourth empowerment, one must confess the fault and, when a sign of purification is seen, reenter the maṇḍala and again receive the four empowerments from the lama or through self-generation. In particular, if deteriorations of the wisdom and ultimate word empowerments occur, nothing will have the power to effect purification unless one retreats to an isolated place to meditate upon the nondual stages of generation and completion, the untransferable uncommon morality of the completion stage with and without characteristics, and the spontaneous blessing of one’s mind. When signs of purification are observed, one should reenter the maṇḍala and once again receive the vows and empowerments. However, while receiving these empowerments and reestablishing the vows, one must not sit together with the senior students or receive offerings from others.

6.b.1(e.2) Restoration based on time:

If opposition occurs, offer a gaṇacakra. If deterioration occurs, fulfill with possessions. If transgression occurs, offer one’s son, spouse, or wealth. If a tear occurs, it is taught that one’s life will restore it.

If the fault of a conflict with words of honor occurs, confession should be made while offering the gaṇacakra feast during the gathering of ḍākas and ḍākinīs. If the fault of a deterioration occurs, one must offer all of one’s possessions to the lama or to the object involved. Confession occurs through this offering. If the fault of a transgression occurs, one’s son, spouse, wealth, precious jewels, gold, and so forth should all be offered to the deities of the maṇḍala and to the lama.
If the fault of a tear occurs, then, with no concern at all for one’s life, all effort must be directed toward serving the lama and the doctrine. In this way, one’s own life becomes an offering—strengthened with intense remorse for one’s mistakes—to the lama. This method of restoring the words of honor, which depends upon the degree of one’s breakage, is clearly taught in the tantras.

6.b.1(e.3) The method of restoration as taught in the Garbhālaṅkāra:

The restoration ritual found in the Garbhālaṅkāra is as follows: confessing before the field of refuge; purifying with mantra, mudrā, and the stages of cleansing, with the burning tummo fire, and with non-conceptual meditation; receiving the four empowerments; confessing to the gathering; speaking to the supports; offering maṇḍalas; constructing stūpas; offering fire and smoke; giving torma and reciting secret mantras; entering into profound meditative concentration; saving lives; reading the Buddha’s words; relying upon the lama; practicing self generation; reciting the hundred syllables of the Buddha at auspicious times; reciting the Triskandhaka; and meditating on Guru Vajrasattva and the yoga of the subtle essence. All these methods will bring restoration.

According to the Garbhālaṅkāra, the mode of restoration is explained according to sādhana practice. After invoking the field of refuge, confession is made in their presence through the application of the four powers. Another method for purifying mantra deteriorations is to use mantra and mudrā. The Vajra-atta-tantra says that the six syllables for rebirth in the six classes are cleansed through mantra. Consider that there is a syllable YA±(xBA) on the sole of each foot and a RAM (v) at the entrance to one’s secret place. At one’s navel are the six syllables of the six classes, and on a seat in one’s heart is PHAṬ (vHat), the essence of body, speech, and mind. From YA±, primordial wisdom wind arises, igniting the primordial wisdom fire from the YA± in one’s navel. This burns the seed syllables and all habitual propensities of the six classes, thus transforming the three doors into enlightened body, speech, and mind. As one recites PHAṬ, they dissolve into the sphere of truth. This is an extremely profound essential instruction.

Another method is to visualize that from the syllable BA±(d=B), the essence of water, the Áêî-ki˚ıM›makı arises. With the aspiration that all negativities may be cleansed, one then bathes in the water.

Another method for ordinary individuals on the path to avoid all faults and obscurations is the recitation of the Vajra Vidraṇī mantra. This is to be recited and accomplished with the vase water, which is then used to cleanse one’s body. By giving rise to the appearance of all empowerment deities in the space in front of one and by receiving the five empowerments, the stages of purification occur. Also, one may consider the syllable KHAM (v) in one’s navel, while in the heart.
one’s negativities are visualized as a mass of flesh. By igniting the tummo fire, all negative karma and obscurations are burned. Another method is to meditate upon the wisdom of the three rounds: the nonconceptual awareness of subject, object, and action. By considering one’s lama, one may also receive the four empowerments, or during the stages of the gaṇacakra feast one may make offerings and confession to the gathering of ḍākas and ḍākīṇīs. Yet another method is to offer the seven-branch prayer in front of an extraordinary fully consecrated support and to then confess through mantra recitation. This recitation may be performed out of intense sorrow, with a wailing tune. By offering to the maṇḍala one’s body, wealth, endowments, and all useful possessions—including the root of all virtue—confession is rendered. Restoration is also possible by building or helping to erect stūpas or clay images of the Buddha and by offering large and abundant peaceful fire-offering ceremonies. One may also offer torma, which is symbolic of offering all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa to the deities in the maṇḍala.

Other methods include reciting the essence mantra of one’s own personal deity; meditating with profound concentration and the application of the meditative absorptions of quiescence and heightened awareness; saving the lives of insects, animals, and fish in springs and ponds; saving bees from honey farms; saving trapped animals; paying hunters not to hunt; assisting people who are ill; protecting others who are under sentence of death; assisting beings who are controlled by weapons; reciting the mantra that is an antidote for negativity and obscurations that is found in the Mahāmokṣa (Sūtra of Great Liberation); reciting the profound Vimaladesanā (Tantra of Stainless Confession); and relying on the Lama’s presence at the crown of one’s head. These are all methods that restore samaya. Still other methods include meditating upon Amoghasiddhi with consort in one’s heart, while from the seed syllables in their hearts nectar descends to cleanse all negativity and obscurations; reciting OM AH KHAM HŪNG and receiving empowerment either from the maṇḍala in front or from oneself; reciting the heart essence mantra of all buddhas or the one-hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva at least five thousand times or more; reciting many repetitions of the essence mantra that purifies negative karma during the auspicious lunar days of the eighth and fifteenth; reciting the Triskandhaka during the six times of day and night; reciting the one-hundred syllable mantra while visualizing Vajrasattva above the crown of one’s head; visualizing self nature as the deity and clearly visualizing the principal channels and cakras in one’s body; performing the yoga of igniting heat and bliss by visualizing in the center of the five cakras a tiny hand implement of the corresponding buddha; and performing, with strong awareness, the yogic breathing exercises of the five buddhas. These latter methods are those of the meditation of profound yoga.

6.b.1(e.4) Restoring through the general cleansing of the three yogas:
As is taught in the *Hasti-upapraśeṣya-tantra*, the general cleansing yoga of the nest of remorse is the “Stirring the Depths.” By confessing in this way, there is nothing that cannot be purified. Practice this accordingly.

According to the tantra called *Hasti-upapraśeṣya* and the *Vimaladeśanā* contained within it, this is the sole text for practitioners of all three yogas who, having engaged on the path and then allowed their samaya to deteriorate, wish to confess and perfectly restore it. The king of all confessions is *Narakakhaḍā-pravāsapaṇapraṃṭana* (*Stirring the Depths of Vajra Hell*). Here, it is clearly taught that by offering the external gathering of offering substances, the internal gathering of one’s own aggregates, and the secret gathering of the awakened mind of bodhicitta on the fifteenth, thirtieth, or eighth day of the lunar month, all deteriorations will be fully purified. If that is not possible, but one still makes prostrations and recalls the deity in order to confess, purification will occur. It is important to persevere in this practice as much as possible.

As is said in this text, “To all the enlightened peaceful and wrathful deities and to their maṇḍalas, I pay homage. I pray that I may cleanse all of my broken commitments without exception. There is no doubt that the five limitless non-virtues can be cleansed and that even the lower realms can be emptied from their depths and that beings will be led to the well-known pure realm of the enlightened beings of pure awareness. Since Vajrasattva is the essential nature of secret mantra and cleanses all of our karmic obscurations and obscurations caused by broken commitments, in order to empty the realms of cyclic existence, recite the mantra.”

Accordingly, if one just hears the names of the deities in this maṇḍala, all deteriorations of one’s root and branch words of honor can be repaired. Signs of accomplishing the purification through confession include indications in the dream state; indications from the lama or deity; and dreams of bathing, putting on white clothing, ascending to the peak of a mountain, and the arising of the sun and moon and so forth. Until such signs arise, one should continue to make confession and apply the four remedial powers.

6.b.2 The faults of failing to restore broken words of honor:

If one fails to make confession in this life, extremely unpleasant consequences will ensue. In the next life, one will be born in the vajra hell of irreversible torment and suffering.

If mantra words of honor are left unconfessed, this becomes a cause for rebirth in what is called “vajra hell.” There is no place of greater suffering. As it says in the *Guhyagarbha*, “If the root or branch words of honor deteriorate, the result is that one falls to the lowest realm.”
In the *Prakaśitavicitra-tantra*, it states: “If a root word of honor deteriorates and no effort is made to restore it, one will fall to the vajra hell. If all the suffering of the ordinary hells were to be combined, that suffering would not equal one fraction of one hundred-thousandth of the suffering experienced in vajra hell.”

It can thus be understood that even an association with an individual who has accrued this degree of negativity can cause one’s own words of honor to deteriorate. Strong adverse effects may occur for those who even come into contact with such an individual. As it says in the *Sarvasamudita*, “Just as spoiled milk will taint all pure milk with which it mingles, a single mantra practitioner who has allowed his words of honor to deteriorate can spoil the words of honor of everyone with whom he comes into contact.” Even if one precedes the breaking of samaya by discussing this with others as a means to communicate one’s intention, this too must be immediately confessed. As it says in the *Mahāyūna*, “If one harms the lama, his or her retinue, or the vajra brothers and sisters by casually speaking negatively or by just a subtle sign of dissent, even if only in the dream state, this must be confessed and cleared from the mind. Actual and inadvertent neglect of samaya that remains unconfessed will cause one to fall headfirst to the hells.”

According to these teachings, it is clear that the loss of any root or branch word of honor is a cause for rebirth in vajra hell. However, there are differences in the degree and duration of suffering experienced, which vary according to the severity of the downfall.

7. The benefits of guarding the words of honor:

With no deterioration, the maximum will be sixteen consecutive rebirths; the minimum will be in this life, at death, or in the intermediate period. Other benefits include accomplishment of the eight common powers; the eight sovereign qualities; supreme spiritual attainment; and obtainment of the seven features of a divine embrace. For this purpose, spontaneously accomplish the twofold purpose of self and others.

The words of honor are the source of all noble qualities and are the very support for the stability and presence of such qualities. As it says in the *Samānaya-sūtra*, “Just as the planting of a seed is dependent upon the earth in order for the result to mature, the life essence of the Dharma remains within the words of honor, which fully mature into the unsurpassed state of awakening as the precious life-essence of virtue.”

Temporary benefits include the accomplishment of all that one aspires to obtain; an appearance that is pleasing to all; becoming an object of the veneration of others, including the most powerful worldly gods; and being blessed by the buddhas, bodhisattvas, dākas, dākinīs, and all objects of refuge, who guard one like their own child. Having understood the importance of pure samaya by
entering the path of all the buddhas, one will quickly ascend the stages of vidyādharahood to realize enlightenment.

If in one’s immediate life one is unable to persevere in the accomplishment of the two stages, yet never allows the words of honor to become defiled, then after taking sixteen successive rebirths enlightenment will be realized. This is the longest possible period of time it will take just through the force and purity of the words of honor alone. After at least seven rebirths, one will meet with the profound path of the two stages and gradually be liberated. The speediest result occurs if one maintains pure words of honor coupled with diligence in the two stages of practice, resulting in the realization of nondual vidyādharahood in that very life. Those of average sensibility will realize the illustrative clear light, which will become the actualization of absolute clear light at the time of their death, and the obtaining of the nondual kāya that arises from training. If the absolute clear light itself is realized, then at death the nondual kāya (arising from no-training) will be obtained. Those of common sensibility, due to their practice, faith in the lama, and strong aspiration for the pure realms, will be liberated in the bardo (antarābhava) [intermediate state] by arriving in the natural nirmāṇakāya pure realm.

These are not the only noble qualities that arise from pure samaya. In addition, both extraordinary and mundane spiritual attainments are obtained. The eight mundane spiritual attainments include the power to make an eye medicine, which, when applied, allows one to see without impediment or physical obstruction; speed walking; the sword accomplishment; seeing underground; making power pills; flying in space; disappearing; and extracting the essence. These eight powers are called mundane, or common, because they are still of this world and can also be accomplished by non-Buddhists. They qualify as accomplishments belonging to paths that are both worldly and transcendental. According to Vajrayāna, these qualities are developed during the two yogic stages and are thus termed common because they are not the ultimate result. In addition, the eight sovereign qualities are achieved.63

The supreme spiritual attainment is the attainment of self nature as the four kāyas, the five primordial wisdoms, and the nondual kāya that occurs without training. The different aspects of this attainment include the seven features of a divine embrace: the ability to completely utilize all aspects of the Mahāyāna doctrine; the perception of all form and all appearances as pure presence; the experience of unchanging great bliss; seeing that all dharmas are naturally without existence and beyond elaborations, and hence are of the nature of emptiness; the all-pervasive origin of mercy as nonconceptual great compassion; the experience of unchanging loving-kindness and constant engagement in the activation of its nature; and the ability, in accordance with the aspirations of each individual being, to ceaselessly manifest limitless embodiments of pure presence and entryways to the Dharma. The first four of these supreme spiritual attainments accomplish one’s own purpose, whereas the latter three are expressions of the fully endowed ability to accomplish the purpose of others.
Summing up the chapter:

This completes the fourth chapter, the explanation of the different levels of the vidyādhara words of honor of secret mantra.

The description of the vidyādhara words of honor and how to practice the uncommon extraordinary vehicle of secret mantra has now been explained according to the progressive stages of development.

CHAPTER FIVE:
AN EXPLANATION OF HOW TO PRACTICE THE THREE VOWS TOGETHER WITHOUT CONFLICT

III. Chapter Five: A Concise Explanation of the Manner in which an Individual May Practice the Three Vows Together without Conflict, in three divisions:

A. Briefly revealing the main subject
B. A detailed examination and explanation of the six branch categories
C. In conclusion, a brief explanation of how to practice all three vows

A. Briefly revealing the main subject:

An individual who upholds all three vows must not confuse their distinctions, must fully perfect what to reject and what to accept, and must transform the nature, as the noble qualities increase with the higher vows. The crucial point is never in conflict when what is most important is maintained according to circumstances.

An individual who wishes to uphold and who purely maintains the prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, and secret mantra vows at the same time must know how to practice all three without conflict. The explanation given here is based on the sūtras, tantras, commentaries, and unmistaken teachings of the greatest scholars and realized masters of India and Tibet.

One must take care not to confuse one’s understanding of the distinctions of the three vows. In addition, one must be knowledgeable concerning what to avoid and how to practice. One’s practice must be fully perfected. One must also understand how it is that the essence of the lower vows transforms into that of the higher vows and the manner in which lower qualities are elevated as the higher vows are obtained. Although there may at times appear to be a conflict, the essential point will never be in doubt if one’s practice is pure and complete. At all times and in all situations, one must examine to see whether it is suitable to employ the method of the lower or higher vow.

As it says in Longchenpa’s *Samten Ngalso* (*bSam-gTan Ngal-gSo*) [*Relaxing in Concentration*], “The prātimokṣa, bodhisattva, and vidyādhara vows are purely
kept without conflict by binding one’s own mind, accomplishing the purpose of others to the best of one’s ability, and recognizing whatever appears to be the path of pure perception.”

Here, what is most important is an awareness of the six points, which will now be explained in detail.

B. A detailed examination and explanation of the six branch categories:

1. The method through which the three vows are understood, without confusing their distinctions:

   Without confusing their distinctions, the vows, the intention, and the rituals are all individually accomplished.

Each category of vows is received according to the intention maintained while receiving them. The rituals through which the vows are received are all different. At the time that one receives a vow, one embraces the nature of that vow. Then, as the next vow is received, the essence of what one already holds transforms into the next, without presenting any conflict. Each vow category will never deteriorate if it is maintained according to its own status. For example, the prātimokṣa precepts are taken for the duration of a lifetime, whereas the bodhisattva and mantra vows are taken until the essence of enlightenment is realized.

2. Perfect awareness of what to abandon and what to practice:

   Delusion is to be abandoned, and one’s purpose should be unconstrained so that total perfection of the essence of each individual path prevails. Although there exist the individual paths through which to abandon and transform, all learned ones agree: that which is characterized as delusion must be abandoned.

According to all three vows, the object to abandon is the deluded state of mind from which all unwholesome accumulations arise. Dharma is that which serves the function of eliminating desire and attachment from the mind stream; and if something is introduced that does not eliminate desire, it is not Dharma. That which is understood to be necessary is the disassociation of the mind from deluded mental afflictions. For example, in prātimokṣa, sexual intercourse must be abandoned, whereas the two higher vow categories view sexual intercourse as a method. However, as a method, intercourse must be unstained by desire so that it is performed as a practice. Each vow category is maintained without conflict so that the qualities of each path concerning what to accept and what to reject can be fully perfected. According to the vehicle of the śrāvakas and the prātimokṣa precepts, delusion must be abandoned. The bodhisattvas recognize that delusion has no true inherent existence and thus transform it into the
nature of truth, dharma. In secret mantra, the primordial wisdom nature of delusion is recognized and is thereby maintained as the path. In this way, while all agree that delusion itself must be abandoned, each individual approach and method is employed. For example, poison can be used in three different ways: it can be rejected, used as a component for making medicine, or blessed by mantra and partaken of. All three methods seek to make the poison harmless.

3. The essence transforms:

   If the prātimokṣa is practiced with the motivation of bodhicitta, this is known as the morality of abstaining from harmful deeds. Upon one’s obtaining empowerment, it then becomes the vajra training. Its essence transforms accordingly, as is clearly established in the transmission of the Pañcaśatasahasra.

   If delusion is left in its place, it will arise to affect the three doors, such that the karma that binds one to cyclic existence continues to accumulate. For this reason, one takes the vow to abstain from harmful conduct, which brings the temporary result of higher rebirth and ultimately leads to liberation. This is the prātimokṣa vow. Then, when one gives rise to the bodhicitta intention and great wisdom and engages in activities that are beneficial to others, this brings the result of the great awakened state. This is the bodhisattva’s morality of abstaining from harmful activities, which brings together the essence of both prātimokṣa and bodhisattva practice.

   With this practice as the basis, one then receives empowerment and maintains the great combination of method and wisdom to spontaneously accomplish the unsurpassed great awakening, and one’s practice is transformed into the training of a vidyādharma. At this time, both prātimokṣa and bodhisattva practices—for one’s own purpose with ordinary perception and to benefit others—transform into the nature of the mantra words of honor. This is clearly explained in the transmission known as the Pañcaśatasahasra.

   Accordingly, once the mantra vows have been received, the two lower trainings are brought into the awareness of extraordinary wisdom and method. Ordinary perception is no longer present, and the essence of the vows becomes the general words of honor of Buddha Vairocana, which include the vows of all five buddha families.

4. The higher possess noble qualities:

   Due to the different intellectual capacities of the worldly, the practiced, and the fully practiced, the higher are capable of what is below. They possess noble qualities that suppress through splendor all that is below.
Just as there are differences between ordinary worldly people, practitioners with some experience, and advanced practitioners in the three trainings, those who have developed extraordinary abilities to skillfully employ the great method and wisdom give rise to the noble qualities they inherently possess. The display of this advanced level of skillful means is an expression of the development of qualities that are primordially perfected.

As it says in the *Guhyagarbha*, “In the supreme words of honor of the unsurpassed, the morality of the prātimokṣa and bodhisattvas is completely perfected without exception.”

5. The essential point is not in conflict:

If a yogin performs intercourse with the three recognitions, then the object, intent, action, and result are incomplete like a dream. It is impossible for this to oppose the essential point.

Here again, we must consider how the two lower vow categories are absorbed into the higher. According to prātimokṣa, the four defeats must be abandoned; bodhi-satvas, while abandoning harming others, aspire only to bring them benefit. Although externally it may seem that the five words of honor to accomplish according to mantra are in conflict with this, in actuality they are not.

For example, one of the four root downfalls is sexual intercourse. If, according to the mantra words of honor, one engages in the practice of the three recognitions, although externally the activity appears to be intercourse it does not qualify as such. A qualified mantra practitioner has transformed both object and subject into the recognition of male and female wisdom deities, so that the first of the four prerequisites is incomplete. If any of the four prerequisites is incomplete, the act does not constitute a defeat. If ordinary desire is transformed into the recognition of great bliss, the intention is incomplete. The activity of union is incomplete because one is maintaining the words of honor concerning method and wisdom. Ultimately, the loss of seminal fluid and the experience and attachment that arise from sexual satisfaction are transformed into the experience of primordial wisdom awareness, within which the essential fluid is maintained as the ultimate result. The prerequisite of the result is thereby incomplete as well.

When one recognizes that all dharmas arise from the nature of the mind, like the experience of a dream, it will be impossible to contradict the essential point of mantra practice. As it says in the *Guhyagarbha*, “Unattached attachment, the nature of which is unattached, is the supreme king of all desire, the experience of great bliss.”

6. That which is most important is maintained according to circumstances:

When one is in a gathering or public circumstance, the lower vows have precedence concerning any negative action or nonvirtue. When
free from desire, at the appropriate time and in isolation, practice secret mantra. If there is no internal conflict, perfectly guard them all. The wise teach that if there is a conflict, weigh what is necessary with what to abandon. Concerning beginners, the advanced, the accomplished, and even the all-knowing, their activities must be carried out with appropriate timing. This is explained in the *Kālacakra*.

As an upholder of all three vows, whenever one is in a gathering of others who are beginners on the path, one should refrain from activity that may appear to be negative. At such times, the code of prātimokṣa morality and behavior should be applied. Otherwise, if one is in isolation, and solely for the benefit of others, a bodhisattva is permitted to commit the seven nonvirtues of body and speech. The secret mantra practitioner is permitted to engage in secret practices which, although they externally appear as one thing, are only the reflection of a downfall and consequently bear no fault at all. In fact, these modes of conduct are necessary as methods on the path. As Guru Rinpoche said, “To internally maintain the conduct of the common tradition of secret mantra, it is necessary to connect with the absolute meaning of the generation and completion stages. Secretly, in order to be liberated in the body of light in one lifetime, it is necessary to maintain the tradition of the great secret atiyoga.”

It is always taught to be extremely careful concerning one’s conduct in the presence of others. Any conduct that would cause others to lose faith must be abandoned, and all conduct that is suitable to accept and incorporate must be perfected without conflict or confusion. If, in one’s own mind, a conflict does arise concerning what is to be rejected and what is to be accepted, one must apply the antidote to remove delusion from one’s mind stream. In such cases, it is important to consider the most appropriate action to take, depending upon the weight of the action and its result. For example, if one decides to abandon a certain response, this decision should be made by considering the potency of the effect. That response with the most potent result should be employed. If, by rejecting nonvirtue and harm, virtue and other qualities arise, it is then absolutely necessary to abandon the negativity. Understanding the general approach and the flexibility of exceptions is extremely important.

A vajra holder of the three vows does not behave thoughtlessly or casually. All actions are intentionally performed according to the appropriateness of the circumstance. A beginning vajra holder of the three vows is one who is still unable to transform the potency of alcohol through mantra or meditative absorption and who has not developed the power to transform poison. Even an advanced practitioner must approach the words of honor according to his or her level of development. If one has firm realization arising from the accomplishment of the two stages, one is then permitted to engage in conduct without acceptance or rejection.

One who has achieved these results has the temporary accomplishment of conduct free from the need to accept and reject, whereas one who has actualized
the ultimate result of the primordial awareness of full awakening experiences every action as the natural expression of bringing boundless benefit to others. All of these individuals on their various levels—beginner, experienced, accomplished, or fully awakened—must still engage in conduct with appropriate and conducive timing and care. This is clearly explained in the Kalacakra-tantra, which states, “Beginners should not perform the conduct of yogins. Yogins should not perform the conduct of mahāsiddhas. Mahāsiddhas should not perform the conduct of the fully awakened.”

C. In conclusion, a brief explanation of how to practice all three vows:

The foundational support of all noble qualities is the prātimokṣa; according to potential, the awakened mind is generated upon that. These are branches of mantra practice. After receiving the ripening empowerment, the three vows must be guarded like one’s eyes. With the generation stage of the recognition of the three seats as the deity, meditate upon the completion stage with characteristics and without. By uniting the stages of the conduct of close causes, in this life, at death, and in the bardo, perfect enlightenment will occur in the natural manifestation realm.

By clearly recognizing the faults of cyclic existence, the śrāvakas and adherents of the common path will develop renunciation as the basis for the seven categories of the prātimokṣa training. At least one of these vow categories must be taken as the basis for all further Buddhist training. Upon that ground, by recognizing the suffering of all sentient beings and wishing to accomplish the ultimate purpose by establishing them all in full awakening, the bodhisattva vows are received. Both of these categories are branches of the secret mantra words of honor. Although the nature of all sentient beings is originally pure, by failing to recognize their own nature they are caught in the snare of the suffering of negative causes and results. Recognizing this, and through the strength and depth of mercy and compassion for all sentient beings and in dependence upon the ripening empowerment, the words of honor of a vidyādhara are taken. Thereafter, one must understand the essential points of what to accept and what to reject as an upholder of all three vow categories, and must guard this training like one’s own eyes. With awareness of the actions to guard against and the basis of the purification and the purification itself, and without separating from the view of the awareness of the three seats of the deity, one then meditates on the profound generation stage. Following that, one meditates upon the channels, winds, and essential fluids, which is the path of the method, the completion stage with characteristics.

After accomplishing each of these stages, one then meditates on the completion stage without characteristics. When the inexhaustible result is swiftly achieved through meditation, this is called the practice, or conduct, of close causes. In the
case of one with superior sensibilities, the nondual kāya will be realized in this very life. The average practitioner will give rise to the nondual kāya at the moment of death. The common practitioner will be blessed by the truth of the dharmatā in the intermediate period between lives and will take rebirth in the natural pure realms of the nirmāṇakāya buddhas. One will then meet directly with Vajrasattva and the five buddhas and so forth, receive empowerment and prophecies concerning one’s own time of enlightenment, and from there swiftly achieve the state of perfected buddhahood.

This completes the fifth chapter, a general examination of the progressive stages of the three vows.