



The Drathalgjur, All-Penetrating Sound Tantra

In his Treasure of the Supreme Vehicle, Longchenpa says that in Saha, our billion-fold universe, there appeared twelve primordial teachers at different times and in different dimensions. These twelve primordial teachers are considered nirmanakaya forms of Vajradhara who manifested the nature of the five perfect conditions twelve times.

The first time, the teacher Child of Supreme Unconceivable Vision appeared in a realm called Joyful Pagoda, surrounded by one thousand luminous Buddhas and two Bodhisattvas as a symbol that one thousand Buddhas and two Bodhisattvas would uplift this eon spiritually. It was this teacher who taught the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra, the root of all teachings, at the time when the lifespan of sentient beings was incalculable.

The All-Penetrating Sound Tantra is considered to be the source of all the 17 Tantras representing the teachings of the Upadesha series of Dzogchen. It is believed that Garab Dorje, born 166 years after the passing of the Buddha, re-transmitted all the Dzogchen Tantras, including the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra.

After Garab Dorje we know that all the Dzogchen tantras were handed down to Manjusrimitra and through a series of teachers they arrived in Tibet. The other day Chögyal Namkhai Norbu explained the particular lineage from which he received transmission of the Drathalgjur.

Although it is called the Drathalgjur, the name is not very easy to translate. 'Dra' means sound. Generally speaking 'thalgyur' means consequence. In fact some scholars who did studies on this tantra literally translated the title as the Consequence of Sound Tantra and, of course, we find other translations such as the Reverberating Sound Tantra. But for the time being we call it the All-Penetrating Sound



Elio Guarisco.



Adriano Clemente.



Jim Valby.

Tantra. The reason we call it like that will eventually be explained when we are doing the translation, but basically speaking I think that it means that the whole spiritual teaching is the manifestation of the natural sound of reality. That is what the name seems to indicate because it also says that the Drathalgjur is the source of all teaching. So maybe we can generally understand the sound of reality as being the origin of all teaching.

The All-Penetrating Sound Tantra has 6 chapters and a total of 200 Tibetan folios. In the first chapter, which is the longest, various secret instructions that affect the liberation of the individual are presented. In the second chapter the essential points of these secret instructions are stated. The third chapter explains the direct manifestation of wisdom. The fourth chapter presents the true nature of reality. In the fifth chapter the view and meditation are taught. In the sixth chapter the final goal of the three or four kayas is taught. In the Drathalgjur, we also find various topics presented ranging from astrology, to tantric practices, and to the theory and application of Dzogchen.

The Drathalgjur is quite difficult and short or terse considering the amount of material it covers and we will do our best to translate it although I don't know how much the translation of the root tantra will be intelligible. The difficulty of this text may be the reason why there have been so few studies of it. Therefore, we will be relying on the commentary to unfold the meaning of the root tantra.

Fortunately we have a commentary to the meaning of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra, called Illuminating Lamp Rin po che snang byed sgron ma written by Vimalamitra. This commentary remained fairly unknown to the general public until it was recently found in two editions. One was in the private library of Kathog Situ, the nephew of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, at Kathog monastery in Derge. The other, a handwritten manuscript, in the library of the Fifth Dalai Lama in Drepung monastery consisting of 335 large folios of nine lines on each side. In this very extensive commentary, the above six chapters of the root text of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra are unraveled in detail.

The Translation Project

Generally the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra is rarely mentioned in Dharma studies, which shows that, perhaps due to difficulty in both its language and concepts, there is little understanding of this Tantra. The Vimalamitra commentary to the root tantra has also not been the object of specific studies.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu alone has dedicated several years of effort to editing Vimalamitra's commentary, comparing the two editions mentioned above, (his work consists of 859 computer pages). On the basis of his research on that teaching he has given several retreats during which he has taught parts or specific explanations and practices, such as Khorde Rushen, practice

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Light of Kailash Volume III Book Launch

During his stay in London, UK, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu presented the third and final version, *The Later Period*, of his acclaimed work on the study of the cultural and spiritual heritage of Tibet, *Light of Kailash – A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet*. The event was held at the Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS University of London on May 22, 2015, as were the presentations of the first and second volume in past years, to an enthusiastic audience.

The third volume, "The History of the Later Period: Tibet," is concerned with an assessment of the genealogies, Bonpo lineages, royal dynasties (from the first monarch gNya'-khri bTsan-po until the forty-fifth monarch Khri-dar-ma 'U-dum-btsan), language, and civilization of Tibet.

Towards the end of his presentation, Rinpoche spoke about his worry for the



Photo by Simone Citeroni

continuation of Tibetan language and culture and his hope for the future.

"When you read the first volume of the *Light of Kailash*, you can understand about the history of Zhang Zhung. The second volume talks about the situation of Zhang Zhung and Tibet when there were two kingdoms. In the third volume you can understand how Tibet dominated Zhang Zhung when the last Zhang Zhung king was killed. I only did research up to the period of the last Tibetan king and didn't write anything about the history of Tibet



Photo by Raf Portas

after that because it is complicated. I wanted to know about the source, the history of the Tibetans and how Tibetan culture developed. This is very useful to study and learn and there are many things to read and understand.

During my research, I compared many texts such as, for example, the Dunhuang documents, which are very important and accepted by scholars from China, Tibet, the West, by all, then texts of the Tang dynasty. When you read the last volume of my work it is a little different from the way history is

» *Drathalgyur* continued from previous page with sound and so forth that are clearly explained in that commentary.

We would like Rinpoche's years of dedicated work not to remain just in a language that only a few scholars can understand nowadays. To unearth that treasure we have set out a project of translation of both the root text of the All-Penetrating Sound Tantra and its commentary written by Vimalamitra.

The Translation Project will be under the Ka-ter translation project of the Shang Shung Institute Austria. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has indicated Adriano Clemente as the coordinator of the translation. Artur Skura has been suggested as the project coordinator, and Oliver Leick as the person in charge of funds.

At the suggestion of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu the translation of the root text and the commentary will be done in two different phases: first the root text and then the commentary.

The Root Text

To make the work of translation smooth and fast we thought that the root text should be translated by only three people: Adriano Clemente, Jim Valby and Elio Guarisco.

The Vimalamitra Commentary

Once the translation of the root tantra is complete we will start the translation of the commentary. The commentary is extensive and it would be very difficult for two or three people to complete the work in a reasonable amount of time. For this reason it will involve team work with more qualified translators such as Donatella Rossi, Giacomella Orofino, Enrico Dell'Angelo, Fabian Sanders, and Tetsu Nagasawa.

The qualified translators will be assigned sections of the commentary to translate according to their individual capacities and time. Those in charge of the revision and editing of the translation at its completion are Adriano Clemente and Elio Guarisco.

Elio Guarisco

The work of translation of the Tantra has already begun!

Up to now Jim Valby has been collecting the different versions of the text printed in various locations in Tibet and the Himalayas. He is in the final phase of placing these versions side by side in Tibetan and in the Wylie transliteration system (a Romanized form) in order to compare them during the process of translation.

The actual translation will start in the coming weeks with Jim Valby producing the basic draft step by step supplemented with clarifying notes from the Commentary edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Each part of the basic draft will be revised first by Elio Guarisco, and then by Adriano Clemente.

The work on the translation of the root-text will last for approximately one year.

The extensive work of translation of the Commentary edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu will begin officially once the Root Tantra has been translated.

Become part of this exceptional new initiative of the Ka-ter Translation Project, become a sponsor of the Dra Thalgyur Translation Project!

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