

The Major Facets of Dzogchen

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[For background, see: [Introduction to Dzogchen](#) {1}.]

The Nyingma tradition is a complex of many lineages and teachings, including dzogchen. Let us examine some of its major facets.

Nine Vehicles

The Nyingma (Old Translation Period) tradition divides Buddha's teachings into nine vehicles (*the-g-pa dgu*): three sutra and six tantra. This contrasts with the Sarma (New Translation Period) schools of Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug, which divide the teachings into three sutra and four tantra vehicles.

- The three sutra vehicles are the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva vehicles. The first two are in the category of Hinayana, while the latter is Mahayana.
- The three outer tantras are kriya, charya, and yoga.
- The three inner tantras are mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga or dzogchen.

[See: [The Terms *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*](#) {2}. See also: [Basic Features of Tantra](#) {3} {8}.]

The first six vehicles in Nyingma and Sarma are the same. The three Nyingma inner tantra vehicles are roughly equivalent to the Sarma category of anuttarayoga tantra. This is because both categories deal with a subtler level of mental activity (mind) than the lower vehicles do for actualizing the third and fourth noble truths - true stoppings of the first and second noble truths (suffering and its causes) and the true pathways of mind that bring about and have true stoppings. True causes are confusion about reality (unawareness, ignorance) and the fleeting levels of mental activity at which they operate. Because they are fleeting levels, they can be removed.

Maha, Anu, and Atiyoga in Comparison with Father, Mother, and Nondual Anuttarayoga Tantra

Mahayoga, anuyoga, and atiyoga all contain the same basic elements of practice on the tantra path to enlightenment. They differ in terms of emphasis. The same distinction is true concerning the three divisions of anuttarayoga tantra: father, mother, and nondual tantra. The two division schemes, however, are not equivalent.

The practice of anuttarayoga tantra entails the generation stage (*bskyed-rim*) and the complete stage (*rdzogs-rim*, completion stage). On the *generation stage*, we generate ourselves as Buddha-figures merely with the power of our imaginations (visualization). On the *complete stage*, everything is complete for actually generating the immediate causes for the body and

mind of a Buddha - not just in our imaginations.

On the complete stage, we cause the energy-winds (*rlung*, Skt. *prana*) to enter, abide, and dissolve in the central channel. This enables us to access the subtlest level of mental activity (clear light, ' *od-gsal*) and use it for the nonconceptual cognition of voidness - the immediate cause for the omniscient mind of a Buddha. We use the subtlest level of energy-wind, which supports clear light mental activity, to arise in the form of an illusory body (*sgyu-lus*) as the immediate cause for the network of form bodies (Skt. *rupakaya*) of a Buddha.

Within this scheme of anuttarayoga tantra:

- father tantra emphasizes illusory body practice,
- mother tantra emphasizes clear light practice,
- nondual tantra emphasizes the unified pair (*zung-'jug*) of illusory body and clear light.

If we use the same scheme as in anuttarayoga to analyze the Nyingma presentation, and divide the complete stage into two phases - before attaining actual clear light nonconceptual cognition of voidness, and after, when we attain the immediate cause for a rupakaya - then:

- mahayoga emphasizes the generation stage,
- anuyoga emphasizes the first phase of the complete stage and working with the energy-winds, channels, and chakras,
- atiyoga (dzogchen) emphasizes the second phase of the complete stage, at which we actualize the immediate causes for the enlightening mind and form bodies of a Buddha.

Three Lines of Transmission Divided According to Their Sources

There are three main lines of transmission of the nine vehicles. The first encompasses all nine vehicles, while the latter two include some mahayoga and anuyoga texts, but primarily dzogchen.

Distant Lineage of the Words of Buddha Himself

The extensive *distant lineage* (*ring-brgyud*) of the words of Buddha himself (*bka'-ma*) comprises the teachings brought to Tibet from India by Indian and Tibetan masters and transmitted directly through an unbroken line of disciples.

The Near Lineage of Treasure Texts

The shorter *near lineage* (*nye-brgyud*) of treasure texts (*gter-ma*, "terma") comprises texts planted either in a physical location (*sa-gter*), such as inside a pillar of a temple, or in the minds of disciples (*dgongs-gter*). The early Indian and Tibetan masters who brought the teachings from India hid them there for safekeeping during times that were not conducive for their practice. Centuries later, *revealers of treasure texts* (*gter-ston*, "terton") recovered and then transmitted them to unbroken lines of disciples.

Burying treasure texts is not unique to Tibet or, within Tibet, to the Nyingma tradition. In India, Asanga buried three texts of Maitreya, including *The Furthest Everlasting Continuum*

Maha, Anu, and Atiyoga in Comparison with Father, Mother, and Nondual Anuttarayoga Tantra

(*rGyud bla-ma*, Skt. *Uttaratantra*) and the Indian master Maitripa recovered them. Within the Kagyu traditions, Milarepa's (*Mi-la Ras-pa*) disciple Rechungpa (*Ras-chung-pa*) buried mahamudra texts and the Drugpa Kagyu founder, Tsangpa Gyarey (*gTsang-pa rGya-ras*), recovered them.

A variant of this manner of transmission is Buddha entrusting *The Prajnaparamita Sutras* to the nagas (*klu*, half-human, half-serpent guardians of treasure), who hid them under the sea. The Indian master Nagarjuna went to the naga-realm beneath the sea and recovered them many centuries later.

The Profound Lineage of Pure Visions

The *profound lineage* (*zab-brgyud*) of *pure visions* (*dag-s nang*, revelation) comprises teachings by Buddha-figures or lineage founders received in visions.

An Indian precedent is again with Asanga, who was taken to Tushita pure land by Maitreya Buddha and received a pure vision there of Maitreya's five texts.

Three Divisions of Treasure Texts

The treasure texts concerning dzogchen fall into three divisions:

- The *mind division* (*sems-sde*) emphasizes pure awareness (*rig-pa*) as the basis for all (*kun-gzhi*, Skt. *alaya*).
- The *open space division* (*klong-sde*) emphasizes the open space aspect (*klong*) of pure awareness as the basis for all.
- The *quintessence teachings division* (*man-ngag sde*) emphasizes pure awareness being primally pure (*ka-dag*). Another name for this division is the *heart essence division* (*snying-thig*). Various texts bearing the term *nyingtig* in their titles belong to this division.

The first two divisions derive from treasure texts buried by Vairochana, one of the first seven Tibetan Buddhist monks. The mind division comes from Indian texts that Vairochana translated; the open space division from his oral teachings. The quintessence teachings division derives from texts buried by either Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) or the Indian master Vimalamitra. Only the third is widely practiced in modern times.

[See: [Brief History of Dzogchen](#) {4}.]

Three Kinds of Pure Visions

The three higher tantra class teachings that derive from pure visions also fall into three categories:

- those that arise from meditative experiences,
- those that arise in dreams,
- those that arise directly to sensory consciousness - actually seeing and hearing a Buddha-figure while awake, not while dreaming or in meditation.

The third kind constitutes the most profound lineage. An Indian precedent is Asanga, who received Maitreya's five texts by actually seeing them in Tushita pure land.

Three Lines of Transmission Divided According to the Manner of Receiving Them

The Nyingma system presents an additional division scheme for the lines of transmission of the three inner tantra classes, divided according to the manner in which the masters who founded a line of transmission received the teachings:

- The *transmission line of the Triumphant Buddha's intention (rgyal-ba dgongs-brgyud)* is received by a master when he or she achieves enlightenment and directly realizes the full intention of Buddha's teachings.
- The *transmission line of gestures from a beholder of pure awareness (rig-'dzin brda-brgyud)* is received by a master in a pure vision of an emanation of a Buddha, when he or she gains realization through seeing a gesture made by the emanation.
- The *transmission line of teachings heard from a person (gang-zag snyan-brgyud)* is received orally from the teachings of a great master. Most derive from the teachings heard directly from either Guru Rinpoche or Vimalamitra.

Rigpa

Dzogchen practice emphasizes accessing *rigpa (rig-pa, pure awareness)*, the subtlest level of mental activity. Rigpa is an unaffected phenomenon (' *dus-ma-byed*), not in the sense of being static, but in the sense of not being contrived or made up as something temporary and new. It is primordially present, continuous, and everlasting. It is unstained by fleeting ordinary mental activity - in other words, rigpa is devoid of them.

Rigpa is complete with all the good qualities (*yon-tan*) of a Buddha, such as understanding and compassion. They are innate (*lhan-skyes*) to rigpa, which means that they arise simultaneously with each moment of rigpa, and primordial (*gnyugs-ma*), in the sense of having no beginning.

We do not need to create good qualities anew from nothing or just from potentials. Like the innate quality of a mirror to reflect, which is there even when dust totally obscures the surface of the mirror, we do not need to add anything for rigpa's good qualities to function. We need merely to remove the fleeting stains, the dust. Before enlightenment, however, even when rigpa is manifest, its good qualities are not all equally prominent simultaneously.

Among the innate qualities of rigpa is self-arising deep awareness (*rang-byung ye-shes*), also known as reflexive deep awareness (*rang-rig ye-shes*). This is awareness of rigpa's own face (*rang-ngo shes-pa*) as the face of Samantabhadra (*Kun-tu bzang-po*, the Totally Excellent One endowed with all good qualities). When reflexive deep awareness is not manifest, due to the automatically arising factor of dumbfoundedness (*rmongs-cha*, stupidity, bedazzlement) that obscures rigpa's knowing of its own nature, mental activity becomes *sem (sems, limited awareness)* and no longer rigpa.

The fleeting factor of dumbfoundedness is another name for automatically arising unawareness (*lhan-skyes ma-rig-pa*) regarding phenomena. It is not an actual disturbing attitude, but only a nominal one (*nyon-mongs-kyi ming-btags-pa*), since it falls in the category

of obscurations regarding all knowables, and which prevent omniscience (*shes-sgrib*).

Moreover, unawareness (ignorance), here,

- is not in the sense of inverted cognition and grasping of the cognitive appearance of things (*phyin-ci-log-par 'dzin-pa*) - perceiving them to exist in a manner that does not correspond to their actuality and grasping for them to truly exist in that manner.
- Nor is it unawareness in the sense of not knowing (*mi-shes-pa*) that dualistic appearances are false.
- Rather, it is unawareness in the sense of not knowing its own nature. It does not "recognize its own face."

[See: Ridding Oneself of the Two Sets of Obscurations in Sutra and Anuttarayoga Tantra According to Nyingma and Sakya {5}.]

Three Aspects of Rigpa

Rigpa's reflexive deep awareness is awareness of its threefold nature ("its own face"). This refers to the three aspects of rigpa: its essential nature (*ngo-bo*, essence), its influencing nature ('*phrin-las*, activity), and its functional nature (*rang-bzhin*, self-nature).

- The *essential nature of rigpa* refers to the category of phenomenon it is. In essence, rigpa is *primal purity* (*ka-dag*). This means rigpa is primally (without a beginning) pure of all stains. This is both in the sense of being self-void (*rang-stong*, devoid of impossible ways of existing) and other-void (*gzhan-stong*, an awareness having that void nature and which is devoid of fleeting grosser levels). Thus, primal purity derives from a union of the teachings of the second and third rounds of transmission (turnings of wheel of Dharma), on self-voidness and Buddha-nature, respectively.
- The *influencing nature of rigpa* refers to the manner in which rigpa influences others. This manner is with its aspect of *responsiveness* (*thugs-rje*, compassion). In other words, the nature of rigpa's influencing others is that it responds effortlessly and spontaneously with compassionate communication.
- The *functional nature of rigpa* refers to what it specifically does. Rigpa effortlessly and *spontaneously establishes appearances* (*lhun-grub*).

The Two Truths in Nyingma

Nyingma presents the two truths (*bden-gnyis*) in several ways. In the broadest sense:

- Rigpa, with its pure appearance-making, is deepest truth (*don-dam bden-pa*, ultimate truth).
- Sem, with its impure appearance-making, is superficial or conventional truth (*kun-rdzob-bden-pa*, relative truth).

Impure appearance-making (*ma-dag-pa'i snang-ba*) gives rise to appearances of things as having true existence, lacking true existence, both, or neither. *Pure appearance-making* (*dag-pa'i snang-ba*) gives rise to appearances of things as existing beyond these four extremes.

Within the context of rigpa:

- The aspect of primal purity - as rigpa's void side (*stong-cha*) and awareness side (*rig-cha*) - is rigpa's deepest truth.
- The aspect of spontaneously establishing appearances based on the aspect of responsiveness - as rigpa's appearance side (*snang-cha*) and appearance-making side (*gsal-cha*) - is its superficial, relative truth.

Thus, rigpa's three aspects, as its two truths, are always inseparable (*dbyer-med*) and simultaneously arising (*lhan-skyes*).

[See: [Conventional and Deepest Bodhichitta and the Two Truths in Anuttarayoga Tantra](#) {6}.
See also: [Relationships between Two Objects in Anuttarayoga Tantra](#) {7}.]

The Basis and Resultant Phases of the Three Aspects of Rigpa

The *basis phase* of the three aspects of rigpa refers to the three as aspects of Buddha-nature in all limited beings (*sems-can*, sentient beings).

The *resultant phase* of the three aspects refers to their manifestation in the fully realized Buddha-nature of a Buddha. In this phase:

- Rigpa's essential nature manifests as Dharmakaya (*chos-sku*, a corpus that encompasses everything - the omniscient awareness of a Buddha and the inseparability of its two truths).
- Rigpa's influencing nature manifests as Sambhogakaya (*longs-sku*, a corpus of the subtle forms of speech and communication that make full use of the Mahayana teachings).
- Rigpa's functional nature manifests as Nirmanakaya (*sprul-sku*, a corpus of emanations of Sambhogakaya in the appearance of physical bodies).

The Pathway Phase of the Three Aspects

To remove the fleeting stains from the basis three aspects of rigpa so that their full functioning as the resultant three aspects may occur unimpededly, we work with the three in their pathway phase. We do this in three stages. Let us look at them in reverse order from the sequence of practice.

Atiyoga Stage

Atiyoga has two extremely advanced stages of practice with rigpa: break-through (*khregs-chod*) and leap-ahead (*thod-rgal*).

- *Break-through* practice emphasizes rigpa's essential nature of primal purity. At this stage, we access rigpa, with its nonconceptual cognition of voidness, and attain a seeing pathway mind (*mtshong-lam*, path of seeing), becoming an *arya* ('*phags-pa*). This is equivalent to attaining the actual clear light stage in anuttarayoga tantra. Although both truths are inseparable and simultaneously arise in rigpa, only its deepest truth - namely, its primal purity - is prominent at this stage. Rigpa's superficial truth

(its appearance-making) and all its other good qualities are not fully prominent.

- Following break-through, *leap-ahead* practice emphasizes rigpa's influencing nature of responsiveness and its functional nature of spontaneously establishing appearances. From repeatedly abiding in rigpa, we cut the continuity of sem, which is the immediately preceding condition (*de-ma-thag rkyen*) for our experience being comprised of our ordinary five aggregate factors (*phung-po lnga*). Consequently, rigpa spontaneously gives rise to an appearance of itself as a rainbow body ('*ja'-lus*). Both truths are still inseparable and simultaneously arise, but here rigpa's superficial truth - its responsiveness and spontaneous establishment of appearances - is more prominent. This stage is equivalent to the stage of the unified pair of the purified illusory body and clear light, and an accustoming pathway mind (*sgom-lam*, path of meditation).

There are two types of practitioners: *those who progress in stages (lam-rim-pa)* and *those for whom it happens all at once (cig-car-ba)*. After attaining break-through, the former progress through the various stages of leap-ahead, one by one, spanning the ten levels of bhumi-mind (*sa-bcu*) of arya bodhisattvas, until their attainment of enlightenment. The latter attain break-through, leap-ahead, and enlightenment all at once, due to an enormous amount of enlightenment-building positive force (merit) from previous intensive practice, often from former lives.

Mahayoga Stage

As preparation for the atiyoga stage of dzogchen practice, we need to practice the equivalent of the generation stage, as emphasized in mahayoga. For this reason, atiyoga is often called *maha-atiyoga*.

The most important feature of mahayoga generation stage practice is the *three samadhis (ting-nge-'dzin gsum*, three absorbed concentrations), in which we work with the three aspects of rigpa in our imaginations:

- *Basis samadhi on the authentic nature (gzhi de-bzhin-nyid-kyi ting-nge-'dzin, de-ting)*. In our imaginations, we absorb our concentration in an approximation of rigpa's primal purity. We do this, for example, by reminding ourselves that primal purity does not come from anywhere, abide, or go anywhere. It is a state of awareness that is free from being pathetic and weak (*lham-me lhen-ne*), being jittery and explosive ('*ar-ma 'ur-ma*), leaning toward one side or another (*zur*), and making or dropping plans (*rgya-chad*). In other words, this is a state of open receptiveness (*klong*), which is the basis for being able to help others as a Buddha.
- *Path samadhi illuminating everywhere (lam kun-snang-ba'i ting-nge-'dzin, snang-ting)*. Moved by compassion that limited beings do not know the primal purity of their rigpa, complete with all qualities, we absorb our concentration in an approximation of rigpa's responsiveness. This is the subtle mental movement to appear and respond, which is the pathway for helping them.
- *Resultant samadhi on the cause (' bras-bu-rgyu'i-ting-nge-'dzin, rgyu-ting)*. Here, we arise as a seed syllable, for example *hum*, which is the cause for appearance as a Buddha-figure. We absorb our concentration on our visualization of this syllable, which represents with an approximation rigpa's functional nature of spontaneously establishing appearances. Imagining that we appear in a visible form that transforms

into a Buddha-figure brings the result of actually helping limited beings.

Practice of the three samadhis of mahayoga purifies our experience of ordinary death, bardo, and rebirth.

- Death is like primal purity, devoid of grosser levels of mental activity and energy-wind.
- Bardo is like responsiveness, with a slight movement of the subtle energy-winds.
- Rebirth is like spontaneously establishing appearances, with the appearance of a seed that will transform into a complete body.

In the other Tibetan traditions, for example Gelug, the equivalent practice on the generation stage is called *taking pathway minds for attaining the three corpuses of Buddha* (*sku-gsum lam-'khyer*):

- taking death as a pathway mind for (attaining) a Dharmakaya,
- taking bardo as a pathway mind for (attaining) a Sambhogakaya,
- taking rebirth as a pathway mind for (attaining) a Nirmanakaya.

Empowerment Stage

To gain the ability to practice mahayoga and atiyoga successfully, we need to receive an empowerment (*dbang*, "wang," initiation) and keep the vows conferred at that time.

[See: [Basic Features of Tantra](#) {3} {8}.]

In general, a tantric empowerment activates our Buddha-nature factors through consciously experiencing a specific state of mind with understanding during the ritual and through being uplifted by the inspiration (*byin-rlabs*, blessings) of the tantric master.

Consciously experiencing something here does not mean having a mystical experience. Rather, it means consciously generating a state of mind that is accompanied by understanding, either with or without effort.

- In Gelug, the conscious experience is some level of blissful awareness of voidness.
- In the non-Gelug systems, it is focus on Buddha-nature in our tantric masters and in us, with some level of understanding of Buddha-nature.
- In dzogchen, it is focus specifically on the basis three aspects of rigpa as Buddha-nature factors in our tantric masters and in us.

Three circumstantial factors, corresponding to the three aspects of rigpa, contribute to our conscious insight into Buddha-nature:

- the samadhi (absorbed concentration) of the tantric master, corresponding to primal purity,
- the mantras the tantric master repeats, corresponding to responsiveness and compassionate communication,
- the ritual objects the tantric master uses during the ritual, corresponding to spontaneously establishing appearances.

To gain inspiration from the tantric master in its fullest form, we need to focus with concentration and understanding on these three circumstantial factors. We sustain the conscious experience we gain by receiving and keeping the bodhisattva and tantric vows.

Inner Preliminaries

To be sufficiently receptive and ripe to receive an empowerment - and not just attend one and experience nothing - we need to have practiced beforehand the six inner preliminaries (*nang-gi sngon-'gro*). As the nineteenth-century master Dza Peltrul (*rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan 'jigs-med dbang-po*) outlined them in *Guideline Instructions from My Totally Excellent (Samantabhadra) Spiritual Mentor (Kun-bzang bla-ma'i zhal-lung, Perfect Words of My Excellent Teacher)*, they are, in reverse order:

- *Guru-yoga*, in which we recognize and focus on Buddha-nature in our spiritual mentors and in us, and make a yoke or bond between the two.
- We are able to do this successfully based on having made beforehand *kusali offerings of chod (chod)*, in which we imagine cutting up and giving away our ordinary bodies, which come from and are accompanied by unawareness (ignorance).
- We are able to do this successfully based on having made beforehand *mandala offerings*, in which we develop generosity and strengthen our enlightenment-building network of positive force (collection of merit) by imagining giving away the universe.
- We are able to do this successfully based on having practiced beforehand *Vajrasattva recitation*, for purification of the gross obstacles that would prevent us from building up an enlightenment-building network of positive force.
- We are able to do this successfully based on having cultivated beforehand *bodhichitta and the far-reaching attitudes (phar-byin, Skt. paramita, perfections)*, so that we are aiming for enlightenment and dedicating our constructive actions for attaining it to benefit all others as much as is possible.
- We are able to do this successfully based on having put beforehand *the safe direction of refuge* in our lives, done while making prostration to show respect to those who have realized rigpa and to our Buddha-natures that will enable us to do the same.

Outer Preliminaries

We are able to practice the six inner preliminaries successfully based on having practiced beforehand the six outer preliminaries (*phyi'i sngon-'gro*). Again, in reverse order:

- Building and maintaining *a healthy relation with spiritual teacher*, as a living example of safe direction.
- We are able to do this successfully based on having realized beforehand *the benefits of liberation*, so that we will look for an example of it.
- We only think of liberation when we have understood beforehand *karmic cause and effect* and the fact that we can free ourselves from it.
- We only think of karma because it is the cause of *the faults of samsara*.

- We only see this when we have thought beforehand about *death and impermanence* and the fact that problems and suffering continue from lifetime to lifetime.
- We think of death only when we have appreciated beforehand our *precious human rebirths*.

The Four Types of Rigpa

- *Basis rigpa (gzhi'i rig-pa)*. Of basis, path, and result, this is the basis. We can experience it only at the clear light of death, although normally we never recognize it. The next two rigpas correspond to the path.
- *Effulgent rigpa (rtsal-gyi rig-pa)*, sometimes also called *appearance-making basis rigpa (gzhi-snang-gi rig-pa)*, is the spontaneous establishing aspect of rigpa, which we recognize on the path first.
- *Essence rigpa (ngo-bo'i rig-pa)*, sometimes also called *nature rigpa (rang-bzhin-gyi rig-pa)*, is the primal purity (essential nature) aspect of rigpa, as recognized on the path after we recognize effulgent rigpa. Sometimes, we speak of a fourth type of rigpa:
- *Rigpa of all-embracing spontaneous presence (lhun-grub sbubs-kyi rig-pa)* is the resultant rigpa equivalent to Dharmakaya.

Basis Rigpa and the Alaya for Habits

A synonym for basis rigpa is *primordial deepest alaya (ye-don kun-gzhi, primordial deepest all-encompassing foundation)*, since it is the source of all appearances of samsara and nirvana.

Without beginning, basis rigpa has been flowing with a fleeting factor of dumbfoundedness, which obscures its reflexive deep awareness, preventing it from knowing rigpa's own face.

Because of the combination of basis rigpa and dumbfoundedness, basis rigpa functions as an *alaya for habits (bag-chags-kyi kun-gzhi, all-encompassing foundation for habits)*, which is a type of sem. Habits include the habits of grasping for true existence, karmic habits, and memories (habits for repeatedly remembering something).

The alaya for habits is the usual clear light of death of ordinary beings, as well as what underlies and accompanies every moment of grosser levels of cognition while alive. It is not that basis rigpa is the cause of alaya for habits - they are essentially the same thing (*ngo-bo gcig, the same item described from two points of view*).

As is the case with all other types of nonconceptual awareness, the alaya for habits is aware of things, but does not give labels (a conceptual process) or follow things out with a train of thought. The alaya for habits gives rise to six types of primary consciousness (*rnam-shes*) and the cognitive appearances of their cognitive objects. The six types of primary consciousness are the five sensory ones, which are always nonconceptual, and mental consciousness, which may be conceptual or nonconceptual (as in dreams in which cognitive appearances of sensory objects arise or in ESP). Together, the primary consciousness and the cognitive appearance simultaneously arise, abide, and disappear each moment, and the moments of them have an order or sequence according to karma.

[See: [Alaya and Impure Appearance-Making](#) {9}.]

Disturbing Awareness

Disturbing awareness (*nyon-yid*, deluded awareness, defiled awareness) accompanies the alaya for habits, and both it and the alaya for habits are considered as types of primary consciousness. Thus, in Nyingma, sem includes eight types of primary consciousness - five sensory, one mental, disturbing, and the alaya for habits.

Disturbing awareness conceives of the alaya for habits as an unaffected, monolithic, independently existing "me" that lords over the aggregate factors of experience, such as the body and mind. This leads to the disturbing attitude of conceiving of "me" as "me, the experiencer, possessor, or controller of what is cognized."

In more detail, nonconceptual cognition by the six types of consciousness lasts only a millisecond. Disturbing awareness does not function then. Immediately following that millisecond, however, with conceptual cognition (mental), disturbing awareness gives rise to the appearance, perception, and grasping (belief in) a seemingly independent boss "me." Next, it gives rise to the dual appearance of "me, the one who experiences something, the possessor, the controller" and "the object that I experience, possess, control." Based on that, we experience disturbing emotions and attitudes, the impulses of karma, and suffering.

The Difference between the Alaya for Habits in Nyingma and the Alayavijnana in Chittamatra

Tibetan Buddhism classifies into four tenet systems (*grub-mtha'*) the philosophical views of the major Indian Buddhist schools that were studied in the Indian monastic universities when the Tibetans began to study Buddhism there in the eighth century. Each of the four Tibetan traditions, however, presents the assertions of the four tenet systems differently. Even within one Tibetan tradition, various masters explain the four differently and some masters, such as Tsongkhapa, explained some of the points differently in texts that they wrote at different periods in their lives.

Among the four tenet systems, the Chittamatra (*sems-tsam-pa*, mind-only) school asserts *alayavijnana* (*kun-gzhi rnam-shes*, all-encompassing foundation consciousness, "storehouse consciousness"). This is the level of mental activity that continues from one lifetime to the next, carrying with it all the samsaric habits.

The dzogchen teachings, however, are presented within the context of the Madhyamaka (*dbu-ma*) school. Although the Nyingma tradition of Madhyamaka accepts in its description of superficial truth (dealing with sem) many of the categories of phenomena used in Chittamatra - such as alaya, disturbing awareness, and reflexive awareness (*rang-rig*) - Nyingma asserts their manner of existence and certain characteristics of them differently.

Concerning the alaya for habits in Nyingma and the alayavijnana in Chittamatra as presented in Nyingma:

- The manner of existence of the alaya for habits is beyond words and concepts - beyond the four extremes of having true unimputed existence, lacking true unimputed existence, both, and neither. Chittamatra asserts alayavijnana as having true unimputed

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existence.

- The alaya for habits is essentially the same thing as basis rigpa. The alayavijnana is not the same thing as the pure sphere of the mind (*chos-kyi dbyings*). The two are mixed together, like milk and water. With the attainment of liberation, the alayavijnana separates out from the pure sphere of the mind, like milk curdling, and its continuity ends.

[For more detail on the Chittamatra school, see: [Basic Features of the Gelug-Chittamatra System, 2 Specific Points Concerning the Three Types of Phenomena](#) {10}.]

Links

{1} http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/dzogchen/basic_points/introduction_dzogchen.html

{2} http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/study/comparison_buddhist_traditions/theravada_hinayana_mahayana/terms_hinayana_mahayana.html

{3} http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/tantra/level1_getting_started/basic_features_tantra.html

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{7} http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/tantra/level4_advanced_points/relationship_2_obj_anuttarayoga.html

{8} http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/advanced/tantra/level1_getting_started/basic_features_tantra.html

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