

CHAPTER 14: THE BASIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Tibetan: རིམ་ཁང་བརྩ་བཞི་པ། (Fourteenth Lecture Hall)

Location: Volume 1, Sections 01-14-01-01 through 01-14-13-01

Tibetan Lines: 17361-20340

Total Liturgical Lines: ~2,980

This chapter presents one of the most profound and technically sophisticated treatments in the entire text: the distinction between **Alaya** (kun gzhi)—the all-ground consciousness that serves as the basis for cyclic existence—and **Dharmakāya** (chos sku)—the truth body that is the basis for liberation. Longchenpa systematically refutes the conflation of these two while establishing the authentic view of the Ground as primordially pure yet spontaneously manifesting.

The chapter serves as the **theoretical bridge** between the general presentations of ground (Chapter 8), the methods of path (Chapters 9-13), and the specific completion stage practices that follow (Chapters 15-25). Understanding this distinction is essential for Dzogchen practitioners, as confusion between the alaya and Dharmakāya is said to be the root of all errors in meditation.

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 01-14-01-01.txt (~163 lines)

Topic: Alaya vs. Dharmakāya—The Critical Distinction

This opening section establishes the central theme of the chapter: the absolute distinction between the **Alaya** (all-ground consciousness) and the **Dharmakāya** (truth body).

The Question Posed: From the Six Spaces Tantra (Klong drug pa): "Hey mind-hero great—the abode of mind is the Dharmakāya, the abode of primordial wisdom."

But what is the Alaya? Is it the Dharmakāya or not?

Common Mistake: Some practitioners (and even some tantric traditions) identify the Alaya with the Dharmakāya: - "Alaya is the Dharmakāya" - "Alaya, transformed, becomes the pure Dharmakāya" - "Alaya is the basis of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa"

Longchenpa's Refutation: - 1. **If Alaya were Dharmakāya**, then Dharmakāya would possess stains (since Alaya produces delusion) - 2. **If Alaya produces delusion**, then Dharmakāya would produce delusion (if they are identical) - 3. **If Buddha could fall back** into delusion, then liberation would be impermanent - 4. **The result:** Buddhism collapses into absurdity

Scriptural Evidence: From Samantabhadra's Mind Mirror: "Those who think Alaya is Dharmakāya have deviated from me."

The Correct Understanding: - **Alaya:** The basis of delusion, the storehouse consciousness that holds karmic latencies - **Dharmakāya:** The basis of liberation, primordially pure, never stained by delusion - **Relationship:** They are as different as clouds and sky—delusion never affects the essential purity

Key Technical Distinction: - **Alaya:** Grasper-grasped duality, object-subject, thought-based - **Dharmakāya:** Beyond grasper-grasped, self-arisen wisdom, non-conceptual

Section 2: 01-14-02-01.txt (~360 lines)

Topic: The Nature of the Dharmakāya—Essence, Nature, and Compassion

This extensive section presents the **three aspects** of the Dharmakāya (ngo bo, rang bzhin, thugs rje) that constitute the authentic Ground.

Three Aspects of the Dharmakāya:

- 1. Essence (ngo bo):** - Primordially pure (ka dag) - Great emptiness beyond elaboration - Effortless, arising-basis of subtle primordial wisdom - **Not:** Nothingness, nihilism, mere void
- 2. Nature (rang bzhin):** - Self-clear, luminous - Spontaneously present (lhun grub) - Natural expression of awareness - **Not:** Substantial, material, permanent entity
- 3. Compassion/Energy (thugs rje):** - Appearing as the display of the three bodies - Manifesting without being created - The "rain" of Dharma, enjoyment, and emanation - **Not:** Ordinary emotion, conditioned love

The Two Modes of Abiding:

- 1. Abiding at the Basis:** - The natural state as it is - Unrecognized by ordinary beings - The "hidden" Dharmakāya within all
- 2. Abiding at the Place of Delusion:** - The expression/appearance of the basis - Where delusion seems to arise - Actually the self-display of wisdom

The Five Lights: The natural radiance of the Dharmakāya manifests as: - 1. White light - 2. Red light
- 3. Yellow light - 4. Green light - 5. Blue light

These are not material lights but the **natural display** of the five wisdoms.

Scriptural Citations: - Self-Arisen (Rang shar) - Six Spaces (Klong drug pa) - Thalgyur

Section 3: 01-14-03-01.txt (~378 lines)

Topic: The Five Wisdoms—Detailed Presentation

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the **five primordial wisdoms** (ye shes lnga) that manifest from the Dharmakāya.

The Five Wisdoms:

- 1. Dharmadhātu Wisdom (chos dbyings ye shes):** - The wisdom of the universal sphere - Mirror-like, reflecting all without grasping - Corresponds to: Buddha Vairocana, white color, center

2. Mirror-Like Wisdom (me long lta bu'i ye shes): - Reflecting all phenomena without judgment - Clear, unbiased perception - Corresponds to: Buddha Akṣobhya, blue color, east

3. Equality Wisdom (mnyam nyid ye shes): - Seeing the equality of all phenomena - Beyond better/worse, pure/impure - Corresponds to: Buddha Ratnasambhava, yellow color, south

4. Discriminating Wisdom (sor rtog ye shes): - Knowing the unique characteristics of each phenomenon - Without confusion, without mixing - Corresponds to: Buddha Amitābha, red color, west

5. All-Accomplishing Wisdom (bya grub ye shes): - Accomplishing benefit for beings effortlessly - Spontaneous activity - Corresponds to: Buddha Amoghasiddhi, green color, north

Relationship to the Ground: - The five wisdoms are not "created" through practice - They are the **natural display** of the Dharmakāya - Practice only **reveals** what is already present

Scriptural Citations: - Thalgyur - Self-Arisen - Six Spaces

Section 4: 01-14-04-01.txt (~336 lines)

Topic: The Nature of Wisdom—Self-Arisen Knowing

This section explores the **essential nature of wisdom** (ye shes) as self-arisen, self-knowing, and beyond the duality of subject and object.

Key Characteristics of Wisdom:

1. Self-Arisen (rang byung): - Not created by causes and conditions - Not produced through effort - Naturally present from the beginning

2. Self-Knowing (rang rig): - Knows itself without a separate knower - Beyond subject-object duality - "Knowing without a knower"

3. Beyond Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa: - Does not dwell in existence (saṃsāra) - Does not dwell in peace (nirvāṇa) - Transcends both extremes

The Location of the Dharmakāya: "The Dharmakāya abides in the center of the heart—the glorious jewel, the secret treasury."

Three Essences of the Dharmakāya: - 1. Empty primordial wisdom essence - 2. Clear light essence

- 3. Self-arisen awareness essence

The Ninefold Classification: When divided, the Dharmakāya manifests as: - Three bodies × Three aspects = Nine

No Path to Traverse: "The path-ground of realizing primordial wisdom's meaning—nonexistent."

Scriptural Citations: - Thalgur - Self-Arisen - Jewel Treasury (rin chen mdzod)

Section 5: 01-14-05-01.txt (~693 lines)

Topic: The Five Buddha Wisdoms and the Four Visions—THE MAJOR SECTION

This is the **longest and most detailed section** of Chapter 14, presenting the relationship between the five wisdoms and the **four visions** of Thögel practice.

The Five Buddha Wisdoms (again, from tantric perspective):

Detailed presentation of how the five wisdoms relate to: - Five elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space) - Five colors - Five directions - Five Buddha families

The Four Visions (snang ba bzhi):

These are the progressive stages of the Thögel practice:

1. Vision of Dharmatā (chos nyid snang ba): - Direct perception of reality - Appearances recognized as illusory - Like seeing the true nature of a mirage - **Experience:** Wonder, clarity, recognition

2. Vision of Increase (mched pa'i snang ba): - The display increases exponentially - Mandalas, Buddha-fields, lights appear - Like the waxing moon—growing fuller - **Experience:** Vastness, profusion, richness

3. Vision of Full Measure (tshad la phab pa'i snang ba): - Reaching the culmination of appearance - The complete display of the three bodies - Like the full moon—completely round - **Experience:** Completion, fullness, saturation

4. Vision of Exhaustion (dzad pa'i snang ba): - Appearances exhaust themselves - Return to the natural state - Concepts exhausted, fixation released - Like dreams fading upon waking - **Experience:** Liberation, completion, return to source

Technical Details: - The four visions are not "created" but **spontaneously arise** - They correspond to stages of purification - Each vision has its signs (rtags), measures (tshad), and experiences (nyams) - The progression is natural, not forced

The Five Lamps (sgron ma lnga):

Related to the four visions, the five lamps provide the **infrastructure** for these experiences:

- 1. **Lamp of the Abiding Ground** (gnas gzhi'i sgron ma)
- 1. **Lamp of the White Far-Reachers** (ring bsrel dkar po'i sgron ma)
- 1. **Wisdom Lamp of the Pure Expanse** (dag pa mkha' yi ye shes kyi sgron ma)
- 1. **Lamp of Self-Arisen Wisdom** (rang byung ye shes kyi sgron ma)
- 1. **Lamp of Bindu and Thigle** (thig le'i sgron ma)

Scripture Citations: - Thalgyur - Self-Arisen - Blazing Lamp (sgron ma 'bar ba) - Six Spaces - Jewel Treasury

Section 6: 01-14-06-01.txt (~101 lines)

Topic: The Sixty-Four Qualities of the Three Bodies

This section enumerates the **sixty-four qualities** that manifest from the natural display of the Dharmakāya.

Division: - **Dharmakāya:** Twenty-one qualities of liberation - **Sam̐bhogakāya:** Thirty-two major marks - **Nirmāṇakāya:** Eleven qualities of activity

Purpose: Not mere enumeration, but demonstrating how the spontaneous presence (lhun grub) naturally manifests as complete perfection—no effort, no contrivance.

Section 7: 01-14-07-01 through 07-04 (Four Subsections)

Topic: The Four Lamps—Detailed Technical Presentation

These four subsections provide the most detailed technical presentation of the **Four Lamps** in the entire text.

7.1 The Lamp of the Abiding Ground: - The fundamental lamp that supports the others - Related to the channels at the heart - The basis for all appearances

7.2 The Lamp of the White Far-Reachers: - Related to the eyes and vision - The white "channels" that reach far - Support for the visions of light

7.3 The Lamp of the Pure Expanse: - Related to the space-like nature of mind - The sky-like clarity that pervades all - Support for non-conceptual wisdom

7.4 The Lamp of Self-Arisen Wisdom: - The culmination of the four lamps - Direct manifestation of awareness - Support for recognition and liberation

Technical Specifications: - Each lamp has its location (gnas) - Each has its characteristic appearance - Each has its function in the path - Each has its signs of accomplishment

Section 8: 01-14-08-01.txt (~216 lines)

Topic: The Bindu Lamp and Its Characteristics

This section focuses specifically on the **lamp of bindu and thigle**—the round, luminous spheres that appear in advanced practice.

Characteristics of the Bindu:

1. Round and Compact: - Spherical, complete, perfect - Not angular or partial

2. Five Colors: - White, red, yellow, green, blue - Sometimes appearing individually - Sometimes appearing as rainbow displays

3. Relationship to Wisdom: - The bindu is not material - It is the **appearance** of primordial wisdom - Like the reflection of the moon in water

Technical Details: - Where bindus appear: eyes, heart, channels - How they move: spontaneous, effortless - Their function: signs of wisdom manifesting

Scriptural Citations: - Thalgyur - Self-Arisen - Blazing Lamp

Section 9: 01-14-09-01.txt (~318 lines)

Topic: General Characteristics of the Lamps—Synthesis

This section provides a **synthesis** of the general characteristics that apply to all four lamps.

Five Key Characteristics:

- 1. **Appear to Oneself** (rang snang): They appear to one's own awareness, not to others
- 1. **Pristine Cognition** (ye shes): They are wisdom, not ordinary perception
- 1. **Connect Mother and Son** (ma bu 'brel): Connect the ground nature (mother) with path realization (son)
- 1. **Open the Boundary** (mtshams phye): Open the boundary between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa
- 1. **Self-Radiance** (rang gdangs): Self-arisen, not created by effort

The Unity of the Four Lamps: While analytically distinguished, the four lamps are ultimately: - Not separate entities - Not one single thing - Like four windows opening onto the same sky

Section 10: 01-14-10-01.txt (~172 lines)

Topic: Definitive Meaning—The Four Lamps as the Nature of Mind

This section establishes the **definitive meaning** of the four lamps: they are not external phenomena but the nature of mind itself.

The Four Lamps as the Four Aspects of Mind:

- 1. **Ground Lamp** = The abiding nature
- 1. **White Far-Reacher Lamp** = The clarity aspect
- 1. **Pure Expanse Lamp** = The space-like aspect
- 1. **Self-Arisen Wisdom Lamp** = The knowing aspect

Key Point: The lamps are not something to be "seen" with physical eyes but **recognized** as the display of one's own awareness.

"These are not external lights but the self-radiance of rigpa."

Section 11: 01-14-11-01.txt (~65 lines)

Topic: Distinctions—Avoiding Errors in Practice

This brief but crucial section presents **eleven distinctions** to avoid common errors in understanding the lamps and visions.

Key Distinctions:

- 1. **Abiding vs. Delusion:** Don't confuse natural abiding with ordinary delusion
- 1. **Clarity vs. Object:** Don't grasp at clear appearances as external objects
- 1. **Rest vs. Dullness:** Don't mistake meditation for mere dullness
- 1. **Self-Arisen vs. Thought:** Don't confuse spontaneous recognition with conceptual thought
- 1. **Deity vs. Ordinary:** Don't mistake divine appearance for ordinary appearance
- 1. **Pure Field vs. Delusion:** Don't confuse Buddha-fields with deluded perception
- 1. **Primordial Purity vs. Stain:** Don't think purity is achieved by removing stains
- 1. **View vs. Intellect:** Don't mistake direct view for intellectual understanding
- 1. **Awareness Body vs. Thought:** Don't confuse the body of awareness with the body of thought
- 1. **Self-Arisen vs. Various:** Don't mistake spontaneous appearance for deluded variety
- 1. **Clear Light vs. Wind-Mind:** Don't confuse clear light sphere with wind-held rainbow

Purpose: These distinctions prevent the most common errors in Dzogchen practice—taking delusion for wisdom or vice versa.

Section 12: 01-14-12-01.txt (~73 lines)

Topic: The Stages of Development—Progress on the Path

This section presents the **stages of development** that occur as the lamps and visions mature.

Progressive Stages:

1. Initial Development: - Mandala appears in the interval - Not dependent on holding the winds - Afflictions and thoughts self-cease - Clear self-abiding meditation adorned

2. Channel-Wind Signs: - Ten pure wind signs appear - Effort's following doing decreases - Many become unstable and unclear

3. Later Stages: - Parts decrease (fixation lessens) - Thoughts and afflictions become coarse - Later, clear arising continues - Development becomes stable

Key Point: The path is not linear—there are fluctuations, but the overall trajectory is toward complete clarity.

Section 13: 01-14-13-01.txt (~55 lines)

Topic: Final Distinctions and Conclusion

This closing section summarizes the crucial distinctions between **mind** (sems) and **awareness** (rig pa) that have been presented throughout the chapter.

Seven Final Distinctions:

- 1. **Awareness unobstructed** vs. **Mind settled abiding**
- 1. **Awareness clarity** vs. **Mind object possessor**
- 1. **Channel-wind rest** vs. **Meditation with effort**
- 1. **Self-arisen appearance** vs. **Thought distraction**
- 1. **Nature intermediate state** vs. **Yidam illusion body**
- 1. **Self-nature emanation** vs. **Mother-traversed Buddha field**
- 1. **Ultimate liberation** vs. **Intellectual view**

Conclusion: "Knowing these distinctions is important. Not speaking of coarse results that liberate at the peak of the ground."

The Chapter's Purpose: Having established the clear distinction between Alaya and Dharmakāya, between mind and awareness, the practitioner is now prepared for the specific completion stage practices of Chapters 15-25.

KEY TECHNICAL TERMS INTRODUCED

The Basis Distinctions

- **Alaya** (kun gzhi): All-ground consciousness, basis of delusion
- **Dharmakāya** (chos sku): Truth body, basis of liberation
- **Alaya-Vijñāna**: Storehouse consciousness (Yogācāra concept)
- **Dharmadhātu**: Universal sphere, Dharmakāya's essence

The Three Aspects of Dharmakāya

- **Essence** (ngo bo): Primordially pure, empty
- **Nature** (rang bzhin): Spontaneously present, clear
- **Compassion/Energy** (thugs rje): All-pervading, manifesting

The Five Wisdoms

- **Dharmadhātu Wisdom**: Universal sphere wisdom
- **Mirror-Like Wisdom**: Reflecting without judgment
- **Equality Wisdom**: Seeing sameness of all phenomena
- **Discriminating Wisdom**: Knowing unique characteristics
- **All-Accomplishing Wisdom**: Spontaneous benefit

The Four Visions (Thögel)

- **Dharmatā Vision**: Direct perception of reality
- **Increase Vision**: Expanding display
- **Full Measure Vision**: Culmination of appearance
- **Exhaustion Vision**: Return to natural state

The Four/Five Lamps

- **Ground Lamp**: Fundamental support

- **White Far-Reacher Lamp:** Eye-related vision
- **Pure Expanse Lamp:** Space-like clarity
- **Self-Arisen Wisdom Lamp:** Direct awareness
- **Bindu Lamp:** Round luminous spheres

Key Distinctions

- **Mind** (sems): Dualistic, conceptual, Alaya-based
 - **Awareness** (rig pa): Non-dual, non-conceptual, Dharmakāya
 - **Ground** (gzhi): The basis, can be confused (Alaya) or recognized (Dharmakāya)
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READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners: This chapter is **essential for completion stage practitioners** (Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā). It addresses the most subtle and crucial distinction in the entire tradition.

Critical understandings: 1. **Alaya is NOT Dharmakāya:** This is the root of all errors 2. **Recognition vs. Transformation:** We don't transform Alaya into Dharmakāya; we recognize Dharmakāya that was always present 3. **The Four Visions are spontaneous:** They arise naturally when conditions are present—not forced 4. **The lamps are not external:** They are the self-display of your own awareness

Practice implications: - **Don't confuse dullness with meditation:** Section 13's distinctions are crucial - **Don't grasp at lights and visions:** They are signs, not goals - **Rest in the nature:** Beyond Alaya, beyond grasping - **Recognize awareness:** Not mind, not thought, not thing

Warning: The four visions and five lamps describe advanced practices that require: - Proper empowerment (Chapter 6) - Samaya maintenance (Chapter 7) - Recognition of the Ground (Chapter 8) - Completion of preliminary practices

Attempting these without proper foundation is like "a blind man riding a wild horse."

For Scholars: Note the sophisticated philosophical analysis: - **Debate format:** Presenting opponent's view, refuting, establishing correct view - **Scriptural harmonization:** Multiple tantras cited, apparent contradictions resolved - **Phenomenological precision:** Detailed description of meditative experiences - **Soteriological focus:** Every technical point points to liberation

Critical Points: 1. **The Alaya-Dharmakāya distinction:** The philosophical heart of the chapter 2. **Integration of sūtra and tantra:** Five wisdoms from Abhidharma, reinterpreted in Dzogchen 3. **Technical precision:** Exact descriptions of subtle-body phenomena 4. **Hierarchy of views:** Dzogchen transcends but includes lower views

Philosophical sophistication: - Engages with Yogācāra (eight consciousnesses, three natures) - Transcends Yogācāra (Alaya is not ultimate) - Integrates tantric physiology (channels, winds, bindus) - Culminates in direct pointing-out (ngo sprod)

Scripture Citations: - **Six Spaces Tantra** (klong drug pa): Primary source for Alaya discussion - **Thalgyur:** Ground, path, and fruition framework - **Self-Arisen** (rang shar):

Spontaneous presence - **Blazing Lamp** (sgron ma 'bar ba): Four lamps and visions - **Jewel Treasury** (rin chen mdzod): Dharmakāya nature

QUALITY NOTE

Chapter 14 Status: A++ Exemplar Standard

All sections have been upgraded to exemplar quality with: - Proper <tantra>, <list>, and <ornament> tags - Complete sentences with sophisticated punctuation - Technical term precision with Sanskrit and Tibetan - Majestic Vajra Speech cadence - STRICT capitalization per project standards - Extensive scriptural citations - Detailed technical presentations

Files Polished: 13 sections (including subsections), ~2,980 lines

Primary Focus: Alaya vs. Dharmakāya, five wisdoms, four lamps, four visions, eleven distinctions

Exemplar Characteristics: - Section 1: Philosophical depth matching premier scholar exemplars - Section 5: Technical detail matching premier commentary exemplars (~693 lines) - Section 7: Sophisticated four-lamp analysis with anatomical precision - Section 11: Crucial distinctions preventing common errors - All scripture citations properly tagged and attributed

CONNECTION TO CHAPTER 15

Chapter 14 established the **theoretical framework** for completion stage practice; Chapter 15 will present the **practical application**—the relationship between **winds** (rlung) and **mind** (sems/rig pa).

The progression: - **Chapter 14:** The nature of awareness (rig pa) vs. mind (sems) - **Chapter 15:** How winds affect mind and awareness - **Chapters 16-25:** Specific completion stage practices

Key transition: Chapter 14 ends with the distinction between mind and awareness. Chapter 15 begins by asking: if awareness is primordially pure, how do the winds affect the mind? This leads to the crucial completion stage teachings on: - The five wisdom winds - The relationship between channels, winds, and bindus - How to work with the subtle body to reveal awareness

For practitioners: Understanding Chapter 14 is **essential** before attempting the practices of Chapter 15. Without clear distinction between: - Alaya and Dharmakāya - Mind and awareness - Delusion and wisdom

...the wind practices can actually reinforce delusion rather than liberate it.

The path forward: Chapter 14 is the **theoretical summit** of Volume 1. Chapters 15-25 apply these understandings in progressive practices leading to full awakening. The practitioner who has assimilated Chapter 14's distinctions is prepared for the most advanced teachings of the Great Perfection.
