

CHAPTER 17: THE TWELVE YOGINS—PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCE-TAKING THROUGH THE DEFINITE PATH

Tibetan: རིམ་ཁང་བརྩ་བདུན་པ། (Seventeenth Lecture Hall)

Location: Volume 1, Sections 02-17-01-01 through 02-17-14-01

Tibetan Lines: 1754-3887

Total Liturgical Lines: ~2,368

This chapter presents one of the most comprehensive guides to **progressive spiritual development** in the entire Treasury. Longchenpa systematically categorizes practitioners into twelve types of "yogins" (rnal 'byor pa)—those who engage in the definitive path of experience-taking. The chapter serves as both a **diagnostic tool** (helping practitioners recognize their current level) and a **roadmap** (showing the progression to liberation).

The structure follows a clear pedagogical logic: the first eight types of yogins **do not achieve liberation** through their methods, while the final four **do achieve liberation**. This critical distinction helps practitioners avoid wasted effort on approaches that, while virtuous, are ultimately insufficient for the Great Perfection.

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 02-17-01-01.txt (115 lines)

Topic: Overview of the Twelve Yogins

This opening section establishes the framework:

The Three Categories: 1. **Common distinction** (thun mong gi dbye ba) 2. **Individual meaning explained** (so so'i don bshad pa) 3. **Supreme place definite** (bla na med pa'i gnas nges pa)

The Twelve Yogins from Rang-shar: - 1. Characteristic word yogin (mtshan ma tshig gi rnal 'byor) - 2. Sign-mere-holding yogin (rtags tsam 'dzin pa'i rnal 'byor) - 3. Following-enter yogin (rjes su 'jug pa'i rnal 'byor) - 4. Nature-definite yogin (ngang nges pa'i rnal 'byor) - 5. Appearance-mind yogin (snang ba sems kyi rnal 'byor) - 6. Enter-action yogin ('jug pa las kyi rnal 'byor) - 7. Action-cause yogin (byed pa rgyu yi rnal 'byor) - 8. Doer-condition yogin (byed pa rkyen gyi rnal 'byor) - 9. End-arrive-fruit yogin (mthar phyin 'bras bu'i rnal 'byor) - 10. Authentic meaning yogin (yang dag don gyi rnal 'byor) - 11. End-arrive liberation yogin (mthar phyin grol ba'i rnal 'byor) - 12. Done-complete yogin (byas pa rdzogs pa'i rnal 'byor)

Critical Distinction: - **First eight** (1-8): Do not liberate because they rely on externals, fixation, or gradual methods - **Last four** (9-12): Liberate because they recognize self-nature, authentic meaning, and primordial completion

Key Teaching:

"In the four great yogins, I do not speak ground-purify, I do not speak path-traverse."

This points to the Dzogchen view that **rigpa is spontaneously complete**—no transformation or purification is needed.

Scripture Citations: Rang-shar (Self-Arisen)

Section 2: 02-17-02-01.txt (206 lines)

Topic: The Four Liberating Yogins

This section details the final four yogins who **do achieve liberation**:

Nine: End-Arrive-Fruit Yogin (mthar phyin 'bras bu'i rnal 'byor): - Carries the path of realization - Does not dwell in ground-path duality - Sees self that-ness - Regarded as great authentic liberation

Ten: Authentic Meaning Yogin (yang dag don gyi rnal 'byor): - Obtains self-realization - In pure bardo-appearance - Sees authentic self - Regarded as end-arrive liberated

Eleven: End-Arrive Liberation Yogin (mthar phyin grol ba'i rnal 'byor): - The certainty-obtaining yogin - In ground itself of certainty-obtaining - Sees obtain self that-ness - Regarded as beyond authentic ground

Twelve: Done-Complete Yogin (byas pa rdzogs pa'i rnal 'byor): - The primordially-pure great buddha - From that gone, beyond speech - Ground-purify and path-traverse not needed - Rigpa spontaneously-accomplished, not-transform not-purify

The Key Distinction: The difference lies in **recognition** (ngo shes) versus **gradual attainment** (rim gyis): - Lower yogins rely on causes, conditions, effort, and gradual progress - Higher yogins recognize what is spontaneously present

Scripture Citations: Rang-shar, Self-Arisen

Sections 3-7: The Progressive Conducts

Section 3: 02-17-03-01.txt (13 lines)

Introduction to the three conducts.

Section 4: 02-17-04-01.txt (685 lines) - THE LARGEST SECTION

Topic: Twenty-One Conducts for Practice

This extensive section presents the **complete system of conduct** (spyod pa):

Three Types of Conduct: 1. **Characteristic vehicle conduct** (rgyu mtshan nyid kyi theg pa'i spyod pa): Sūtra approach—does not quickly liberate, enters common path only 2. **Mantra general conduct** (gsang sngas spyi'i spyod pa): Tantra approach—exists method but dwells in effort-accomplishment, does not quickly liberate 3. **Great Completion spontaneously-accomplish conduct** (rdzogs pa chen po lhun gyis grub pa'i spyod pa): Dzogchen approach—no acceptance-rejection holding effort, accord conduct, dwells great spontaneously-liberate spontaneously-conduct

Twenty-One Conducts with Animal Analogies: - 1. Bee-like conduct: Enjoy all dharmas' taste - 2. Deer-like conduct: Abandon delusion-become condition objects - 3. Mute-like conduct: Abandon various delusion speech - 4. Peacock-like conduct: Cut secret mantra doubt - 5. Madman-like conduct: Abandon one-dwelling objects - 6. Lion-like conduct: Go charnel-ground, abandon fear mind - 7. Dog/pig-like conduct: Abandon pure-impure thought - 8. Cloud-like conduct: Experience memory thought instant - 9. Child-like conduct: Abandon long delusion clinging - 10. Echo-like conduct: Guide world with accord words - 11. Elephant-like conduct: Turn depth samsara battles - 12. Deer-like conduct: Abandon son-enemy concept - 13. Tortoise-like conduct: Decide desire-content time - 14. Bear-like conduct: Not-do spread samsara seed - 15. Brahmin-like conduct: Abandon other enjoy food - 16. Heroine-like conduct: Divide samsara-nirvana boundary - 17. Water-letter-like conduct: Place memory support self-place - 18. Sky-dagger conduct: Use leftovers for entities - 19. Wind-in-space conduct: Abandon grasping and holding - 20. Garuda-like conduct: Cut precipices with wings - 21. Mountain-like conduct: Immovable self-pure above

Vajra Song and Dance (rdo rje'i glu gar): - Body: Costumes and dance mudras - Speech: Mantras and essence recitation - Mind: Deity visualization - Times: When dividing samsara-nirvana, during gatherings and empowerments, when enhancing samādhi - Benefits: Satisfies all buddhas' minds, companion of yogin's experience, captivates ḍākinīs' minds, turns back six realms' attachment

Scripture Citations: Sun-Moon Mouth-Join Tantra (Nyi zla kha sbyor), Self-Arisen, Thalgyur, Secret Conduct Seed Tantra, Four Vajra Seats

Sections 5-6: 02-17-05-01.txt (98 lines) & 02-17-06-01.txt (246 lines)

Topic: Definite Sequence Conduct and Progressive Practice

These sections explain: - **Beginner's conduct:** Ten dharma activities (writing, offering, giving, hearing, reading, holding, explaining, reciting, contemplating, meditating) - **Intermediate conduct:** Practicing profound instructions, three empowerments' preliminary, body-speech-mind conduct dividing samsara-nirvana, establishing rigpa - **Advanced conduct:** Seven of the twenty-one conducts as primary - **Progressive manner:** From hearing to contemplation to meditation

The Three Wisdoms: - Hearing wisdom: Cuts outer superimposition - Contemplation wisdom: Cuts inner superimposition - Meditation wisdom: Cuts secret superimposition

Section 7: 02-17-07-01.txt (60 lines)

Topic: Dream Yoga Practices

This section presents **actual dream yoga** (rmi lam):

Training Methods: 1. **Harsh-holding:** When fear arises from fierce conditions, think "I sit within a dream" 2. **Emanation:** One-to-many emanation of deity-forms, sentient beings 3. **Transformation:** Male-female, god-naga transformation 4. **Travel:** Go to not-reached places, realms, hear dharma

Stages of Dream Practice: - First: coarse dreams - Then: subtle dreams - Then: fade - Finally: anything not dream—day-night mixed self-clear rigpa concentration

The Definitive Point: Though preliminary dream practice is important, the actual meaning is **not free from intellect truth-grasping**. The definitive practice is recognizing **appearances' nature**—one-pointed meditation without losing effort-force.

Sections 8-9: 02-17-08-01.txt (75 lines) & 02-17-09-01.txt (78 lines)

Topic: Illusory Body and Clear Light

These sections cover: - **Illusory body** (sgyu lus): Like a dream, like an echo, like a magical illusion - **Clear light** ('od gsal): Day-night dharmatā-wheel, not beyond - **Eight examples of illusion:** Dream, echo, magical illusion, mirage, water-moon, water-bubble, optical illusion, echo

Section 10: 02-17-10-01.txt (51 lines)

Topic: Transference of Consciousness ('pho ba)

This section explains the **three types of transference:**

1. **Great:** Clear-light transference
2. For those who mastered clear-light
3. Death-time: extract awareness to Brahma-aperture, transference to dharmadhātu
4. **Medium:** Illusory-body transference

5. For those who mastered illusory-body
6. Death-time: project awareness to Brahma-aperture, transference to dharmatā meaning deity-form
7. Hold bardo illusory-body, become buddha
8. **Finally:** Body-speech transference
9. For those who didn't master the first two
10. Depend upon body-speech-mind three points channel-wind
11. Transference to Brahma-aperture

Brahma-Aperture: The crown aperture (tshangs bug) as the transference path

Warning: Forceful transference from upper nine apertures is like "killing a Brahmin"—a grave act with five borderless transgressions.

Scripture Citations: Thalgyur, Four Vajra Seats

Sections 11-13: 02-17-11-01.txt (266 lines) - 02-17-13-01.txt (155 lines)

Topic: Bardo Instructions and Union Realization

These sections cover: - **Four bardos:** Birth-death, dream, dharmatā, existence - **Union realization:** Practicing this life for bardo readiness - **Actual bardo instruction:** Recognition of dharmatā at death

Section 14: 02-17-14-01.txt (78 lines)

Topic: Concluding Instructions

This final section summarizes the **definitive meaning:**

Three Examples: 1. **Royal empowerment:** Like royal caste head empowerment, taking royal throne without change—rigpa taking its own place 2. **King's army:** Like when king sends army to frontier, king-subject circle changes place—five gates consciousness dawn, ground empty, saṃsāra name not 3. **Minister captured:** Like when excellent minister captured by another king—mind consciousness move continuum ceases, dawn-ground rigpa obtains self-power

Final Teaching:

"Effort do arisen like not—primordially thus dwell meaning top nature arrive fruit."

The nature arrives at fruit without effort, primordially dwelling thus.

From the Six Vastnesses: - Obtain existence in mind-itself - By self-pure hope-fear - Free from effort-accomplish - Body three self complete

KEY TECHNICAL TERMS

The Twelve Yogins (rnal 'byor pa bcu gnyis)

First eight (do not liberate): 1. Characteristic word—attached to words 2. Sign-mere-holding—relies on signs 3. Following-enter—follows faith 4. Nature-definite—meditates not-thinking 5. Appearance-mind—all is mind 6. Enter-action—engages in action 7. Action-cause—relies on tantra cause 8. Doer-condition—seeks meaning through conduct

Last four (do liberate): 9. End-arrive-fruit—carries realization path 10. Authentic meaning—obtains self-realization 11. End-arrive liberation—certainty-obtaining 12. Done-complete—primordially-pure great buddha

Conduct Types (spyod pa)

- **Sūtra conduct:** Effort, causes, conditions
- **Tantra conduct:** Method, transformation
- **Dzogchen conduct:** Spontaneously complete, no effort

The Twenty-One Animal Analogies

Bee, deer, mute, peacock, madman, lion, dog/pig, cloud, child, echo, elephant, deer (second), tortoise, bear, Brahmin, heroine, water-letter, sky-dagger, wind-in-space, garuda, mountain, thunder

Transference Types ('pho ba)

- **Clear-light transference** ('od gsal 'pho ba): Great
- **Illusory-body transference** (sgyu lus 'pho ba): Medium
- **Body-speech transference** (lus ngag 'pho ba): Final
- **Brahma-aperture** (tshangs bug): Crown aperture path

Bardos (bar do)

- **Birth-death** (skye 'chi): This life
- **Dream** (rmi lam): Sleeping state

- **Dharmatā** (chos nyid): Death moment
 - **Existence** (srid pa): Intermediate state
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THE CHAPTER'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Progressive Pedagogy

Chapter 17 exemplifies Longchenpa's sophisticated pedagogy:

1. **Diagnostic:** The twelve yogins help practitioners identify their current level
2. **Prognostic:** Shows which approaches lead to liberation and which don't
3. **Therapeutic:** Provides specific remedies for each type
4. **Graduated:** From beginner (ten dharma activities) to advanced (spontaneous conduct)

Critique of Gradualism

The chapter contains a **powerful critique** of gradual spiritual approaches:

- **Not rejection:** The first eight yogins aren't wrong—they're incomplete
- **Not acceptance:** They don't lead to the final goal
- **But recognition:** The last four yogins recognize what is spontaneously present

Integration of Methods

The chapter integrates: - **Sūtra:** Ethics, study, contemplation - **Tantra:** Deity yoga, mantras, conduct - **Dzogchen:** Spontaneous liberation, rigpa recognition

READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners

This chapter is **essential for self-assessment**:

Key Questions: 1. Which yogin am I? (Be honest!) 2. Am I relying on causes and conditions (first eight) or recognition (last four)? 3. Do my practices lead to liberation or just virtue?

Practice Applications: - **Dream yoga:** Start with harsh-holding, progress to emanation-transformation - **Conduct:** Adopt the twenty-one animal analogies gradually - **Transference:** Master clear-light or illusory-body first if possible - **Bardo:** Prepare now through day-night union practice

Warning Signs: - Attachment to words → become characteristic word yogin - Attachment to signs → become sign-mere-holding yogin
- Attachment to faith → become following-enter yogin - Attachment to meditation experiences → become nature-definite yogin - Attachment to "all is mind" view → become appearance-mind yogin - Attachment to action → become enter-action yogin - Attachment to tantra causes → become action-cause yogin - Attachment to caste/conduct → become doer-condition yogin

The Remedy: Each of the first eight has a corresponding liberation in the last four. The key is **recognition** (ngo shes) of what is spontaneously present.

For Scholars

Note the systematic structure: - **Taxonomy:** Twelve types with clear characteristics - **Evaluation:** Which liberate, which don't - **Progression:** From effortful to effortless - **Integration:** Sūtra, tantra, Dzogchen as progressive stages






Critical Points: 1. **Not elitism:** The first eight aren't rejected—they're steps toward the last four 2. **Not anti-intellectual:** Words, study, and practice are necessary foundations 3. **Not quietism:** Spontaneous completion doesn't mean inaction 4. **But directness:** The last four point directly to what is always already the case











SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

- **Rang-shar** (Self-Arisen): Primary source for twelve yogins
 - **Thalgyur** (Consequence): On transference and conduct
 - **Nyi zla kha sbyor** (Sun-Moon Mouth-Join): On twenty-one conducts
 - **Secret Conduct Seed Tantra**: On conduct benefits
 - **Four Vajra Seats**: On transference practices
 - **Six Vastnesses**: On final meaning
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QUALITY STATUS

Chapter 17 Status: A++ Upgrade In Progress

Completed Sections: -  02-17-01-01.txt (115 lines) - Twelve yogins overview - 
02-17-03-01.txt (13 lines) - Introduction to conducts -  02-17-07-01.txt (60 lines) - Dream
yoga practices -  02-17-10-01.txt (51 lines) - Transference practices -  02-17-14-01.txt (78
lines) - Concluding instructions

Remaining Sections to Upgrade: -  02-17-02-01.txt (206 lines) -  02-17-04-01.txt (685
lines) - Major section -  02-17-05-01.txt (98 lines) -  02-17-06-01.txt (246 lines) - 
02-17-08-01.txt (75 lines) -  02-17-09-01.txt (78 lines) -  02-17-09-02.txt (125 lines) - 
02-17-11-01.txt (266 lines) -  02-17-12-01.txt (117 lines) -  02-17-13-01.txt (155 lines)

Total: 2,368 lines across 14 sections

Completed: ~317 lines (13%)

Remaining: ~2,051 lines (87%)

CONNECTION TO CHAPTER 18

Chapter 17 established the **progressive path of practice**; Chapter 18 will present the **fruition** of these practices. The progression:

- **Chapter 17:** The path—twelve yogins, twenty-one conducts, dream yoga, transference
- **Chapter 18:** The fruition—recognition, liberation, completion

This mirrors the ground-path-fruition structure: 1. **Ground:** Primordial purity spontaneously present 2. **Path:** Progressive recognition through the twelve yogins 3. **Fruition:** Done-complete yogin, primordially-pure great buddha

Key Insight: The chapter shows that **all practices are complete in rigpa**—the progressive path is for those who don't yet recognize this. The last four yogins recognize what the first eight are striving toward.
