

CHAPTER 12: KEY POINTS OF CHANNELS, WINDS, AND BINDUS—THE FOUR LAMPS

Tibetan: རྒྱା-ନ୍ଦ୍ର-ସ୍ତୁ-ଶୈଖା-ଧୀ (Twelfth Lecture Hall) **Location:** Volume 1, Sections 01-12-01-01 through 01-12-07-01 **Tibetan Lines:** 13831-15778 **Pages:** 338-382

OVERVIEW

This chapter marks a pivotal transition in the Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle—from philosophical exposition and symbolic narrative into the direct yogic technology of the Great Perfection. Following the cosmological foundations (Chapters 1-3), the doxographical analysis (Chapter 4), and the allegorical transmissions of delusion and liberation (Chapters 5-11), Longchenpa now presents the **subtle body practices** that form the operational core of Dzogchen meditation.

The chapter's title references the **Four Lamps** (*sgron-ma bzhī*)—the fourfold system of channels (*rtsa*), winds (*rlung*), bindus (*thig-le*), and lamps (*sgron-ma*) that constitute the physical basis for realization in the Great Perfection. While Dzogchen is often characterized as a "mind-only" or "non-physical" tradition, this chapter demonstrates its sophisticated understanding of embodied consciousness and the precise psychophysical mechanisms through which recognition becomes stabilized as ongoing realization.

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 01-12-01-01.txt (765 lines)

Topic: General Presentation of Channel Nature

This foundational section establishes the complete anatomy of the subtle body as understood in the Great Perfection tradition.

The Three Principal Channels

1. **Roma** (Right Channel) - Associated with method, moon energy, and white bodhicitta
2. Originates at navel, curls to the right, terminates at right nostril
3. Called "roma" because it extracts the essence of all experiences
4. Related to conventional bindus and desire-attachment
5. **Rkyang-ma** (Central Channel) - Associated with wisdom, sun energy, and red bodhicitta
6. Runs straight like a stretched rope from heart to crown aperture
7. Called "rkyang" because it is straight without branches or leaves
8. Related to ultimate bindus and non-conceptual wisdom
9. The pathway for liberation without effort
10. **Kun-'dar-ma** (Left Channel) - The all-pervading channel
11. Gathers all channel-energies, bindu-bliss, and wind-bliss
12. Called "kun-'dar" because it pervades the entire body
13. Serves as the supporting structure for all subtle body practices

Scripture Citations: Pearl Garland Tantra, Thalgyur

Section 2: 01-12-02-01.txt (303 lines)

Topic: Detailed Enumeration of Channels

Building on Section 1's general presentation, this section provides systematic enumeration:

Fivefold Channel Classification

1. **Channels of Birth** - Those involved in incarnation
2. **Channels of Dwelling** - Those maintaining embodied life
3. **Channels of Experience** - Those conveying sensory information
4. **Channels of Liberation** - Those serving as pathways to freedom
5. **Channels of Activity** - Those involved in physical functions

Color and Shape Classifications

- White channels associated with phlegm and cold disorders
- Red channels associated with bile and hot disorders
- Blue-black channels associated with wind and neutral conditions
- Straight, curved, coiled, and branched channel morphologies

Scripture Citations: Various Great Perfection tantras

Section 3: 01-12-03-01.txt (237 lines)

Topic: General Enumeration of Channels

This section presents alternative enumeration systems:

The Twenty-Five Principal Channels

Detailed presentation of the five sets of five channels associated with: - The five elements - The five aggregates - The five poisons - The five wisdoms - The five Buddha families

Channel-Wind-Bindu Interdependence

- Channels as the mansion
- Winds as the horse
- Bindus as the rider
- How these three must be harmonized for practice

Scripture Citations: Secret Essence Tantra

Section 4: 01-12-04-01.txt (399 lines)

Topic: Detailed Presentation of the Four Lamps

This is the **heart of the chapter**—the complete presentation of the Four Lamps:

1. Far-Reaching Water Lamp

Located at the heart, this lamp projects rays that can perceive distant objects. Associated with the water element, dharmakaya, and primordial purity. The basis for clairvoyance and clear appearance.

2. Lamp of Abiding Butter Lamps

Located at the throat, this lamp maintains continuous light. Associated with the fire element, sambhogakaya, and spontaneous presence. The basis for continuous luminosity in meditation.

3. Lamp of the White Smooth Surface

Located between the eyebrows, this lamp reflects all appearances like a mirror. Associated with the earth element, nirmanakaya, and clarity. The basis for the arising of thogal visions.

4. Lamp of Increasing Wisdom Appearances

Located throughout the body but concentrated at the crown. Associated with the wind element and svabhavikakaya. The basis for the progression through the four visions.

Scripture Citations: Four Lamps Tantra, various Self-Arisen tantras

Section 5: 01-12-05-01.txt (234 lines) and 01-12-05-02.txt (156 lines)

Topic: Vital Points of Practice—Posture and Key Points

These sections present the practical application:

The Seven Postures

1. Body straight - Aligning the central channel
2. Legs crossed - Stabilizing the lower energy centers
3. Hands in equipoise - Balancing solar and lunar energies

4. Neck slightly bent - Facilitating the ascent of kundalini
5. Tongue touching palate - Completing the central channel circuit
6. Eyes gazing at nose-tip - Concentrating the water lamp
7. Mind without wandering - The innermost key point

The Four Key Points

1. Body vital point - Posture that opens channels
 2. Door vital point - How to direct the senses
 3. Object vital point - How appearances arise
 4. Mind vital point - How to rest in recognition
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Section 6: 01-12-06-01.txt (9 lines)

Topic: Brief Summary Section

A transitional passage summarizing the previous material.

Section 7: 01-12-07-01.txt (271 lines)

Topic: Detailed Explanation of Vital Points

The chapter's final section provides the **most advanced instructions**:

Channel-Wind-Bindu Synchronization

- How to bring winds into the central channel
- How to cause bindus to melt and flow
- How to recognize the "four emptinesses" that arise
- How to stabilize the "clear light of the path"

The Four Visions Progression

1. Direct perception of dharmata
2. Increase of experience
3. Perfection of awareness

4. Exhaustion of phenomena

KEY TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY

Channels (rtsa)

- **Principal channels:** Roma, rkyang-ma, kun-'dar-ma
- **Channel wheels:** Navel, heart, throat, crown
- **Channel knots:** Blockages to be opened
- **Channel vitality:** The living channel-wind system

Winds (rlung)

- Life-sustaining wind
- Upward-moving wind
- Fire-dwelling wind
- Pervasive wind
- Downward-clearing wind

Bindus (thig-le)

- **White bodhicitta:** Male essence, method
- **Red bodhicitta:** Female essence, wisdom
- **Essence bindu:** The core energy
- **Mind bindu:** Awareness as bindu

Lamps (sgron-ma)

- Far-reaching water lamp
 - Abiding butter lamp
 - White smooth surface lamp
 - Increasing wisdom appearances lamp
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READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners

This chapter is **essential reading** for anyone practicing Dzogchen:

- 1. Do not skip the theory:** The detailed channel descriptions encode precise practice instructions
- 2. The Four Lamps are not metaphors:** They refer to actual psychophysical experiences
- 3. Posture matters:** The seven postures align the subtle body for optimal practice
- 4. Signs indicate progress:** Learn to recognize the signs of accomplishment
- 5. Obstacles are normal:** Channel blockages and wind disorders are part of the process

For Scholars

Note the sophisticated integration: - Indic medical traditions meet Buddhist tantra - Chinese medicine influences are synthesized - Bön traditions contribute unique terminology - Dzogchen transcends all while including all

Critical Points

- 1. Channels are not physical nerves:** They exist at a subtler level than gross anatomy
 - 2. Not all practitioners need detailed practice:** Some realize through mind-only approaches
 - 3. Danger of fixation:** The chapter warns against becoming attached to blissful experiences
 - 4. Ultimate nature is beyond channels:** All this anatomy serves to reveal what was never confined by it
 - 5. Integration with view:** Channel practice without the view of primordial purity becomes mere energy manipulation
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CONNECTION TO OTHER CHAPTERS

- **Chapter 11:** Channels, winds, and bindus are the basis for the bardo experiences
 - **Chapter 13:** The Four Lamps support the Four Visions
 - **Chapter 18:** The complete stage practices rely on the channel system
 - **Chapter 23:** The bardo body operates through these same channels
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PRACTICAL NOTE

This chapter should be studied under the guidance of a qualified teacher. The practices described, while profound, can cause physical and psychological disturbances if attempted without proper preparation and supervision.
