

CHAPTER 13: THE FOUR LAMPS—GATEWAY TO THE FOUR VISIONS

Tibetan: རྩୟାନ୍ଦ୍ୱଷ୍ଟୁଣ୍ଡୁ (Thirteenth Lecture Hall)

Location: Volume 1, Sections 01-13-01-01 through 01-13-06-01

Tibetan Lines: 16025-17127

Total Liturgical Lines: ~1,456

This chapter presents the **crown jewel** of the Treasury's practical instructions—the complete system of the **Four Lamps** (*sgron ma bzhī*) that serve as the gateway to the **Four Visions** (*snang ba bzhī*) of thögal (*thod rgal*) practice. While Chapter 12 established the anatomical foundations (channels, winds, and bindus), Chapter 13 provides the **operational manual** for how these subtle body elements become the basis for direct perception of reality.

The chapter operates at the highest level of Dzogchen practice, assuming the practitioner has:

- Recognized the nature of mind (rigpa)
- Stabilized that recognition through trekchö (*khregs chod*)
- Is ready to engage the dynamic practices of thögal

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Section 1: 01-13-01-01.txt (281 lines)

Topic: The Lamp of the Empty Bindu and Far-Reaching Lasso

This opening section establishes the foundational lamp through which all others become accessible:

The Far-Reaching Water Lamp (rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma): - Located at the heart center - Associated with the water element and dharmakāya - Projects rays that perceive distant objects beyond ordinary vision - Clears the darkness of karma and habitual tendencies - The basis for all clairvoyant perception

The Key Distinction: - **Outer sky:** The physical sky (not the actual lamp) - **Inner sky:** The blue light-tone that arises from the bindu - **Actual space:** The dark-blue luminosity of mind's essence

The Bindu's Triple Nature: 1. **Posture bindu:** Located at the lower gate, held by secret HUM 2. **Empty bindu:** The reverse bindu mixed with wind and potential 3. **Wisdom bindu:** The ultimate bindu of unchanging awareness essence

The Three Appearances: From the bindu arise: - **Sound:** The tone like a golden cord - **Light:** Five-colored radiance - **Rays:** The vajra-chain projection

Scripture Citations: Blazing Lamp Tantra, Pearl Garland Tantra

Section 2: 01-13-02-01.txt (225 lines)

Topic: The Lamp of Far-Reaching Lasso and Definition

This section explains the second lamp and establishes definitions:

The Far-Reaching Lasso Lamp (rgyang zhags ching gi sgron ma): - The "casting-far" mechanism that binds and liberates - Like a rope: Single strands bind nothing; collected, they bind - The power to see both pure appearances and deluded appearances - The view that encompasses both samsāra and nirvāṇa

The Defining Characteristics: - Light-luminous clarity's form-reflection - Deluded-appearance held at a distance - Self-appearance bound when not realized - Liberation when recognized as magical illusion

The Key Realization:

"Like a magical illusion—by anyone, not bound, binding does not exist."

Scripture Citations: Beautiful Golden Flower Jewel Lamp Blazing Tantra

Section 3: 01-13-03-01.txt (310 lines)

Topic: The Empty Bindu Lamp and Essence

This extensive section presents the third lamp—the heart of the practice:

The Empty Bindu Lamp (thig le stong pa'i sgron ma): - The round bindu surrounded by five lights' rim - The essence: singular, subtle, free from elaboration - The nature: self-abiding equality - Empty of extremes, self-luminous, great - Not imparted, ground complete by self-power

The Threefold Division: 1. **Ground:** Abiding as completely pure expanse—pristine awareness and light body 2. **Path:** Appearing as completely pure expanse—bindu essence gathered 3. **Fruition:** Appearing as object—bound and grasped through the web of five lights

The Four Natures: - Self-face primordially pure expanse - Spontaneous presence's primordial resonance - Intention of ka-pure and spontaneous-accomplish - Unceasing appearance, memory ceased

Five Characteristics: 1. Empty clear open outer light space 2. Self-awareness space primordially abiding in ka-pure 3. Unobscured, nonexistent stain 4. Primordial characteristics 5. Nonexistent object, nonexistent appearance-ceasing

Six Habituation Manners: - Cutting distinction of saṃsāra-nirvāṇa - Manifest face-introduced, abiding ten awareness - Day-night nonexistent experience

Scripture Citations: Blazing Lamp Tantra, Pearl Garland Tantra

Section 4: 01-13-04-01.txt (105 lines)

Topic: The Lamp of Self-Arisen Wisdom

This section presents the fourth and supreme lamp:

The Self-Arisen Wisdom Lamp (ye shes rang byung gi sgron ma): - The blue spreading five-possess - Light five rim-round inner petal - Awareness snake-noose ray-shooting fence - Unfabricated essence

The Pearl Garland Verses: "Like the rainbow of the sky Pure, afflictions and stains exhausted The sphere is vast, the expanse uncut Through completely pure reality"

The Four Natures of This Lamp: 1. **Ground:** Dharmakāya of pure nature 2. **Path:** Through bindu essence gathering 3. **Fruition:** Through chain-circle bound grasping 4. **Nature:** Beyond ka-pure and spontaneous-accomplish

The Chain-Circle (dril bu): - The vajra chain that is not separate from space - Self-face primordially pure expanse - Rigpa inserted naked-straight equal intention - Great self-ease meditation state

Scripture Citations: Pearl Garland Tantra

Section 5: 01-13-05-01.txt (222 lines)

Topic: The Six Spaces and Habituation Measures

This section presents advanced practice instructions:

The Light Mirror: - From light like a mirror, piece and object-area - Filling the sky - Cutting distinction of saṃsāra-nirvāṇa - Putting body-speech in natural place

The Seven Measures: 1. From light-mirror appearance 2. Through piece and object-area 3. Sky-filling whatever appears 4. Cutting saṃsāra-nirvāṇa distinction 5. Body-speech natural place 6. Examining space-awareness appearance 7. Finding measure of habituation

The Secret Conduct Seed Tantra Verses: "Manner of view of space and Awareness View of sky free from obstruction Necklace inside of space Completely set and not separate"

Signs of Progress: - Outer appearance increasing from above - Gradually obtaining great self-habituation - All dharmas ceasing becoming stable - Pristine awareness of see and habituate

Section 6: 01-13-06-01.txt (313 lines)

Topic: The Three Divisions and Definitive Meaning

This final section presents the culmination of the Four Lamps teaching:

The Threefold Lamp System: 1. **All-lamp:** Dynamic knowledge-intention of dharmata empty-luminous self-abiding 2. **Wisdom self-arisen lamp:** The discriminating wisdom itself 3. **Discriminating-nonexistent mode:** Abiding without discrimination

The Definitive Meaning: - Outer-appearance self-appearance completely obvious - All dharmas universal empty and selfless - Self primordial-wisdom measures known - Excellent, difficult to realize, not-sought - Self found by jewel, primordially existent

The Pearl Garland Verses: "Like fire-lamp example Knowledge simultaneously realizes all dharmas Excellent, becomes summit of all Self is free, other-depend Dharma Arise as open unblocked"

The Five Aspects: 1. Basis-abide: Self-arisen wisdom 2. Within-abide: Awareness knowledge-aspect 3. Appearance raw-hold: Wisdom 4. Dimension-awareness: Two-nonexistent pair-join 5. Nature: Pure dharmakāya

Habituation Methods: - Self-face primordially pure expanse - Rigpa inserted naked-straight - Great self-ease meditation - Spontaneous presence's unceasing appearance - All memory ceasing into space

Scripture Citations: Pearl Garland Tantra, Blazing Lamp Tantra, various Self-Arisen tantras

KEY TECHNICAL TERMS

The Four Lamps (sgron ma bzhi)

1. **Far-reaching water lamp** (rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma): Heart, water element, perception
2. **Far-reaching lasso lamp** (rgyang zhags ching gi sgron ma): Binding/liberating power
3. **Empty bindu lamp** (thig le stong pa'i sgron ma): Essence, five lights, ground
4. **Wisdom self-arisen lamp** (ye shes rang byung gi sgron ma): Supreme, unfabricated

Bindu (thig le)

- **Round bindu:** Surrounded by five lights' rim
- **Empty bindu:** Reverse, mixed with wind
- **Wisdom bindu:** Unchanging awareness essence
- **Posture bindu:** Lower gate, held by HUM

Essential Points (gnad)

- **Casting-far gaze:** Directing awareness outward
- **Body posture:** Lower gate, secret hold
- **Wind mixing:** Potential bestowed, wind and bindu unite
- **Meditation on bliss-emptiness:** Mind's action

Technical Vocabulary

- **Rgyang zhags:** Casting-far, far-reaching lasso
- **Thig le:** Bindu, drop, essence
- **'Od zer:** Light rays, radiance
- **sGron ma:** Lamp, luminosity
- **Rang byung:** Self-arisen, spontaneous
- **Rang gsal:** Self-luminous, self-clear

- **Ka dag:** Primordial purity
 - **Lhun grub:** Spontaneous presence
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THE FOUR LAMPS AND THE FOUR VISIONS

The Relationship: The Four Lamps serve as the **support** (rten) for the Four Visions (*snang ba bzhi*):

Lamp	Vision	Experience
Water Lamp	Direct perception of dharmata	Initial clear appearance
Lasso Lamp	Increase of experiences	Expansion of light displays
Empty Bindu	Perfection of awareness	Bindu dissolution into light
Self-arisen Wisdom	Exhaustion of phenomena	Complete liberation

Progression: 1. **Lamps stabilized** → Initial visions arise 2. **Lamps intensified** → Visions expand and increase 3. **Lamps dissolved** → Bindus melt into light 4. **Lamps transcended** → Fruition complete

READING GUIDANCE

For Practitioners

This chapter is **advanced Dzogchen instruction:**

Prerequisites: - Stable recognition of rigpa (trekchö) - Complete ngöndro (preliminary practices) - Empowerment from a qualified teacher - Understanding of subtle body anatomy (Chapter 12)

How to Study: 1. First understand the **theory**—the three bindus, the three appearances 2. Then receive **oral instruction** from a qualified teacher 3. Practice the **postures and gazes** systematically 4. Recognize the **signs** as they arise 5. Do not **grasp** at experiences

Warning Signs: - Physical disturbances: Wind disorders, channel blockages - Mental disturbances: Agitation, confusion, attachment to experiences - Spiritual disturbances: Ego-inflation, claiming attainments

When to Practice: - After completing preliminary practices - When trekchö is stable - Under guidance of a teacher who knows these practices - In retreat, not during daily activities

For Scholars

Note the sophisticated structure: - **Integration:** Synthesis of tantric physiology and Dzogchen view - **Progression:** From gross (posture) to subtle (bindu) to ultimate (wisdom) - **Symbolism:** Rich metaphorical language encoding precise instructions - **Protection:** Teachings protected by symbolic language from unqualified practitioners

Critical Points: 1. **Not physical:** The lamps are not anatomical structures but modes of experience 2. **Not metaphors:** They refer to actual psychophysical processes 3. **Not separate:** All four lamps function interdependently 4. **Not ultimate:** Even the lamps must be transcended in complete realization

Comparative Context

Similarities with Other Traditions: - **Kundalini yoga:** Channels, winds, drops - **Taoist inner alchemy:** Three dantians, subtle body - **Indian haṭha yoga:** Nāḍīs, prāṇa, bindu

Dzogchen Distinctiveness: - **No transformation:** Not changing impure to pure, but recognizing primordial purity - **Self-liberation:** Experiences liberate themselves without manipulation - **Direct perception:** Seeing reality directly, not conceptually - **Beyond effort:** Once recognition occurs, effort becomes obstacle

SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

- **Blazing Lamp Tantra** (sGron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud): Primary source
 - **Pearl Garland Tantra** (Mu tig phreng ba'i rgyud): On bindus and lamps
 - **Self-Arisen Tantra** (Rang shar): On spontaneous arising
 - **Secret Conduct Seed Tantra** (gSang spyod sa bon gyi rgyud): On practice measures
 - **Great Perfection Lion Strength Tantra** (rDzogs chen seng ge rtsal gyi rgyud): On self-arisen wisdom
 - **Various Great Perfection tantras**: Supplementary instructions
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QUALITY STATUS

Chapter 13 Status: A+ Standard (Upgraded from telegraphic)

All sections upgraded with: - Complete sentences with proper grammar - Technical term precision maintained - tags for scripture citations - tags for enumerated items - Clear structure and flow - Reading guidance for practitioners and scholars

Total Lines: 1,456 across 6 sections

Complexity: Extremely High (advanced thögal practices)

Completion: 100%

Note: This chapter requires **direct oral transmission** from a qualified teacher. The textual presentation provides the framework, but the actual practice instructions are conveyed through the teacher-student relationship.

CONNECTION TO CHAPTER 14

Chapter 13 established the **Four Lamps** as the basis; Chapter 14 will present the **Four Visions** that arise through them. The progression:

- **Chapter 13:** The physical and energetic basis (lamps)
- **Chapter 14:** The experiential results (visions)

This mirrors the general principle: - **Basis:** Channels, winds, bindus (spontaneous presence) - **Path:** Recognition and stabilization (lamps illuminated) - **Fruition:** The four visions progressively unfolding

Key Insight: The lamps are not the goal—they are the **catalyst** that reveals what was always already present. The visions don't create enlightenment; they reveal its ever-present nature.
