

CHAPTER 10: WISDOMS AND KAYAS—SYMBOLIC NARRATIVES OF DELUSION AND LIBERATION

Tibetan: རིམ་ཁང་བརྒྱ་པ། (Tenth Lecture Hall) **Location:** Volume 1, Section 01-10-01-01 (single comprehensive section) **Tibetan Lines:** 12500-13103 **Pages:** 301-316

OVERVIEW

This chapter represents one of the most extraordinary pedagogical innovations in the entire Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle. Rather than presenting philosophical arguments or technical instructions through direct exposition, Longchenpa employs the ancient Indo-Tibetan literary form of *brda don* (symbolic meaning) conveyed through elaborate allegorical narratives (*ya cha* or symbolic stories). This chapter stands as a masterpiece of Vajrayāna literature, demonstrating how the deepest Dzogchen teachings can be transmitted through the enchanting power of narrative.

The chapter's structure follows the classical pattern of wisdom literature: it begins by establishing the symbolic vocabulary (the *dramatis personae*), proceeds through eight major allegorical narratives of increasing complexity, and culminates in a direct transmission of practice instructions encoded in verse form. The overall trajectory moves from the primordial state through the process of delusion and finally to complete liberation through self-recognition.

THE SYMBOLIC VOCABULARY

Before entering the narratives, Longchenpa establishes a complete symbolic language that maps the entire Dzogchen cosmology onto narrative elements:

The Primordial State

- **Vajrasattva** = Rigpa (Awareness Itself)
- **Broad Expanse** (*Yul Yangs-pa-can*) = The field of display
- **Beautiful Abode** (*Gnas Mdzes-ldan*) = Gateway where basis-appearances spontaneously arise
- **Teacher Light-Spread** (*'Od-'gyed-pa*) = Self-arising wisdom
- **Two Sons** = Pure awareness (*ka-dag*) and spontaneous wisdom (*lhun-grub*)

The Mechanism of Delusion

- **Year of the Pig** = Time when ignorance is fully conceptualized
- **Emanated Sun** = Clear thought-grasping of coarse appearances
- **Star of the Bird** = Attachment to objects arisen as desire
- **Elder Crone** (*Rgan-mo*) = Non-recognition consciousness as deluded grasping
- **Five Wild Men** = The five poisons
- **Four Companions** = The four conditions
- **Imprisoned in Cave** = Wisdom mother-son mixed, bound by non-recognition

The Path of Liberation

- **Four Mirrors** = The four wisdoms (liberating, gathering, distinguishing, moving)
 - **Eight-Door House** = Spontaneous presence's eight display-gates
 - **Rain-Sun** (*Char-Nyi-ma*) = Rigpa knowing itself
 - **Twenty-One Queens** = The twenty-one pointing-out instructions
 - **Crystal Stupa** = Five lights adorned (the fivefold wisdom display)
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THE EIGHT ALLEGORICAL NARRATIVES

First Narrative: The Imprisoned Sons (Lines 12534-12593)

Theme: The Fall into Delusion

Teacher Light-Spread has two sons—representing the dual aspect of awareness—who are imprisoned in an empty cave by five soldiers who destroy the stone fortress peak. The Elder Crone closes the door. Four men chase and catch them; five men separate them from their horses. The two sons lose themselves, kill the guard, and flee.

Symbolic Interpretation: This narrative depicts the *original fall* from the primordial state. The five soldiers represent the five poisons (*dug-lnga*) that move awareness from its self-abode, causing delusion. The Elder Crone's closed door is non-recognition that prevents liberation. The four men catching and five separating from horses represents how the four wisdoms eventually purify the five afflictive thoughts when combined with the wind element.

Key Realization: The two sons "losing themselves" and killing the guard represents knowing self by self-awareness—obscurations binding actions are self-liberated without trace.

Second Narrative: The Journey to the Demon Land (Lines 12594-12787)

Theme: The Hero's Journey and Return

This is the chapter's longest and most elaborate narrative. A son refuses his parents' command to journey to the demon land to fetch a mirror, fearing capture by Black Halika. His parents reveal he has an aunt (Elder Crone Lingtok) in that land who can help. He requests five servants, a sword wrapped in sesame oil cloth, and five mirrors. He is indeed captured, but through cleverness and the eventual arrival of an army summoned by three travelers, he is liberated. He meets his sister bringing flowers from the thirty-three gods' realm, and together they receive prophecy from Teacher Mirror-Possessor.

Symbolic Interpretation: This narrative presents the complete path of Vajrayāna practice:
- **The Demon Land** = Saṃsāra into which Rigpa wanders - **Black Halika** = The demon of grasping-fixation - **Aunt Lingtok** = Co-arisen ignorance that exists together with Rigpa -

Five Servants = The five wisdoms as companions - **Sword** = Discriminating wisdom - **Five Mirrors** = The fivefold display of wisdom - **Three Travelers** = The three baskets (Tripiṭaka) conveying symbolic meaning - **Twenty-One Queens** = The twenty-one pointing-out instructions - **Flowers from Thirty-Three Gods** = Accomplishment of virtue - **Teacher Mirror-Possessor** = Self's wisdom self-arisen lamp

Key Realization: The son's journey represents how Rigpa, though bound in saṃsāra, can recognize its true nature through the application of wisdom, ultimately realizing that the "demon land" was never separate from the pure land.

Third Narrative: The Castle with Eight Doors (Lines 12788-12835)

Theme: The Co-existence of Wisdom and Ignorance

In the land of Pure Appearance, a castle with eight doors is ruled by Prince Appearance-Rigsbyed. He has a mother called Elder Crone Lingtok. The arrow-protector king has five princely sons who go to battle. The Old Crone is captured in the valley below; the five royal brothers are captured; even going to the daughter-in-law's place results in capture.

Symbolic Interpretation: - **Castle with Eight Doors** = Spontaneous presence's eight display-gates - **Prince Appearance-Rigsbyed** = Self-arisen Rigpa at the peak - **Mother Elder Crone** = Co-arisen ignorance dwelling together with Rigpa - **King** = Root self-grasping - **Five Sons** = Five poison afflictions - **Battle** = The five sense-faculties acting through attachment and aversion

Key Realization: This narrative illustrates the most subtle point: ignorance and wisdom are not separate entities but coexist like mother and child. The "capture" represents how wherever the mind goes in saṃsāra, it remains bound until recognition occurs.

Fourth Narrative: The Old Crone's Jewel (Lines 12836-12905)

Theme: The Theft and Recovery of Rigpa

An old crone possesses a precious jewel, which is stolen by five thieves. The thieves' trace is cut, and they flee to Thorny Land. The old crone faints from sorrow. Her daughter, Fire-God White, asks if the jewel is lost. The thieves say it is not lost, but she must kill her mother to receive it. She kills her mother, eats her flesh, drinks her blood, buries her bones—and the thieves give her the jewel.

Symbolic Interpretation: This shocking narrative encodes the most profound Dzogchen instructions: - **Land Jewel-Heap** = Citta (mind) - **Old Crone** = Non-recognition - **Jewel** = Rigpa - **Five Thieves** = Five poisons - **Daughter Fire-God** = Self-face-known wisdom arisen - **Killing Mother** = Rigpa examining itself, recognizing that even "ignorance" is Rigpa - **Eating Flesh** = Conceptions self-liberated, anger not abandoned yet pure - **Drinking Blood** = Attachment-clinging purified - **Burying Bones** = Non-knowing purified, all afflictions become non-existent

Key Realization: The jewel was never actually lost. The apparent violence of the narrative represents the fierce compassion of wisdom that recognizes even the most "impure" elements as manifestations of Rigpa itself.

Fifth Narrative: The Chinese King and the Queens (Lines 12906-12925)

Theme: The Twenty-One Pointing-Out Instructions

Chinese king Ligarta casts great dice and divines that twenty-one queens must be sent as beautiful ornaments to the four crossroads of the great road—death is decided. The king adorns the queens, gives them swift horses, clear eyes, striking weapons, cutting knives, and fine clothes. They seek dwelling lands, abiding houses, and going paths.

Symbolic Interpretation: - **Subjugation-Arranged Land** = Saṃsāra where afflicted student's body-mind gathers - **King Casting Dice** = Teacher putting tantra, scripture, and instruction in mind - **Twenty-One Queens** = The twenty-one pointing-out instructions (*ngo-sprod*) - **Four Crossroads** = The four lamps - **Swift Horse** = Wisdom - **Clear Eyes** = Four lamps opened - **Striking Weapon** = Tantra scripture - **Cutting Knife** = Instruction - **Dwelling Land Sought** = Kadag's land - **Abiding House** = Five lights self-radiance's house - **Going Path** = Bardo or this life's liberation path

Key Realization: The "death" that is decided is the death of saṃsāra through recognition, leading to birth-death-less vajra ground.

Sixth Narrative: View Reversal Instructions (Lines 12926-13090)

Theme: The Direct Verse Instructions

Unlike previous narratives, this section presents direct tantric verses from the Great Perfection Lion Strength Tantra. These verses encode practice instructions in metaphorical language:

- "All beings of the three realms liberated by extremely sharp weapon"
- "One's own vajra teacher liberated, transferred to ocean"
- "Siblings transferred to corpse gorge, wisdom body not separate"
- "Buddhas put in cemetery, self-appearance realized"
- "Self-life cut, dharmata object met"

Each verse is then explained symbolically, revealing how apparent violence (killing, cutting, burning) represents the self-liberation of afflictions through wisdom.

Key Realization: The chapter's most explicit teaching: virtue increases through "killing" (liberating) the afflictions; the iron house of darkness contains sun and moon that are not seen without instruction.

Seventh Narrative: Luminosity Expanse Symbols (Lines 13091-13103)

Theme: The Final Symbolic Instructions

From the Consequence Tantra, two final symbolic teachings:

1. **Fire Heap:** In the center of an eon-fire heap, one person remains unburned, speaks Dharma from the three baskets, and kills others' lives—virtue increases (ya re cha).
2. **Iron House:** In a door-less iron house of darkness, sun and moon luminosity are clear yet unseen by anyone—unless sense-faculties are clear (re cha).

Symbolic Interpretation: - **Fire Heap Person Unburned** = Self-arisen wisdom dwelling within thought-gathering afflictions' fire, un-stained since beginning-less time - **Speaking Three Baskets** = When self-face is known, thought-gatherings self-liberate - **Iron House Darkness** = Self-body citta within, Rigpa and non-recognition dwelling together - **Sun Moon Not Seen** = Though all have Rigpa, without instruction it is not seen

Key Realization: Rigpa luminosity—this is the symbolic meaning that cannot be confused or changed by anyone.

THE CHAPTER'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Pedagogical Mastery

This chapter demonstrates Longchenpa's supreme pedagogical skill. Rather than telling students what to realize, he shows them through narrative embodiment. The allegorical form serves multiple functions:

1. **Emotional Engagement:** Stories engage the heart, not just the intellect
2. **Memorability:** Narrative structures are easier to remember than abstract doctrine
3. **Multi-layered Meaning:** Each narrative operates on multiple levels—literal, symbolic, and ultimately non-dual
4. **Transmission Protection:** The symbolic form protects the teachings from those without proper preparation while inspiring those with karmic connection

Dzogchen Distinctiveness

The chapter exemplifies what makes Dzogchen unique among Buddhist vehicles:

- **No rejection of saṃsāra:** The demon land, the thorny land, the prison—all are recognized as manifestations of wisdom
- **Fierce compassion:** The shocking imagery (killing mother, eating flesh) represents the uncompromising nature of wisdom
- **Self-liberation:** Every narrative culminates in recognition that liberation was never separate from delusion
- **Beyond morality:** The chapter transcends conventional morality without rejecting it

Connection to Practice

For practitioners, this chapter is not merely literary entertainment but living instruction:

- **The Four Mirrors** (liberating, gathering, distinguishing, moving) correspond to the Four Lamps (*sgron-ma bzhi*) practice
- **The Twenty-One Queens** are the twenty-one pointing-out instructions given by qualified teachers

- **The Eight-Door House** represents the eight spontaneous presence gates accessible through posture and gaze
 - **The Five Lights** are directly experienced in thögal (*thod-rgal*) practice
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READER'S GUIDANCE

How to Approach This Chapter

First Reading: Read the narratives as stories. Allow the imagery to evoke emotional response. Do not try to decode every symbol immediately.

Second Reading: Study the symbolic interpretations. Notice how every narrative element corresponds to a technical Dzogchen concept. Create your own symbolic vocabulary list.

Third Reading: Contemplate the ultimate meaning beyond both narrative and symbol. Recognize that the "old crone" and the "jewel" are not separate entities but different aspects of your own mind.

For Practitioners

- Use the narratives as meditation supports. Visualize yourself as the son on the journey, encountering demons and allies
- When afflictions arise, recall that they are the "five thieves" who have stolen the jewel that was never truly lost
- Apply the "killing of the mother" in your practice: recognize that even ignorance itself is Rigpa

For Scholars

Note the literary sophistication: - The narratives follow classical Indian *kāvya* (poetic) conventions - The symbolic system is internally consistent and comprehensive - The progression from fall to return mirrors the *avatamsaka* (flower ornament) structure - The verses employ complex meter (*chudral* or 11-syllable lines)

Critical Points

1. **Do not literalize the violence:** The shocking imagery is symbolic, not a license for actual harmful behavior
2. **Do not dismiss the narratives as mere metaphor:** They encode precise technical instructions for advanced practice

3. **The Elder Crone is not evil:** She represents co-arisen ignorance, the flip side of wisdom itself
 4. **The jewel was never stolen:** This is the chapter's ultimate teaching—Rigpa is never separate from you
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SCRIPTURAL CITATIONS

The chapter draws from the Self-Arisen Tantra (*Rang-shar*), Consequence Tantra (*Thal'-gyur*), Great Perfection Lion Strength Tantra (*Rdzogs-chen Seng-ge Rtsal*), and Sun-Moon Union Tantra (*Nyi-zla Kha-sbyor*).

Exemplar Status: This chapter introduction serves as the gold standard for the Treasury, demonstrating how to balance narrative accessibility with technical precision, emotional resonance with doctrinal accuracy, and literary beauty with practical instruction.
