

ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་

འཕྲིན་ལྷན་ཁང་།

TRANSLATION & TRANSMISSION

ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་

OCTOBER 2-5, 2014

KEYSTONE, COLORADO, USA

Workshop 3 | Room: CASTLE PEAK | 4:30-6:30pm, October 3, 2014

Translating Spiritual Instructions (zhal gdams & man ngag)

with Sarah Harding, Peter Roberts, Sangye Khandro



Sarah Harding

(Tsadra Foundation Fellow; Naropa University)

Sarah Harding has been a Buddhist practitioner since 1974 and has been teaching and translating since completing a three-year retreat in 1980 under the guidance of Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche. Her publications include *Creation and Completion*, *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*, *Treasury of Knowledge: Esoteric Instructions*, *Machig's Complete Explanation* and *Niguma, Lady of Illusion*. She is an associate professor at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where she has been teaching since 1992, and has been a fellow of the Tsadra Foundation since 2000. Currently she is working on translating the *zhi byed* and *gcod* sections of the *gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod*.

Sarah Harding's Presentation

༡༡། ཀ་མོ་གུ་བ། ཅ་ཁ་འབྱེད་པའི་མན་ངག་ནི། རྩིལ་གྲངས།^①
གས་སྤང་བྱས་ལ། གཡོན་པའི་ཁུ་རྩྱུར་བྱང་ཁར་བཞག གཡས་པ་
དྲག་པོར་བརྒྱང་། གཡོན་པ་ཡང་ནི་དེ་བཞིན་ནོ། རེ་ཡི་འོག་ཏུ་སྤྱག་
། རྩིར་ལ་དྲག་པོ་བརྒྱང་བྱ་ཞིང་། ཁ་གདངས་མིག་གྲང་སྤྱང་པར་བྱ།
སྤྱག་བཞི་དྲག་ཏུ་སྤྱག རེ་འོག་སྤྱ་མའི་གཏུམ་མོ་སྒྲིམ། རང་ལུས་
ང་ཚོས་བརྟུན་ལ། དབུ་མ་དྲང་པོར་གནས་བསམས།^② རྩི་པོར་ཅ་
མ་བསམས། ^{not in st.} རེ་འོག་ཡི་ཤེས་མེ་དེ་ནི། ཡང་སྤྱང་དབུ་མའི་ནང་
ཏེ། སྤྱ་མའི་ཞབས་ལ་རེག་གུར་པས། བདུད་ཅི་དབབ་ཅིང་བདེ་བ་
སྤྱ་མ་མི་དམིགས་མེ་སོར་གནས། བདུད་ཅི་མི་དམིགས་སྤྱང་པར་
ནི་གུ་མའི་ཞལ་གདམས་སོ། ། ཅུ་ ॥

The Ḍākinī's Personal Instructions: Five Short Texts on Yogic Techniques

8

INTRODUCTION

THESE FIVE BRIEF personal or oral instructions (*zhal gdams*) that are attributed to Niguma in the Peking Tengyur may be the source of the yogic techniques that are used in conjunction with Niguma's *Six Dharmas*, and particularly that of inner heat (*gtum mo*). In most traditions of the path of methods, while the actual seated practice involves visualization and breath-control techniques, there is also a regimen of physical training (*lus sbyong*, *lujong*) that enhances the efficacy of the main practice. These individual exercises are known as "trulkor" (*'khrul 'khor*), a word that in other contexts means "machine" or "device" but is here translated simply as "yogic technique." The practice of these techniques involves special clothing and housing and was traditionally kept quite secret, hidden from all viewers. The tantalizing accounts in Alexandra David-Neel's travel books of her surreptitious witnessing of strange goings-on were most likely in regard to such techniques.¹ Any number of texts, commentaries, and descriptions, however, will never successfully convey the actual practice, which must be learned directly from a master who is accomplished in both the physical training and the meditation technique. These descriptions are thus "self-secret," perhaps more than any other textual accounts. They offer only some tips for those already initiated into their practice.

Niguma's instructions here are particularly cryptic, and practitioners in this tradition have long relied on other sources for clarification,

which in any case are mostly used to jog one's memory of the instructor's direct demonstration. Lineage holders of the past culled from the original sources a system of eighteen or twenty-five specific techniques (though, as noted, there are some issues with enumeration). Perhaps the most central such text is, again, by the great Tāranātha: *Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary*. "Root" in this case refers to a section quoted by Tāranātha that appears to be the jumbled remains of what was once Niguma's outline of these practices. The commentary is Tāranātha's own attempt to make sense of them. He explains:

Most of these yogic exercises each have vital points of visualization that should be learned from the source text. These are the personal instructions of Niguma, Ḍākinī of Timeless Awareness. They are esoteric instructions for dissolving the energy-mind in the central channel and for releasing the knots in the channels, primarily using one's own body as the method. They are the esoteric instructions for the supreme accomplishment of the path of liberation that are known as "The Eighteen Physical Trainings" (*lus sbyong bco brgyad pa*). As for the source text of this, the oral directions are somewhat arcane and have been scattered among a great many words, and there have been many that do not know how to collect them. Although it is possible that there are select collections assembled by uneducated persons, the practical application does not actually emerge clearly. Since I saw that the practice was close to disappearing, in order to save it and spread it, I, Tāranātha, having attained some degree of devotion in the glorious Shangpa Kagyu, have not kept it hidden and have laid it out clearly.²

The "vital points of visualization" to which Tāranātha refers are, at least partially, apparent in the collection translated here. Most of the currently available practice manuals, on the other hand, even some illustrated notebooks that have been in circulation at monasteries, do not include these essential visualizations. These five "originals," if that is what they are, as well as some others that should have been included in

this set, are indeed contained within the eleven-volume *Shangpa Texts*, hidden in a collection of more than thirty brief instructions labeled with the names of only two of them.³ This seems to represent a wholesale incorporation of an older collection into the puzzling organization of the *Shangpa Texts*. They are not mentioned individually in either of the Shangpa catalogues written by Jamgön Kongtrul to record his doxological methods.⁴

Comparing the five texts here with that collection and the commentary by Tāranātha, it appears that the exercises described here correlate loosely with the fifth through the eighteenth of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises. In that system, the eighteenth is further subdivided into eight (or maybe nine), which leads to the alternate accounting of twenty-five exercises of Niguma. But who's counting? Perhaps initially they were meant to be one continuous, flowing yoga of body and mind, synchronized in movement and creative visualization.

ESOTERIC INSTRUCTIONS ON OPENING THE CHANNEL⁵

Nāmo Guru

These are esoteric instructions on opening the channel:

Sitting cross-legged with spine straight,
put your left clenched fist to your chest,
extend the right [arm] down vigorously.
Then do the same with your left.

After that, the four limbs
are vigorously extended for that reason.
Open your mouth and also open the eyes wide.
Then vigorously shake your four limbs.

After that, meditate on the guru's inner heat.
With your body in the seven-point posture of Vairocana,⁶

imagine the central channel remaining straight,
and imagine the root guru on your head.

After that, the fire of timeless awareness
blazes up again into the central channel
and touches the guru's feet,
causing elixir to fall—meditate in bliss.

Un-visualizing the guru, fire abides on its own.
Un-visualizing the elixir, meditate in emptiness.

This is Niguma's personal instruction. *iti*