

# A Brief Discussion of Development/Fulfillment Stage Meditation

By Kathy Wesley, after teaching by Ven. Bardor Tulku Rinpoche

## Transformation

The “work” of the Buddhist path is transforming confusion into primordial awareness (i.e., Buddhahood).

Theoretically, this is easy. In our ordinary state, our mind is clouded and confused; but if we recognize our mind’s true nature, we experience primordial awareness.

However, on a practical level, this does not happen automatically. One must use skillful means to transform discursive thought into enlightened awareness.

In the Vajrayana, one such skillful means is Development/Fulfillment Stage Meditation.

In Tibetan, the words are “Kye Rim” for Development, and “Dzog Rim” for Fulfillment.

Now, our three faculties of body, speech, and mind are obscured by basic ignorance.

To transform these, we must become physically, verbally and mentally aware. Therefore, in Vajrayana, we use all three of these faculties.

## Our Physical Body

We are very attached to our physical body, and think of it as being pure, permanent, and real.

Yet, our body is only temporary. This confusion obstructs the arising of primordial awareness.

We must come to see that the body is something that appears without having self-nature.

The body is the Form Aspect of consciousness.

In Vajrayana, we identify with a pure and enlightened form, like the bodhisattvas Tara and Chenrezig. We put aside our concept of our body for the body of an enlightened being, but we do not make this form solid or substantial. We make the visualized form of our body insubstantial and made of light.

If we completely identify with this form, the experience is called “The Union of Appearance and Emptiness.”

## Our Speech

Although it could be considered intangible, we actually relate to our speech as something solid and real. Because we are so attached to what we say, our speech is given such a power.

However, ultimately, our speech is without true reality.

In Vajrayana, we meditate on mantra, the enlightened speech of enlightened beings.

If we completely identify with this speech, the experience is called “The Union of Sound and Emptiness.” As such, it has no intrinsic reality, but is a manifestation of pure sound, arising simultaneously with emptiness.

Through the practice of Mantra, we no longer cling to the reality of speech, so the confusion of speech is transformed.

## Our Mind

Normally, we believe our thoughts are real and substantial. In believing this way, we misunderstand our mind’s true nature.

In Vajrayana, our mind is concentrated on the visualization of the enlightened beings and its mantra and “seed syllable,” which is usually located in the heart of the enlightened being. The seed syllable is considered to be the essence of the enlightened being upon whom we are meditating.

While meditating on this mantra and seed syllable in the heart, we see lights going out from the mantra and seed syllable, making offerings to enlightened beings above and blessing sentient beings below. Meanwhile, our mind rests in its own nature of emptiness.

After practicing this for some time, a change will occur; we will have the experience that anything arising in the mind arises from and dissolves back into emptiness. For that time, we experience only emptiness—a state called, “The Union of Awareness and Emptiness.”

This is Mahamudra, the “great seal” of emptiness.

As the end of our meditation session, we dissolve our visualization into a formless state and simply rest the mind evenly in its own nature.

Then, we can experience all three of these – body, speech and mind – as arising from primordial awareness. In this way, we gather all aspects of our experience into one, the emptiness of mind from which everything arises.

### **Three Samayas**

There are Three “Dam-tsiks,” or “samayas,” or “promises” involved in the practice of the Development Stage:

“Sal” (in Tibetan). This means “clear,” and it refers to the need for our visualization to be clear.

“Dak” (in Tibetan). This means “pure,” and it refers to the need for our visualization to be pure in the sense of sacred outlook. “Sacred outlook” means that we

should have the sense that everything we experience is part of the enlightened being we are meditating upon. We should have no doubts about the enlightened being as present in front of us—or no doubts that we are the enlightened being (when we are visualizing ourselves as a Buddha or bodhisattva).

“Ten” (in Tibetan). This means “firm,” and refers to our being able to hold our attention on the practice. As one teacher put it, “it’s not like you think, ‘now I’m in sacred outlook,’ or ‘now I’m not in sacred outlook – I’m not worthy.’”

We use these promises to rid ourselves of the impure outlook of dualistic fixations.

We should see the visualized image as clear like a painting, and yet empty of solidity—like it’s made of light.

