



The Essence of Wisdom: How to Sustain the Face of Rigpa

by Mipham Rinpoche

Homage to the glorious Primordial Protector!

There are three stages to sustaining the essence of rigpa: recognizing it, becoming familiar with it, and resting in it steadily. At first, clarify your recognition so that, through the guru's instructions, you come to see the direct face of rigpa, naked and free from conceptual elaboration. Once recognition is certain, it is essential to sustain the essence of rigpa itself.

Mere recognition alone is insufficient; the strength of recognition must be developed. Although you may recognize rigpa in the beginning, if you do not settle in that recognition, it will quickly be interrupted by thoughts, making it difficult to experience rigpa in its naked state. Therefore, at this stage, it is crucial to settle without blocking or indulging thoughts, but rest repeatedly, and for periods of increasing duration, in natural, open awareness.

As you become familiar with this again and again, the waves of discursive thought gradually subside, and the face of rigpa that you are sustaining will grow clearer. During meditation remain in this experience for as long as possible, and in post-meditation maintain the mindful recollection of the face of rigpa. Through continued familiarization in this way, the strength of rigpa will naturally grow.

At first, thoughts will continue to arise. However, without applying any remedy to stop them, they are instantly self-liberated simply by leaving them as they are—like a snake uncoiling its own knots. Then, with further familiarity, rising thoughts will continue to bring some slight disturbance, but will dissolve immediately by themselves—like writing on water.

As familiarity with this state deepens further, you reach a point where rising thoughts have no effect whatsoever, and there is no hope or fear concerning their arising or non-arising. This experience, beyond benefit and harm—is like a thief entering an empty house.

By continuing to familiarize yourself with this, you will reach the level of perfect strength. At that point, conceptual thoughts and the ālaya, together with the wind energies that generate mental movement, dissolve into unaltered dharmakāya, and rigpa remains secure in its own place—like searching for earth and stones on an island of gold, without ever finding them.

All appearance and existence, without exception, arises as the realm of dharmakāya, utterly pure. This is known as ‘gaining stability’, in which all hope and fear of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa and birth and death are completely exhausted.

Just as daytime perceptions and thoughts are gradually brought into rigpa’s domain, so too during the night there is no need to rely on any other instruction, for the same recognition can be applied to dreams and to the clear light of light and heavy sleep. Having understood this, you must persist in the practice until you gain stability, with unwavering diligence, like the continuous flow of a river.

This instruction was given by Mipham. May virtue and goodness abound!