

Melody of Dharma

❁ The Correct Way to Receive an Initiation
A Teaching by H.H. the Sakya Trizin

❁ Parinirvana of H.H. Jigdal
Dagchen Rinpoche

❁ Remembering Great Masters –
Mahakassapa

❁ The Holy Lamdre in Frankfurt



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Cover photo: Vulture peak, Rajgir
(Photograph by Teverapapas)

FROM THE EDITORS

Another year has gone by, marked by milestones of major significance. Towering among these was the passing of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche on the 29th of April 2016, leaving all Sakyapas in a deep state of mourning. The auspicious signs accompanying Rinpoche's parinirvana on the 5th of May, after spending several days in the state of Thukdam, lifted everyone's spirit and, over the course of the following months, prayers were recited and rituals held in all Sakya centres for his swift rebirth. Rinpoche's final rites were conducted in New Delhi by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin on the 11th of November and were attended by great numbers of Lamas, monks, nuns and lay followers.

All in all the year was beneficial, with our masters travelling worldwide over the past months, bringing precious Dharma teachings to new students and bolstering the knowledge and enthusiasm of existing ones. Among other things, His Holiness the Sakya Trizin bestowed the Holy Lamdre for the 23rd time, on this occasion in Frankfurt, Germany.

Another auspicious milestone for the Sakya Tradition has been the start of the first academic year at the Sakya Academy in Dehradun. Under the auspices of His Holiness the Sakya Trizin, the Sakya Academy was created by Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche with a vision to endow young Sakya monks with a full English Medium School education alongside their traditional religious training. Its aim is to form well-rounded adults with the necessary preparation to make a significant contribution to society. The school's formal inauguration will take place later this year.

These upcoming months promise to be very bountiful ones for the Dharma, in particular the Enthronement Ceremony of Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche as the 42nd Sakya Trizin in Puruwalla on the 9th of March 2017. It is little to say that this is an historic event for the Sakya School, and that the latter will with certainty continue to thrive under the wise guidance of its new leader.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of our readers a very happy and prosperous 2017 and immense success in your spiritual endeavours.

The Editing Team

RAJGIR



(Photo: Kirsty Chakravarty)

Rajgir is ranked fifth among the eight major pilgrimage sites associated with the Buddha's life and deeds. It was Prince Gautama's first destination when he abandoned his father's palace at Kapilavastu, and it is where the Lord Buddha began his last journey to Kushinagar. Rajgir was the scene of many of the Buddha's activities in the intervening years, including the conferring of some of his most important sermons. It



Venuvana Bamboo Grove

was also where the First Council of the Sangha was held in order to consolidate the Vinaya code as set down by the Buddha.

Even before the Buddha's time, Rajgir was a site of choice for yogis and siddhas, with its surrounding hills studded with hot springs and caves providing ideal conditions for meditation.

At the time of the Buddha, Rajagrha, as it was known, was the capital of the old Kingdom of Magadha and the royal city of King Bimbisara, as well as a famed centre of learning. It is written that when the Buddha first arrived at Rajagrha, King Bimbisara caught a glimpse of him begging for alms. The monarch was so impressed by the mendicant's de-

meanour that he went to see him and offered him half of his kingdom if he would stay in Rajaghra. The Buddha declined the offer, but promised that he would return after attaining enlightenment.

The Buddha kept his promise and, approximately one year after his enlightenment, he returned to Rajaghra. King Bimbisara went to greet him and offered the Buddha his favourite pleasure garden as an abode for himself and his disciples. Venuvana, known as the Bamboo Grove, would serve the Buddha as one of his main places of residence throughout his life and as the setting for many of the notable events that marked it.

It was here that three of the Buddha's principal disciples joined his sangha of monks: Shariputra, Maudgalyayana and Maha Kas-sapa. It was also here that the Buddha's cousin Devadatta, devoured by jealousy, set an enraged elephant to cross the Buddha's path and trample him. It is written that, when the elephant approached the Buddha, the Lord tamed him with soft words and the wild animal knelt at his feet.



The Buddha taming a wild elephant

Rajgir is surrounded by hills, atop one of which is the Vulture Peak, the site where the Buddha gave one his most profound teachings, the Heart Sutra. Sitting somewhere between heaven and earth, Vulture Peak is by itself an awe-inspiring place, with exhilarating views to an endless horizon.



Vulture Peak



H.H. the Sakya Trizin at Vulture Peak

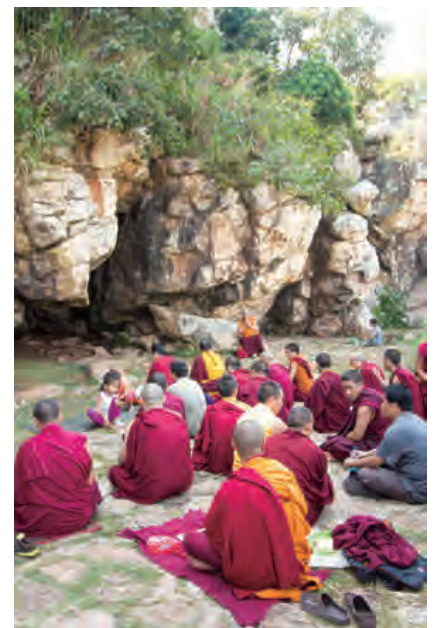


The Boar's Grotto

Here, the Buddha gave numerous teachings to thousands of adepts, while a few steps down from the summit, sits the Boar's Grotto, the Buddha's favourite retreat place.

On a nearby hill, the Saptaparniguha Cave opens to a terrace overlooking a precipice. This is where, shortly after the Buddha's parinirvana, five hundred *arhats* came together for the First Council of the Sangha to recite and commit to record the Buddha's Vinaya code of rules.

It had been stipulated that only enlightened disciples could attend the Council. Buddha's cousin and attendant Ananda, who was endowed with a prodigious memory and had been present at nearly all of the Buddha's sermons, was not allowed to attend. He had spent all his years with the Buddha tending to his every need, so much so



Saptaparniguha Cave

that he had found no time for his personal practice, which meant that he had not attained arhatship and therefore could not attend the gathering. Much to everyone's relief, Ananda strived with all his might to gain attainment and, the very night before the council, he became an arhat and proved to be an invaluable asset to the Council.

The area is dotted with significant sites, one of which is the Goose Stupa on Indraśaila Hill. It is associated with a moving story according to which a skein of geese was flying over a Hinayana Monastery. Knowing them to be Bodhisattvas, one the bhikshus cried out to them derisively: "Oh great ones! Today the priests have not had enough to eat. Here is your opportunity to show your compassion!" At that very moment, one of the geese plunged to the ground at the bhikshu's feet. Realising their misconception, the bhikshus discovered the meaning of compassion and embraced the Bodhisattva path.

Another site worth mentioning is the Kukkutapadagiri, known as the Cocksfoot Mountain. It is said that, shortly after the Buddha's parinirvana, Maha Kassapa climbed up this mountain, donned the robe given to him by the Buddha, sat in the hollow between the mountain's three peaks, and entered sa-



Karandaka Lake



Mahakassapa's house

madhi. The mountain closed over him, sealing him inside, where he awaits the coming of the future Buddha Maitreya.

Many more vestiges of an illustrious past are to be found in and around Rajgir, such as the Venuvana Park with its Karandaka Lake, Maha Kassapa's house, Jivaka's Mango Grove where the Buddha and his disciples often rested, remnants of stone structures, stupas, statues, meditation

caves and the ramparts of the old city.

But a visit to the Vulture Peak is in itself sufficient to appreciate the significance of Rajgir as a principal pilgrimage site. As one gazes at the horizon from the remains of the temple that crowns it, it is difficult not to be grasped by the timelessness of the place and the vivid sense that the Buddha is still there expounding his indissoluble teachings.

The Śurangama Samadhi Sutra

The Concentration of Heroic Progress



The Śurangama Samadhi Sutra is an early Mahayana scripture that was given by the Lord Buddha on top of the Vulture Peak in Rajgir. Below is an excerpt of this teaching, expounding on the unfathomable nature of the Śurangama Samadhi and the extraordinary qualities of the Bodhisattvas who rest in it.

Thus I have heard. At one time the Buddha was on Mount Grdhrakuta near Rajagrha, with thirty-two thousand great bhikshus in attendance. There were also seventy-two thousand Bodhisattva Mahasattvas there who were known to the assembly and who had mastered dharani, were accomplished in the discrimination [of spiritual matters], and took unlimited pleasure in preaching [the Dharma]. They resided in samadhi without any vacillation, well comprehended the inexhaustible wisdoms, had achieved profound forbearance of [the inherent birthlessness of] all dharmas, had attained profound insight into the Dharma, and had completed all the training that

there is to be undertaken in all the excellent Dharmas during all the limitless and innumerable eons. They had subjugated the hordes of demons [Maras] and had vanquished their enemies. They had incorporated within themselves that which is most honored and had ornamented and purified the Buddha lands. They possessed great compassion, had ornamented their bodies with the various marks [of enlightened beings], and had with great endeavor attained the other shore [of Nirvana]. Well did they know all the verbal expedient means [of teaching], and their practice of the ceremonial deportments was complete and pure. They all had achieved residence in the three emancipations and had penetrated the three periods of time with their unhindered wisdom. They had generated the determination not to abandon all [sentient beings], remembered the purport of the doctrines, and possessed the tolerant forbearance of wisdom. Such was the virtue of all these Bodhisattvas.

...

[Among them was a Bodhisattva named Resolute Mind, with whom the Buddha entertains a dialogue.]

...

The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, he practices charity without having to seek for wealth [to donate to others]. All the treasures, food and drink, clothing, elephants and horses, and chariots within the great oceans, the heavens, and the realms of mankind within the great chiliocosm—all these objects are automatically given. All this is the achievement of the fundamental merit [of the Śurangama Samadhi]. How much more so with the accomplishments performed at will through the divine power [of this samadhi]! This is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Charity of the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.” The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, he is immovable in the precepts without having taken the precepts again. Because he wants to teach all sentient beings, he may manifest the maintenance of the precepts and the various rules of deportment. He may manifest violations and the elimination of transgressions, but his internal purity is always flawless. Because he wants to teach all sentient beings, he may be born in the realm of desire as a Wheel Turning Sage King, with a harem of princesses worshipfully surrounding him. He may manifest the existence of wife and children and may be wantonly engaged in the five desires, but internally he will always remain within meditation and the pure precepts, well comprehending the three disastrous transgressions. Resolute Mind, this is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Morality of the

Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.”

The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi he completely cultivates the ultimate forbearance. Because of this, he cultivates forbearance before sentient beings are even born, he cultivates forbearance before the dharmas are even generated, he cultivates forbearance before the mind even takes form, he cultivates forbearance before [the discrimination of] self and other even occurs, he cultivates forbearance before there is even a thought of birth and death. He cultivates forbearance with the essence of Nirvana, he cultivates forbearance without destroying the dharma-natures. Thus does the Bodhisattva cultivate forbearance without there being anything that is cultivated and without any not cultivating. In order to teach sentient beings, he is born in the realm of desire. He may manifest anger, but within he is pure. He may manifest the cultivation of distant transcendence, but [he knows that there actually] is no far or near. In order to purify the sentient beings he may break worldly rules of deportment, but he never breaks the dharma-natures [never goes counter to the inner realities of things]. He may manifest forbearance, but [in reality] there are no dharmas [that can be forborne]. He is able to forbear through the indestructibility of his permanent meditation. Thus does the Bodhisattva achieve forbearance. In order to eradicate the great anger of sentient beings, he always praises the blessings of forbearance, but he never attains either forbearance or anger. Resolute Mind, this is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Forbearance of the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.”



The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, he generates great energy and attains all the good dharmas, but he does not generate karma of body, speech, and mind. It is for the lazy that he manifests the practice of energy. He wants to make sentient beings follow my teaching, but he neither generates nor accepts the dharmas. Why? The Bodhisattva understands that all the dharmas completely and constantly reside within the dharma-natures, without coming and going. Thus does he distantly transcend the actions of body, speech, and mind; and yet he is able to manifest the practice of energy. Nor does he consider that dharmas achieve completion. He manifests the practice of energy within the world but is without any actions either within or without. He is always able to travel about the innumerable Buddha realms, but his body remains universally ‘equivalent’ and does not move. He manifests the practice of all the good dharmas but never perceives the good or wrong of any of the dharmas. He manifests the acceptance of teaching [from others] in his spiritual quest but never follows any teaching other than that of Buddhism. He manifests becoming intimate with the preceptors and masters but is revered by all gods and humans. He manifests earnest inquiries [about the teaching] but within himself has attained unhindered discrimination. He manifests reverence but is worshipped by all gods and humans. He manifests entry into the womb but is without defilement within all the dharmas. He manifests birth but does not perceive generation and extinction within all the dharmas. He manifests existence as a child but his physical faculties are all complete. He manifests abilities in the arts, medicine, magic, literature, mathematics, and the crafts but has already penetrated everything within himself. He manifests illness but has already permanently transcended the afflictions. He manifests old age, but his senses are already inde-

structible. He manifests death, but he has never been defeated by samsara. Resolute Mind, this is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Energy of the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.”

The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, although he knows that the dharmas always have the characteristic of meditation, he manifests the various distinctions of meditation for sentient beings. He manifests residence in meditation in order to teach those with confused minds but does not perceive any confusion within the dharmas. All the dharmas are as the characteristics of the dharma-natures, and he subjugates his mind and is motionless in meditation. He manifests the various deportments of coming, going, sitting, and lying down, but he is always serene within meditation. He manifests agreement with what the majority say but never rejects the characteristics of the various meditations. Out of compassion for sentient beings, he enters the cities, villages, and countries, but he is always in meditation. He manifests eating, out of a desire to benefit sentient beings, but he is always in meditation. His body is hard, like vajra; inside it is substantial, not empty, and indestructible. Within it there are no growing organs or mature organs and none of the impure and malodorous defilements of defecation and urination. He manifests eating, but [the food] does not enter him. [He eats] only through his compassion to benefit sentient beings; although he has no faults in any of his [physical or sensory] functions, he manifests behavior like that of all ordinary people. However, he is actually without any activity that transgresses against the various [Buddhist] practices.



Resolute Mind, when a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi he manifests no distinction between open space and villages. He manifests no distinction between living as householder or monk. He may manifest the white robes [of the householder], but he is not lax. He may manifest [the form of] a monk, but he is not arrogant. He will not become a monk within the dharmas of the non-Buddhist teachings, so as to teach sentient beings. He is not affected by all the heterodox views, and he does not claim to achieve purity within them. He may manifest practice of all the non-Buddhist rituals, but he does not follow their practice of the path. “Resolute Mind, he is likened to a guide who has led a group of people over a steep road, only to return to save other people. It is thus, O Resolute Mind, that the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi acts in accordance with the spiritual aspirations of sentient beings. [Sentient beings] may aspire to the path [i.e., the enlightenment] of the Sravaka, or the path of the Pratyekabuddha, or the path of the Buddha; he teaches them and leads them to salvation as appropriate, and then returns to save other sentient beings. Therefore he is called a guide. “He is likened to a ferry, which carries innumerable people from this shore to the other shore. When it reaches the other shore it returns to carry over [i.e., save] more people. Thus, O Resolute Mind, does the Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi perceive sentient beings. He lets himself be carried along by the four currents of the river of birth and death only because he wants to help others escape. He accomplishes this according to the good roots sown by those sentient beings. If he sees that someone can be saved as a Pratyekabuddha, he manifests for that person the enlightenment of Nirvana in his own body. If he sees that someone can be saved as a Sravaka, he preaches extinction to that person and enters Nirvana together with him.

Because of the power of the Śurangama Samadhi, he manifests birth once again and saves more people. Thus is the Bodhisattva called the ferryman. “Resolute Mind, he is likened to a magician who manifests his own death, dismemberment, and immolation before an audience. He may manifest to his audience that he is burned by fire and eaten by birds, but after receiving payment [from the audience] he will be revived. [The magician] is able to do so because he is proficient in magic. The Bodhisattva who thus resides in the Śurangama Samadhi manifests old age and death in order to teach sentient beings, but actually there is no birth, old age, disease, and death. Resolute Mind, this is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Meditation of the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.”

The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, his senses are sharp in his cultivation of wisdom. Never perceiving the existence of the essences [natures] of sentient beings, he preaches the existence of sentient beings in order to save them. Never perceiving longevity and life span, he preaches that there are [such things as] longevity and life span. Never perceiving karma and karmic retribution, he indicates to sentient beings that there are [such things as] karma and karmic retribution. Never perceiving the essences of the afflictions [klesa] of samsara, he preaches that one should understand the afflictions of samsara. Never perceiving Nirvana, he preaches that one proceeds to Nirvana. Never perceiving the distinguishing characteristics possessed by the dharmas, he preaches that there are good and bad dharmas. Thereby is he able to carry [sentient beings] over to the other shore of unhindered wisdom. He manifests birth in the realm of desire but is not attached to the realm of desire. He manifests the practice of meditations of the realm of form but is not attached to the realm of form. He

enters into the meditations of the formless [realm] but is born in the realm of form. He manifests the meditations of the realm of form but is born in the realm of desire. He manifests himself in the realm of desire but does not practice the practices of the realm of desire. He knows all the various meditations, and he knows the portions of meditation. He can freely enter into meditation and leave meditation. In order to teach sentient beings, he can be born any place at will. He is always able to accomplish the profound and wondrous wisdom and to eradicate all the various activities of sentient beings. In order to teach sentient beings, he manifests the occurrence of activities, but he is actually without activity with regard to the various dharmas. He has completely gone beyond all the various activities and has long since eradicated the illusions of self and personal possession, although he manifests the receipt of the various things that are required. “When a Bodhisattva accomplishes wisdom such as this, everything that he does derives from that wisdom and is never defiled by the results of karma. In order to teach sentient beings he manifests being deaf and dumb, but subtle pure sounds actually occur within him. He comprehends the spoken word, the scriptures, and mathematics, and he does not have to stop to consider what Dharma to preach [on any given occasion]. Wherever he goes, audiences always consider his preaching wonderful, and he can always make [his listeners] be joyful and attain resolute [faith]. He preaches the Dharma as the occasion arises, and the wisdom of this Bodhisattva does not decrease. “Resolute Mind, he is likened to men and women, who are either large or small, who carry vessels to a place where there is water, which may be a spring, a lake, a river, or the ocean. They fill the vessels large and small and return, but the various bodies of water do not decrease. Thus, O Resolute Mind, does the Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama

Samadhi appear to audiences anywhere, whether of ksatriyas or brahmins, whether laypeople, monks, or gods. He appears to all these various congregations without any mental effort, and he is able to make them all joyous through his good words. He preaches the Dharma wherever it is appropriate to do so, but his wisdom is never lessened. Resolute Mind, this is said to be the fundamental fruit of the Perfection of Wisdom of the Bodhisattva residing in the Śurangama Samadhi.”



The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, those sentient beings who see him all attain emancipation. Those who hear his name, see his ritual deportment, hear him preach the Dharma, or see him in silence—all these attain emancipation. Resolute Mind, he is likened to the great medicine-tree king named Joyous Vision—all those who see him are healed of illness. Thus it is, Resolute Mind, with the Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi. The illnesses of greed, anger, and stupidity of any sentient being who sees him will be eradicated. It is like the great medicine king named Eradication. If [this medicine] is painted on one’s drums during wartime, the sound of the drum will pull the arrow, sword, or lance out and eliminate the poison from any injuries suffered from arrows, and the like. Thus it is, Resolute Mind, with the Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi. The arrows of greed, anger, and stupidity will naturally come out of those who hear his name, and the poison of wrong views will be completely eliminated, so that all the afflictions will operate no more.

“Resolute Mind, he is likened to the medicine

tree named Sufficient. If a person uses its root, his illness will be healed. His illness will be healed by the stems, knots, core, bark, twigs, leaves, flowers, or fruit, which may be fresh, dried, or ground—any form may be used to heal the illnesses of sentient beings. The Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi is also like this. There is no time at which he does not benefit sentient beings—he is always able to eliminate all the afflictions. While preaching the Dharma, he concurrently practices the four embraces [charity, loving speech, beneficial action, and homologous behavior] and the various Perfections, so that [sentient beings] attain emancipation. Whether a person makes offerings or not, and whether there is benefit [to him] or not, the Bodhisattva always uses the advantage of the Dharma so that the person will attain peace. And when he dies and his body is eaten—whether by animals with two legs or four, or by birds, or by humans or non-humans—due to the power of the Bodhisattva’s preceptual vows, when these sentient beings die they are reborn in heaven and are forever without the calamities of illness, pain, old age, and the afflictions. Resolute Mind, thus is the Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi like a medicine-tree.”

The Buddha told Resolute Mind, “When a Bodhisattva resides in the Śurangama Samadhi, for lifetime after lifetime he automatically understands the Six Perfections without having to study them from anyone else. Lifting his foot and lowering his foot, breathing in and breathing out, he is in possession of the Six Perfections. The Śurangama Samadhi Sutra with each moment of thought. Why? Resolute Mind, the entire body of a Bodhisattva like this is the Dharma, and his entire activities are the Dharma.

“Resolute Mind, he is likened to a king and his great ministers, who have a hundred thousand varieties of incense ground together into powder. If some-

one searches for one particular variety without having its fragrance mixed up with the other [varieties of] incense, Resolute Mind, within these hundred thousand varieties of incense powders, will he be able to separate one from the others?” [Resolute Mind answered,] “No, World-Honored One.” [The Buddha continued,] “Resolute Mind, since the Bodhisattva has perfumed his body and mind with all the Perfections, he always generates the Six Perfections in every moment of thought.

“Resolute Mind, how can the Bodhisattva generate the Six Perfections in every moment of thought? Resolute Mind, the Bodhisattva has complete equanimity and is without attachment; this is the Perfection of Charity [dana]. His mind is well serene and ultimately without any wrong; this is the Perfection of Morality. He understands that the mind exhausts [all] characteristics and exists unharmed within [the realms of] sensory data; this is the Perfection of Patience [ksanti]. He strives in contemplation and selects [advantageous states of] mind but understands that the mind transcends characteristics; this is the Perfection of Energy [virya]. He is ultimately well serene and has controlled his mind; this is the Perfection of Meditation [dhyana]. He contemplates the mind and understands the mind, penetrating the characteristics of the mind; this is the Perfection of Wisdom [prajña]. Resolute Mind, a Bodhisattva who resides in the Śurangama Samadhi possesses the Six Perfections in every moment of thought as given in this teaching.”

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Remembering Great Masters

MAHA KASSAPA Father of the Sangha



Among all the Buddha's disciples, five were regarded as closest to the Master and most highly accomplished. Four of these were two sets of brothers – Sariputra and Moggallana, Ananda and Anuruddha - and the fifth one was Pippali Kassapa, known as Maha Kassapa.

Of these five, Maha Kassapa was recognised by all, even by the Buddha, as surpassing everyone in terms of spiritual accomplishment. He had in common with the Buddha the attainment of the eight meditative absorptions and the six supernormal knowledges, which include Arahantship. The Buddha repeatedly praised his detachment from worldly concerns and compared him with 'a royal swan that

swims on a lake without his feathers getting wet.' The Buddha also said of him: 'His heart was free from bondage, and he always taught others out of a feeling of compassion'. He was beyond compare in his strict discipline and his staunch practice of the austerities.

It is for no small reason that, following the Buddha's Parinirvana, Maha Kassapa was chosen to lead the Sangha and to preside over its First Council.

He was born in Maghada to a family of Brahmins. His parents, Kapila and Sumanadevi enjoyed great wealth and Pippali, as he was then called, grew up in lavish comfort. But none of this satis-

fied him – from early childhood he only yearned to renounce the world. As he grew in years, this deep aspiration became more and more compelling.

When the time came for him to marry, he went to great lengths to counter his parents' efforts to find him a bride. He went so far as having an artist craft a golden statue portraying a woman of incomparable beauty, and telling his parents that he would only marry a woman as beautiful as the statue. His father's emissaries roamed the land with their precious load, but were not able to find anyone whose beauty even remotely compared to the statue's. Until they came to a place called Sagala. There they found a girl called Bhadda Kapilani, whose beauty far outshone the statue's. And so it was arranged that she would be Pippali's bride.

As it turned out, this beautiful young woman had no appetite for worldly concerns either, but rather had aspirations to become a wandering ascetic. In spite of their resistance to the union, the couple were betrothed and made to share a nuptial bed. In order to keep their vows of chastity, they placed a string of flowers each night in the middle of the bed and swore not to cross it. So they lived for many years.

When Pippali's parents died, it became his and Bhadda Kapilani's responsibility to tend to the vast dominions that they had inherited. It didn't take long before both of them realised how much pain was caused by the tilling of the land: every time the plow tore through the fields, countless insects were killed. Aware of the karmic consequences that this entailed, the couple decided to relinquish their lands and become ascetic wanderers, finally realising their old, common aspiration. They cut each other's hair, exchanged their luxurious clothes for the simple garb of wanderers, slung a bowl over their shoul-

ders, and slipped away unnoticed by the estate servants. This, incidentally, happened on the day of the Buddha's enlightenment.

And so they took to the road, Pippali leading the way. They soon came to the conclusion that Pippali being accompanied by a beautiful woman would invite negative comments, and so they decided to part ways and seek spiritual accomplishment separately. And so, at the next crossroads, he took the right and she took the left. At this moment, the earth shook.

The Buddha was in Veluvana at the time, and realised what the earthquake signified. He swiftly travelled to cross Pippali's path and sat on the roadside waiting for him. When the latter saw the Buddha sitting at the foot of the Bahuputtaka Nigrodha, he immediately recognised him as his Teacher and threw himself at his feet. The Buddha gave him ordination right then and there. From then on, Pippali was to be called Maha Kassapa. Together they walked back to Rajgir, and it is during this journey that something unique took place: they exchanged robes. This was an extraordinary occurrence, the only time that the Buddha would ever have such an intimate interchange with anyone. And so it was that Maha Kassapa became one of the Buddha's closest disciples, attaining arhatship barely seven days after their initial encounter.

As for Bhadda Kapilana, she made her own way along the spiritual path. Her journey also took her to the Buddha, whose teachings she attended in Sravasti and, five years after she separated from Pippali, she was ordained as a bhikkhuni. From then on, she dedicated herself to the education of younger nuns, placing great emphasis on their observance of the Vinaya. The Buddha praised her as foremost among nuns who could recollect past lives, several

of which had been shared with Maha Kassapa.

Maha Kassapa now lived alongside the Buddha as one of his chief disciples, pursuing an irreproachable life of dedication and restraint, and setting a staunch example for all Sangha members to emulate. The strongest recognition of Maha Kassapa's achievement was the praise awarded him by the Buddha himself, found in a sutra where it is said that Maha Kassapa could attain at will, just like the Buddha himself, the four finematerial and the four immaterial meditative absorptions, the cessation of perception and feeling, and could also attain the six supernormal knowledges, which include the supernormal powers and culminate in the attainment of Nibbana. Here his powerful meditative achievements, equalling those of the Buddha, appear as a characteristic trait of Maha Kassapa's mind. It was because of that deep meditative calm that he could adapt himself, unperturbed, to all external situations and live as one of few wants, materially and socially.

Kassapa was not present at the death of the Buddha. As he was journeying from Pāvā to Kusināra, he met a man carrying in his hand a mandāra flower picked up by him from among those that had rained from heaven in honour of the Buddha, and it was he who told Kassapa the news. It was then the seventh day after the Buddha's death, and the Mallas had been trying in vain to set fire to his pyre. The arahant theras, who were present, declared that it could not be kindled until Mahā Kassapa and his five hundred companions had saluted the Buddha's feet. Mahā Kassapa then arrived and walked three times round the pyre with bared shoulder, and it is said the Buddha's feet became visible from out of the pyre in order that he might worship them. He was followed by his five hundred colleagues, and

when they had all worshipped the feet disappeared and the pyre kindled of itself.

Following the Parinirvana of the Buddha, it was Maha Kassapa who was chosen to lead the Sangha. And it was he who, foreboding the weakening of the Buddha's teachings, convoked the First Council of the Sangha, setting down the Vinaya rules that would bind its members.

Indicative of Maha Kassapa's extraordinary qualities are some of his verses included in the Theragatha (Verses of the Elders):

*"Down from my mountain lodge I came one day
And made my round for alms about the streets.
A leper there I saw eating his meal
And courteously I halted at his side.*

*He with his hand all leprous and diseased
Put in my bowl a morsel; as he threw it,
A finger broke off and fell into my food.*

*At a wall nearby I ate my share,
Not at the time nor after felt disgust.*

*For only he who takes as they come
The scraps of food, cow's urine for medicine,
Lodging beneath a tree, the patchwork robe,
Truly is a man contented everywhere."*

There is no certain indication of the time or place of Maha Kassapa's death, but his legacy lives on in the Buddhist Canon, much of whose content is due to his cautious initiative.

Developing The Right Attitude To Receive An Initiation

A Teaching by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin



The teachings of the Buddha are the source of all happiness and benefit. Among his teachings, the most important is the practice of compassion. Compassion is the life force of all virtuous qualities. Avalokiteshvara is the manifestation of all the Buddha's compassion, and so the initiation of Avalokiteshvara is among the most important teachings of the Buddha.

In order to receive this precious initiation, the very first thing that we need to do is to create the right motivation. Everything depends on our motivation. If our motivation is associated with our defilements, then it can cause harm. If our motivation is neutral, neither good nor bad, if we just receive the initiation out of curiosity, then no benefit is gained from it. But if our motivation is good, then just to hear just one

line of the teachings brings enormous benefit.

Good motivation has many levels. Generally, people receive teachings in order to overcome obstacles and difficulties in this life, to have success in their lives. Although their motivation is good, they are not practising the real Dharma. For it to be proper Dharma, it should at least not be for the sake of this lifetime alone. If we are attached to this life, it appears like Dharma, but in reality it is merely another means to achieve worldly gains. It is not Dharma. For it to be the real Dharma, it should at least be for our next life, not merely for this current one.

This life is like water bubbles that can burst at any moment, and it is not worthwhile being attached to it. Eventually we will die and this life will be over. When we die, our physical body will be disposed of

in one way or another. But our mental consciousness is something that cannot disappear, because it is intangible. It continues into its next life, and where it will go is determined by the deeds that we have performed. If we committed negative deeds, then our mind is predetermined to fall into the lower realms. And if we have performed good deeds, then it will go to higher realms.

And so, out of fear of falling into the lower realms and wishing to continue to be born into the higher realms, we practise the Dharma. This is good motivation, but it still belongs to samsara, the cycle of existence. It is not proper renunciation. Of course, there is a difference between higher and lower realms, but as long as we're still in the cycle of samsara, we're not free from suffering.

Everything depends on our motivation...Our motivation should be for the good of others.

So any attachment to the higher realms is similar to eating sweet poison. Some poisons are very sweet in taste, but they have harmful effects. So we need to develop renunciation thoughts, and in order to do this, we must realise that all of samsara, whether it be the higher or the lower realms, is not worthy of any attachment.

Our motivation should be for the good of others. Just as much as we wish to be free from suffering, every living being also wishes the same. And so to have attachment to our own purpose is wrong, we must think of the good of others. Furthermore, we believe in rebirth – we keep changing lives, each with a different body, family and place. Our lives keep changing, rotating, and so every single living being has been our own very dear father and mother. Abandoning them just to seek our own benefit, our own liberation, is not right.

Having attachment to our own purpose is like

raising the enemy's child. When we raise the enemy's child, the child will be very pleased temporarily, but eventually it will bring us harm. Likewise, clinging to our own purpose can be temporarily pleasing, but eventually it will bring us harm. So our motivation should not be for the sake of this life, for a higher rebirth, for our own liberation, but rather for the sake of all living beings. All sentient beings wish to be free from suffering and to attain happiness. But, due to ignorance, the majority of beings are experiencing suffering. Some are momentarily happy but are creating more and more causes of suffering.

So we must generate compassion for all sentient beings, and when genuine compassion arises, then we cannot remain idle. We need to make the effort to save beings from samsara. As ordinary persons, we are very limited and cannot help sentient beings. The way for us to help others is to attain enlightenment. Once we have attained enlightenment, even in a single moment we can save countless beings.

And therefore, the sole purpose of receiving an empowerment such as that of Avalokiteshva should be to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. So the first thing we need to do is to have such motivation. Also, with the right conduct, we should receive the teachings just like a patient receiving advice from his doctor. The guru is like a doctor, the Dharma is like medicine, and we are like patients. Our defilements are very severe illnesses. By receiving the teachings, we are receiving treatment, and the people surrounding us are like medical assistants.

It is with such an attitude that we should be receiving the teaching.

Specially for higher Vajrayana teachings such as Avalokiteshvara, it is not proper to be in ordinary appearance and surroundings. We must think that where we are is not an ordinary place, but that it is a pure realm. The guru is not in ordinary form but in the form of the deity, and all other disciples are also in the form of the deity.

The teaching is that every single being possesses Buddha nature. In a sense, the true nature of our mind was never stained with obscurations. It is pure and has been pure right from the beginning. And so every single being has a chance to become fully enlightened if the right method is used. It is just like seeds, which have the potential to grow into a crop if meet with the right conditions. Although every sentient being possesses Buddha nature, we cannot see it at the moment because our minds are covered with obscurations, like the obscuration of defilements and the obscuration of knowledge. And so we're caught up in samsara.

The sole purpose of receiving an empowerment should be to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

As long as we're in samsara, we're never free from the suffering of the lower realms and of the higher realms. The lower realms, of course, have the greatest suffering, but the higher realms also have suffering. In appearance, they have a mixture of happiness and unhappiness, but if we examine carefully we find that it's not real happiness – it's just a different form of suffering.

The only way to be free from suffering is to practise the holy Dharma. But in order to practise the Dharma, we need a base. Although every being has Buddha nature, human beings have the best chance to become free from suffering. Especially those who are endowed with all the prerequisites, who have freedom from the unfavourable places and who have the favourable necessary conditions. All together, there are eighteen prerequisites. From many points of view, human life is very difficult to obtain.

Therefore, due to our own merit and our sincere prayers, we were born as human beings and we have all the prerequisites. This is a condition that is far

more precious than the wish-fulfilling jewel. It is said that there is a jewel called the 'wish-fulfilling jewel' which, if you pray to it and make offerings, can fulfill all our wishes, all our material needs, clothes, shelter, medicine, etc. But our present human life is far more precious than the wish-fulfilling jewel, because the latter can only fulfill our material needs. It cannot give us higher rebirth, personal liberation or enlightenment. But through this human life, by using it as a vehicle, we can attain a higher rebirth, personal liberation, even full enlightenment.

But just having this precious opportunity of having a human life with all the prerequisites is not enough. We have to make the very best of it. If we lose this opportunity, it will be very difficult to get another chance. And so we have to make great effort, and we have to do this without any delay. The Buddha said that all compound things are impermanent. This means that everything that depends on causes and conditions is impermanent. Our life has no definite life span, and there are many external and internal factors that can shorten our life. There is very little that can prolong our life.

No one can determine when we will lose this life – death can strike today, tomorrow, at any time. We normally think that we won't die any time soon, because we are favoured with good health, good conditions. But this is not solid reasoning – death could strike at any time. And so therefore, we have to think of impermanence, of the complete certainty of death and the complete uncertainty of the time of death.

And at the time of death, there is nothing that can help us. No matter how rich we are, no matter how learned or powerful we are, nothing can help us. The only thing that can help us is the Dharma practice that we have done during our life. And so we need to be very diligent, we need to practise the Dharma without any delay. Our main practice as ordinary beings is to very strictly follow the law of karma.

Everything that we experience now, happiness and

suffering, has not been created by an outside cause. The only cause for it is our own previous deeds. So if we want to be free from suffering, then we have to abstain from the cause of suffering. And the cause of suffering is our negative deeds caused by our defilements. Likewise, if we wish to attain happiness, we have to create the cause of happiness. And the cause of happiness is the virtuous deeds performed without defilements and with good inspiration. We need to follow in our everyday life the law of karma by abstaining from negative deeds and by practising virtuous deeds.

Also, the great Lord Buddha, who possessed infinite wisdom, compassion, and skillful means, bestowed an enormous amount of teachings. Beings are all different, we all have different mentalities, different propensities, different defilements, different levels of understanding. In order to suit every kind of personality and every level of understanding, the Buddha also gave different kinds and levels of teachings.

The highest one is the Vajrayana teaching. Vajrayana itself has different levels of teachings. The Four-Arm Avalokiteshvara empowerment belongs to the highest level of teaching, in which Mahamudra and Great Compassion come together – wisdom and compassion.

We have to think of impermanence, of the complete certainty of death and the complete uncertainty of the time of death.

In order to receive such an initiation, one needs to request it from our teacher by offering him a mandala offering. And then, we need to purify ourselves in order to be suitable vessels for the teachings. Just like any container needs to be cleaned so that whatever we pour into it doesn't spoil, we need to purify ourselves from all our negative deeds.

The way to do this is by performing the Seven-

Fold Prayer. The first thing we do is to visualise the Guru in the form of Four-Armed Avalokiteshvara, surrounded by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, just like a pile of clouds. And then, in front of ourselves, all sentient beings reciting the Seven-Fold Prayer.

The first part of the Seven-Fold Prayer consists of confessing all the negative deeds that we committed since beginningless time. To do this, we need the four powers. The first power is the power of object, that is to say to whom we confess – we are relying on Avalokiteshvara, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas to help us purify our negative deeds. The second power is the power of remorse – we need to deeply realise that the negative deeds that we have committed are a great mistake. We need to feel strong remorse, as if we had taken poison by mistake. The third power is the power of antidote – we confess our faults, realise our great mistakes, and we make the staunch resolution never to repeat these again, even if it costs us our life. The fourth power is the power of remedy – through our confession, all our gross negative deeds have been purified.

In the second part of the Seven-Fold Prayer, we rejoice in all virtuous deeds. Starting with the Buddhas, the Shravakas, the Pratiekabuddhas, all those who have gone beyond, and then extending it to ordinary being including ourselves, we rejoice in the virtuous deeds that have been performed by all, without any kind of jealousy, any competitive thoughts.

And then the third part is to hold in mind the absolute bodhicitta. There are two kinds of bodhicitta – that of the relative enlightenment mind and that of the absolute enlightenment mind. Here we are dealing with the absolute enlightenment mind, the absolute reality of all phenomena. This we cannot realise through rituals – we need to realise it through meditation. We make the resolution to meditate on ultimate reality and, just like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas meditated and attained realisation, we also resolve to meditate and attain realisation.

The fourth part is that of taking refuge. This is very important, because when we enter the Dharma path, the first step we take is to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This is necessary because, for example, if we need to go to an unknown place, the first thing we require is someone who can show us the way, a guide. Similarly, we take refuge in the Buddha as a guide to show us the way to liberation and enlightenment. And then, we ourselves need to travel on the path. This the Buddha cannot do for us, and so we take refuge in the Dharma as our actual path, because it is through the practice of Dharma that we attain liberation. And then, if we are going to undertake a long and arduous journey, rather than travelling alone, it is helpful to have companions. So we take refuge in the Sangha as our companions in the Dharma path. Out of compassion for all sentient beings, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha from this moment until enlightenment. Our ultimate goal is to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

In the fifth part, we cultivate the relative enlightenment mind. There are two kinds of enlightenment mind: the wishing enlightenment mind and the entering enlightenment mind. First, the wishing enlightenment mind. It means the sincere wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. We create this wish in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

And in the sixth part, we create the entering enlightenment mind. This means not merely wishing for enlightenment, but actually resolving to enter the Bodhisattva's way of life, just like the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas followed the path, we also resolve to follow it. We make this a vow.

And finally, in the seventh part, we dedicate the merits. By confessing, rejoicing, taking refuge and creating the enlightenment mind, we have acquired an enormous amount of merit. And so, while this is still fresh and hasn't been damaged by opposite paths, we dedicate it for our purpose of attaining liberation for all beings, thus protecting it from weakening or dete-

riorating, but rather helping it to keep increasing.

The root of emptiness, nirvana, the suffering of samsara, all of this lies in the mind.

Holding these visualisations, we recite the Seven-Fold Prayer. Through this we purify our negative deeds and accumulate merit. We also receive the refuge vow and the Bodhisattva vow at the same time. And so this prayer is very important.

In this way, we receive the initiation of Avalokiteshvara. In conclusion, we meditate on Mahamudra. The root of emptiness, nirvana, the suffering of samsara, all of this lies in the mind. If we try to examine the mind, it's not something that we can see with our eyes. Mind is not something that we can touch with our hands. Mind has no colour, no shape. Mind is neither one nor many. So it's naturally emptiness. And since it is devoid of self-nature it is never born. It cannot remain, it cannot reside. Since it does not reside, likewise it doesn't cease. So it is devoid of rising, residing and ceasing.

And it has no base, no root, and it is away from all descriptions such as existing or non-existing, or both or neither.

So it is just like space. Space was never born, never residing, never ceasing, unaffected by the elements, and it covers everything. Mind is just like space. So without interference of thoughts, we remain in this state of Mahamudra. We meditate on this for a moment. We have received Avalokiteshvara's transcendental wisdom initiation. Our mental obscurations have been purified, and now we can meditate on transcendental wisdom.

In conclusion, we promise to keep our samayas and vows, we make a mandala offering for thanksgiving and we dedicate the merits.

Understanding Our Mind

A Teaching by Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche



Generally speaking, whether we experience suffering or not when we face problems or challenges, depends on how we react to them, how we handle the situation. For example, if two persons experience the same suffering or face the same challenge, and if one is a Dharma practitioner while the other is just a mundane person, then although they may be facing the same problem and the same suffering, they will most probably handle the situation in different ways. Each one's suffering will be different from the other's. The one who faces challenges with an understanding of Dharma—not only a knowledge of Dharma, but also the capacity to apply their intellectual understanding of Dharma into their practice - will experience less suffering.

The Dharma can be a powerful tool in helping us to handle life's situations. In order for this to happen, we first need to gain knowledge of the Dharma, we need to study it. And then we need to use our knowledge in our approach to our challenges. The

Lord Buddha gave an enormous amount of teachings, and the purpose of all these teachings is to help us to subdue our mind, to tame our mind.

In his seminal text *Bodhisattva Acharyavatara*, the great Acharya Shantideva said that if we tether the mind, if we control it, then we will be able to control all the fears that assail it, and we will gain all the virtues that lead to its happiness. Shantideva said that if we are successful in taming our mind, we can control any fearsome animal, any evil spirit, any enemy whatsoever— we become completely free from fear.

Shantideva also said that cannot cover the whole universe with an animal skin or with a leather sheet. We can, however, cover our feet with leather. Similarly, as Shantideva adds, we cannot defeat all our enemies, but we can protect ourselves from them. We can apply this to our crises – we cannot defeat every single one of our obstacles, but we can protect our mind by controlling it, thereby overcoming all our

obstacles. The outcome doesn't depend on external factors but, rather, it depends on our own mental state.

Furthermore, whether we feel as if we are facing big problems or not also depends on our mind. The importance we give to problems depends on how strong our attachment is to the mundane world. If we don't have much attachment to the mundane world, then even if we face problems, we won't place too much importance on them. We won't be so affected by them, they won't cause us to suffer so much.

If we lose an object that has little value, we won't feel sad. But if we lose a precious object, then we will experience sadness. Whether we feel sad or not doesn't depend on the object itself – it depends on the importance that we place on it, it depends on our mind. If we're attached to it, we'll experience suffering; if we're not, then we won't experience suffering.

For example, if we buy a disposable product like a plastic plate or cup, and we know that we will only use it once and then throw it away. If we lose it, we won't feel sad, because we don't feel attached to it. But if we buy something precious like a car or a house and lose it, then we will feel sad, because we're attached to it. It all depends on whether we feel attachment or not.

If we feel attachment to an object, it means we have attachment to samsara. If we have attachment to samsara then, as Manjushri says in his four-line teaching "Parting from the Four Attachments", we don't have the renunciation thought.

Also, an object, the same object, can produce different kinds of feelings. In Spain, for example, saffron is commonplace, we can get it anywhere. And so, if we lose saffron in Spain, we won't feel sad. But elsewhere, saffron is rare and if we lose it there, we will feel regret, we will feel some suffering. So we can feel more or less attachment to a particular object depending on the circumstances.

Therefore whether we feel suffering or not doesn't depend on the object itself. It depends on our own mind, how we perceive the object. If we have attachment to the

object, then we feel pain when we lose it; if we don't, then we don't feel pain. Everything is mind. And so it is very important to control our mind. This is the key.

The Lord Buddha gave an enormous amount of teachings, and the purpose of all these teachings is to help us to subdue our mind, to tame our mind.

The Buddha gave an enormous amount of teachings to tame our mind, to subdue our mind. He taught the Dharma in many ways, but all his teachings can be combined into truths: the relative truth and the absolute truth, also known as the ultimate truth.

It is important to know and understand these two truths. If we can concentrate on these two truths, if we can meditate on them, then not only can we overcome the problems of this life or even of the next life, but we can also overcome all of samsara and attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. We can gain ultimate happiness and ultimate wisdom, power and all the other great qualities of the Buddhas.

So there are two realities. One is the reality of relative truth and the other is the reality of ultimate truth. The reality of relative truth refers to all the phenomena that we perceive, which in actuality are not truly existent. They only seem to exist. They are like a reflection in a mirror, like a magical show or like a dream. As ordinary beings, we cannot realise this. We see things as truly existent. We have a strong attachment to phenomena and cling to them as real. We don't see the reality of relative truth. Due to this, we become more materialistic and we focus on the outside world. We don't focus on our mind.

According to the reality of relative truth, these phenomena are not truly existent but, rather, they depend on their own causes and conditions. All phenomena depend on interdependent origination.

In the world today, we see the world getting smaller and smaller, ie we are more and more interdependent.

We can very much see this interdependent origination everywhere we look.

What interdependent origination means is that the phenomena that we perceive are not truly existent. If they were truly existent, they wouldn't depend on anything else to exist. But in order to exist, everything depends its own causes and conditions.

Interdependent origination means that things are not real the way we think them to be. Things are compound things, ie they are impermanent. They are not inherently existent. They depend on other things to rise. What's more, everything that arises will eventually cease, everything is impermanent.

For example, all beings born in this world will die. There's not a single person who is born in this world who will not eventually die. Not only living beings, but also material objects – whatever materialises will eventually cease. Even something as solid as iron can be destroyed and cease. Everything can be destroyed and cease.

So everything is impermanent and nothing is intrinsically true. Everything is like a dream. In one of his sutras, Lord Buddha gives the example of a young woman who dreams of having a son, which makes her very happy, only to find that her child dies, which plunges her into despair. In actuality no son was born to her, which means she has no reason to rejoice, and no son died, which means she has no reason to feel dejected. Similarly, all phenomena are like this.

We have good and bad dreams, and these make us feel happy or sad. But when we awaken from sleep, these feelings will not prevail during our waking life, because we know that dreams are not true. It is the same with the reality of relative truth. Our waking life is like a vision, like a dream. But at the moment, we look at our waking life as real, different from the dreams that we experience while we're sleeping. This is because we have a stronger propensity to believe that our daytime experience is real.

It's important to know the reality of relative truth. By doing so, we can definitely lessen our suffering,

we can definitely control our mind, and we can definitely reduce and eventually subdue our negative thoughts.

According to the reality of relative truth, phenomena are not truly existent but, rather, they depend on their own causes and conditions. All phenomena depend on interdependent origination.

And by suppressing our negative thoughts, we can eventually know the reality of absolute truth, which eliminates all negative thoughts from our mental continuum.

The reality of ultimate truth refers to a state that is free from all extremes. In reality, there is no self at all. If we analyse it thoroughly, we cannot find the self. For example, when we say "my car", it means that this car belongs to me, but it doesn't define the car itself. Likewise, when we say "my body", the body is not self. It belongs to me, but it is not my self, just like my car.

If we examine the body and try to determine what in it is 'self', we won't find it anywhere. As it says in the Bodhicharyavatara, "the teeth are not self, the hair is not self, the nails are not self, etc.."

And so in the reality of relative truth, there is a self, but it is like a vision, a dream, a magical show. And in ultimate truth, there is no self at all. We cannot find a self. But this doesn't mean that there isn't anything there. This is not right either. Both views are faulty – to say that there's nothing there is a nihilistic view, whereas to say that something exists inherently is an extremist view.

The truth is that actual reality is neither existing nor non-existing. The truth lies beyond these extremes. In short, by knowing the reality of relative truth, we can subdue our negative thoughts, which are the cause of our suffering. And by knowing the reality of ultimate truth, we can completely eliminate negative thoughts from our awareness

The Practice Of Guru Yoga

A Teaching by Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



It is written in the Hevajra Tantra that in order to attain Enlightenment it is necessary to realise the nature of mind, and that the best way to do this is through the accumulation of merit and the blessing of the Guru. And so an essential part of the Dharma path is the practice of Guru Yoga. But if we are going to follow this path, we need to really make certain that we understand its true meaning. Guru Yoga is a well-known and popular concept, but it is not one that is fully understood by the majority of Dharma practitioners.

In order to truly understand what Guru Yoga is, we need to educate ourselves as to its nature and its requirements, and then we need to train ourselves to generate the right kind of devotion towards the Guru in order to practise it correctly.

Many people practise Guru Yoga, but its nature and requirements are understood by few. In many cases, just because a teacher shows kindness to certain people, offers them attention or favours, then these people look upon him or her as a wonderful Guru and

they develop strong feelings of love for this teacher, a sense of Guru devotion. Of course, these feelings are valid, and this form of Guru devotion has its value. But, whatever its worth, devotion based on material or conventional considerations is not true Guru devotion.

Also, it is common nowadays to see the teacher as a kind of movie star, with students grouping around him like a fan club. Often, the teacher's qualities lend him a certain magnetism that attracts people. As a result, people feel a kind of connection with the teacher, which creates pleasant emotions like love and joy, a kind of sentimentality. Actually, these emotions we can enjoy with anyone, and they're not really relevant to a Guru-student relationship.

We see that many Dharma teachers are surrounded by devotees who follow them wherever they go, attend their teachings, make many offerings to them, run errands for them, give them massages, and so on. This is definitely beneficial, but only if it is accompanied by a resolute effort to put into practice the instructions that the teacher gives.

Real Guru Yoga is only possible if a genuine Guru-disciple relationship is established, wherein the Guru confers the Buddha's teachings to the student and the student strives with all his or her might to put these teachings into practice.

Generally, there are three ways in which a student's devotion to the Guru can be expressed. These ways are known as the ordinary, the middling and the superior. Ordinary Guru devotion is mainly based on making material offerings to the Guru, such as flowers, clothes, a car, property, etc. This practice is laudable and very meritorious, and it creates a strong bond between the student and the Guru. But it is not true Guru Yoga.

Middling Guru devotion consists of the student making the offering of his or her body, capacities and time to the teacher, by serving the Guru to the best of his or her abilities. This practice means that a substantial part of the student's activities are dedicated to serving the Guru. It requires a great deal of devotion from the student and in this sense it is highly formative and valuable. But this is still not true Guru Yoga.

Superior Guru devotion is substantially different from the other two kinds. Here, the student offers his or her spiritual practice to the teacher. This is the highest offering that a student can make to his or her Guru, and this is where true Guru Yoga is found.

Real Guru Yoga is only possible if a genuine Guru-disciple relationship is established, wherein the Guru confers the Buddha's teachings to the student and the student strives with all his or her might to put these teachings into practice. Here, the teacher takes on the supreme role of mentor, guiding the student to Buddhahood, for the sake of all beings.

This pure Guru Yoga requires an unconditional commitment from the student. Many devotees recite Guru Yoga prayers, pledging to do anything for the Guru. But one thing is mentally and verbally offering absolute devotion to the Guru, and another thing is to actually engage in true Guru Yoga practice. This is similar to thinking of going swimming and talking about it but, when the time comes to jump into the water, the enthusiasm wanes. It's a different matter altogether. Not too many people actually get to test the waters. Likewise, it takes a lot of courage and determination to engage in true Guru Yoga practice.

True Guru Yoga is very demanding, with the disciple relying heart and soul on the teacher's instructions and engaging his or her entire being into putting them into practice. Since the attainment of Buddhahood is at stake, the teacher's instructions are often highly challenging and difficult to meet. An unshakeable faith in the teacher is required to overcome these hurdles, and the full confidence that he will lead the disciple to Buddhahood.

Faithfully following the Guru's advice, the disciple adopts what is virtuous and abandons what is not virtuous and, through the Guru's wisdom and compassion, gradually acquires a better understanding of the nature of reality.

From his side, the Guru unfailingly guides and protects the disciple along the path, leading him step by step to the ultimate accomplishment.

An Introduction To Buddhism

A Teaching by Chogye Trichen Rinpoche



This is a teaching about the importance of cultivating positive emotions such as loving kindness and compassion, and how this will promote wellbeing, not only in ourselves, but also in the greater world we all share.

[A Buddhist Aeon] In order to put the Buddhist tradition into context and understand how a fully enlightened one appears in this world, it is important to know about kalpas, the aeons or cycles of time. Within a given cycle of time, there is always the formation of a physical environment of the 'outer elements', and this environment will be inhabited by sentient beings such as ourselves. A kalpa time cycle is divided according to three phases: First, there is the process of coming into being or 'creation'; next, the time span during which the environment and beings abide; and finally, the phase of cessation, where that cosmos and the beings within it disappear. A kalpa or aeon in which a fully enlightened one appears is called an aeon of light, or 'fortunate' aeon. It is fortunate

because a fully enlightened one appears in the world and bestows the light of spiritual intelligence upon the beings there. In contrast, there are the dark aeons, those cycles of creation in which no enlightened being will appear. It is also said that the dark aeons are more numerous than the aeons of light.

[A Fortunate Aeon] The particular cycle in which we now live is of a very special type, known as a 'fortunate' aeon. At the beginning of this fortunate aeon, there was a Chakravartin, a universal monarch of great power known as Tsibkyi Mugyu, or Arenemi. As ruler at an early stage in the formation of that aeon, King Arenemi enjoyed a reign of great prosperity, harmony, and wellbeing. This was true not only for the realm of the gods, but also for the human worlds. Although officially King Arenemi may not have had many queens, still it is said that as a great universal regent, he had thousands of queens. We are also told that these queens bore him more than one thousand princes. Due to his vast merit, merely by gesturing

to one of these women and calling her his queen, she was able to bear him a son. King Arenemi gave rise to the wish that each of his sons could share among themselves the rule of his kingdom.

In those times, there lived a Buddha, the historical Buddha of that era, just as the historical Buddha of our era is Shakyamuni. These are fully enlightened Buddhas who display the twelve great deeds of an enlightened one. The Buddha of that era was known as Mahavairochana. The king approached Buddha Mahavairochana, saying that he had fathered more than one thousand sons, and asking how he might bless each son to enjoy a worthy and meaningful reign as king. The king asked if he might offer the services of these princes to Buddha Mahavairochana, in order that his sons might bear even greater fruits of virtue. The Buddha accepted King Arenemi's request, taking the princes as his disciples. The king offered his sons to the Buddha with great aspirations, wondering in his heart when they would become equal to the Buddha himself. He asked Mahavairochana, 'When will they be like you?' The Buddha reassured the king that all of the princes, as his disciples, would one day certainly become fully enlightened ones. Over the progression of the cycles of time, it is said that an aeon of light is generally followed by a dark aeon. This particular aeon in which we dwell is known as a Bhadrakalpa, an 'extremely auspicious aeon'. At the beginning of the formation of this aeon, it is said that in the middle of the universal ocean there blossomed a one-thousand-petalled golden lotus flower. This wondrous lotus sprung up with such force that it reached to the heights of the realms of the gods or devas. The appearance of the golden lotus caused the gods to exclaim, "What a wonder it is to witness the blooming of the thousand-petalled golden lotus! It is an auspicious omen, signifying the coming of one thousand Buddhas in this aeon." Thus the blossoming of the lotus foretold the

birth of the thousand princes destined to Buddhahood.

This particular aeon in which we dwell is known as a Bhadrakalpa, an 'extremely auspicious aeon'.

[Previous Buddhas] Delighted by Mahavairochana's prediction, the king further wondered in what order his sons would become enlightened. He requested the Buddha to reveal this to him. Mahavairochana ordered that the name of each prince be written out, and the names were gathered in a cloth and placed in a vase. Then the Buddha drew names, one by one, unfolding the sequence in which each of the princes would reach Buddhahood. The first name selected, the one who would become the first Buddha of our fortunate aeon, was the one we know as Buddha Krakuchandra. The second name drawn was the one who became Buddha Kanakamuni, the second Buddha of our kalpa. The third name drawn was the prince who would be born as the Buddha Kashyapa, the third Buddha of our fortunate aeon. The fourth was the name of the prince who was to become the enlightened one of our present era, Buddha Shakyamuni. Hence Shakyamuni is known as the fourth great emancipator, or liberating one. The fifth name drawn was the one to appear as our next Buddha, Lord Maitreya. The sixth will come as Buddha Simhanada. In this way the names of each of the more than one thousand princes were drawn. It was further prophesied by the Buddha that the prince whose name was drawn last, upon taking birth as the final Buddha of this fortunate aeon, was to be an extraordinary enlightened one. This Buddha would embody all the realization, qualities and activities of all the previous Buddhas united within himself. Our present era is that of the fourth prince, known to us as Buddha Shakyamuni.

[The Coming of the Buddha of this Age] Prior to Shakyamuni's descent into our world, he reigned in the realm of the gods known as Tushita. Whoever ruled in the Tushita heaven assumed the name of Svetakirti, and so this was Shakyamuni's name while he dwelt there. During his reign in the Tushita heaven, Svetakirti received many requests from gods as well as humans, beseeching him that he might appear in our world and manifest the twelve deeds of a supremely enlightened one. In response, he made five careful and specific observations regarding the circumstances of his future birth. These included the place in our world in which he would be born, at what time and on what date, as well as whose child he would be, and so forth. From these five careful observations, Svetakirti determined that he would appear in this world as a prince, the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mayadevi in the kingdom of Kapilavastu. The remains of Kapilavastu are found in southern Nepal, not far from the border with India.

[Lumbini Garden] Just to the east of Kapilavastu there was in those ancient times a small kingdom whose capital was known as Devadaha. The two kingdoms enjoyed prosperous matrimonial bonds, with frequent marriages occurring between them. In those days, the woman who was to be the grandmother of Shakyamuni Buddha, whose name was Lumbini, dwelt in Devadaha. While Lumbini, a queen, was dwelling in the capital city of Devadaha, she used to visit a very beautiful garden nearby, which was owned by a wealthy family. As she went there frequently, she grew to wish that she be given the garden as her own. Her husband, the king, told her, "Although I may be the lord of this land, it would not be right for me to claim someone else's garden for you. Still, if you so wish, I shall build for you just such a garden." And so it was that the king built a most unique and splendid garden in the countryside between the two

cities. He named the garden in honour of his queen, and that place is known to this day as Lumbini. Queen Lumbini became the mother of two beautiful princesses. As was the custom in those times, she consulted the astrologers and soothsayers, so that she might know what future best suited her daughters the princesses. The seers unanimously predicted that both girls had the great merit to marry either a powerful ruler, or to become the mother of a mighty being who would become a supreme enlightened one. In the light of these predictions, her husband Suprabuddha, the king of Devadaha, wished to form a bond of marriage with the king of Kapilavastu, a man of great fame and reputation. As it happened, the king of Kapilavastu harboured a similar wish. Thus Queen Lumbini's eldest daughter, Mayadevi, was chosen to marry Shuddhodana, the prince of Kapilavastu. The marriage between Mayadevi and Shuddhodana was a grand celebration.

[Birth of Shakyamuni] In due course, the future Buddha Shakyamuni entered into this world. It is said that Queen Mayadevi conceived her son on the full moon night of the sixth lunar month in the earth sheep year. Then, in the fourth lunar month of the following year, the year of the iron monkey, on the seventh day of the month, she gave birth to a son. The normal period of growth in the womb is nine months, yet it is said that she carried her child for almost ten months. This is the account of the gestation and birth of the Buddha as it is given in the traditional histories. After Mayadevi found herself heavy with child, she remained for the most part in confinement, away from the social activities of the royal court. But, as the time to give birth grew near, she wished to withdraw to somewhere more peaceful. When asked what place she would find more pleasing, Mayadevi proposed a visit to her mother's garden, Lumbini, to relax and take rest. As she strolled in the Lumbini grove, the

time for Buddha's birth suddenly came upon her. Just as Queen Mayadevi reached out to grasp the branch of a plaksha tree, the Buddha miraculously issued forth from her. Causing Mayadevi neither pain nor injury, Buddha was born from under her right arm. The legends of the Buddha's birth tell us that from the day he entered Mayadevi's womb, all the devas and gods from the golden celestial realms watched over and protected him. It is even said that Buddha emerged from the ribs of Mayadevi's right side in the form of shimmering, scintillating golden light. Thus his appearance in this world was not by means of an ordinary birth, but was accompanied by miraculous events. We are also told how, immediately upon emerging from Queen Mayadevi, the Buddha walked seven steps in each of the four directions. Taking those steps, Buddha uttered four profound statements. The translation of these four statements is wonderful in the Tibetan language, where they reflect a play on the words for east, south, west, and north. As the Buddha took his first steps, in the eastern direction, he said, 'From here I arrive to attain nirvana, enlightenment.' The word for east in Tibetan also means 'to arrive'. Stepping to the south, the Buddha said, 'I will be in harmony with worldly understanding.' As he moved to the west, the direction of the setting sun, he said, 'This is my final birth.' And, with seven steps to the north, Buddha said, 'I have purified all my deeds in samsara, worldly existence...' playing on the word for north which also means 'purify'. Naturally, a child born in the ordinary way would never be able to walk and speak with such eloquence and dignity. Yet at his birth the Buddha strode forth in each of the four directions, heralding the event of his birth to all the world as he fearlessly proclaimed, 'I am unexcelled by anyone ever to appear in this world.' The child was raised as prince Siddhartha, and all people held great hopes for him as the future leader of the Shakya clan.

“From here I arrive to attain nirvana, enlightenment.

I will be in harmony with worldly understanding.

This is my final birth.

I have purified all my deeds in samsara.”

[Marriage] When his time of maturity had come, two fair princesses were proposed who might serve as his future queens. They were called Yasodhara and Gopika. Both princesses belonged to highly respected and wealthy families, and there were many princes in the surrounding kingdoms who eagerly sought their hands in marriage. And so a competition was arranged, and all their suitors had to display their skills and sportsmanship, in hopes of winning such widely coveted brides. Prince Siddhartha defeated every rival and had the honour of claiming both princesses as his Queens. In this way, Siddhartha prepared to succeed his father as ruler of the kingdom of the Shakyas. Having married, Siddhartha reigned as prince of the Shakya kingdom. One day, he went on his first excursion outside of the palace and into the city of Kapilavastu. On this journey, the prince witnessed four events that would change him forever. These events brought Siddhartha face to face for the first time with human suffering, from which he had so far been carefully shielded by his father the king. Having never in his life seen such conditions, Siddhartha immediately understood that all living beings are subject to the inevitable sufferings of illness, old age, and death. As the full force of this understanding struck his mind, Siddhartha wondered how any one could pretend that all was fine in the world and carry on as if such suffering did not exist! This experience quickly caused Prince Siddhartha

to give rise to a powerful sense of renunciation, and it forced him to recognize the futile nature of this world. All the activities of this life were ultimately meaningless, since all who inhabit this world must one day experience the same pains and pass away, leaving the experiences of this world to fade away like a dream. Having come to this realization, Siddhartha resolved to leave the palace life and wander in search of the truth. He sought to extract from life its essential meaning.

[Leaving the Palace] The young prince had a faithful attendant known as Chanda, and he had a most excellent horse known as Kanthaka. Siddhartha summoned his attendant and ordered him to prepare his mount. Bidding his wife and infant son farewell as they lay asleep, he stole from the palace in secrecy, under cover of night, lest his subjects learn of his departure. Prince Siddhartha ordered his attendant to grasp the tail of his horse Kanthaka, who then miraculously bound over the walls of the palace compound and into the city. It is said that the four great guardian deities of the directions offered their service to Siddhartha, each lifting one hoof of the horse and spiriting them off through the air, until at last they brought them to the place known as Vishuddha stupa, the 'stupa of great purity'. It was there that the prince formally abandoned the life of a householder and adopted the life of a total renunciate. Seizing a blade, he cut off the length of his hair, as a sign that he had parted from all attachment to this world. Siddhartha discarded his princely garb, his gown and ornaments. It is said that hosts of gods and devas magically appeared all about him, offering him the robes of a spiritual mendicant. Donning these garments, bestowed upon him by the gods themselves, he declared, 'I have renounced worldly life in order to seek the path to enlightenment.'

[Early Asceticism] Now Siddhartha pondered

carefully the nature of the path he sought. He understood that all the Buddhas of the past had reached enlightenment through ascetic practice. He knew with certainty that there was no way for him but to follow the same path. Siddhartha resolved to practice the ascetic way, making a solemn vow of fasting, and abstained from all food for six years. He further determined to remain motionless in meditation, and so it was that he sat continuously for six years without moving. This period of Siddhartha Gautama's life has come to be known as the six years of asceticism, of unbroken, solitary meditation practice. This is how penances led him to the threshold of enlightenment, on the banks of the river Niranjana. During these six years of fasting, Siddhartha also kept a vow of noble silence. He did not speak to anyone, but remained absorbed in the silence of meditation. Once, as he sat motionless and speechless, some local cowherds came upon him, and wondered if he was a human being or a statue. They went so far as to poke burning irons into his ears, but Siddhartha showed not the slightest reaction. In this way he demonstrated the greatest determination to succeed in his meditation and austerities.

[Enlightenment] Now Siddhartha Gautama's mother had passed away seven days after giving birth to him, and she had been reborn in the land of the gods known as the 'realm of the thirty-three.' As a deva of this realm, she possessed some limited clairvoyance, and was able to see that her son from her previous life, Gautama, was undergoing great hardships. As this goddess, the former Mayadevi, wept for Siddhartha, her tears fell miraculously from the celestial world, forming a small pool in front of the meditating Buddha. In response to this, the great meditator Gautama broke his silence, just one week before he was to attain enlightenment. He spoke out reassuringly to his mother, saying, 'Although I have

gone through these ascetic practices of unimaginable difficulty, yet I still have not reached my goal. I have only one week before I will gain enlightenment. Then I will repay your kindness, and will come to teach you in the near future.' In this way, his mother was the first person for whom Gautama broke his vow of silence, just prior to attaining enlightenment. Completing his six years of meditation, Siddhartha arose from that place, setting out on foot for what would come to be known as Bodhgaya, the diamond seat. Thus he came to arrive before the great Bodhi tree there. He knew that this was indeed the very place where all the past Buddhas, such as Krakuchandra, Kanakamuni, and Kashyapa, had attained enlightenment, on the very seat he himself now approached. In deepest reverence, Gautama bowed before the vajra seat and then took his place upon it, leaning his back against the Bodhi tree. Upon that very throne of enlightenment of the Buddhas of the past, Siddhartha repeated the greatest act of all of history, achieving complete enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Bodhgaya. Gautama had spent six years meditating on the banks of the Niranjana, and had come to the diamond seat of Bodhgaya to finish his meditation training. He entered again into seated meditation at dusk on the full moon night. Terrifying hosts of mara-devils and evil beings swarmed around him in a jealous frenzy. They threatened him with fearsome apparitions, brandishing terrible weapons and hurling them at him in rage and envy. These demons had great power and were able to destroy whatever they set themselves upon. Yet, due to the invincible power of meditation, compassion, and loving kindness emanating from Siddhartha, they could not defeat him. Now only hours from gaining enlightenment, in a meditation of unassailable stability, he transformed all that was flung at him into celestial flowers. He suffered not the slightest harm. Thus conquering and subduing

all the mara-devils during the period of dusk on that night, then continuing on through the middle watch of the night he remained in the deep Samadhi of meditation. Finally, in the early dawn that followed the full moon night, he gained complete and perfect enlightenment, samyak sambuddha. Having attained enlightenment, Siddhartha Gautama, now the Buddha, entered into the most sublime and indescribable state of bliss and emptiness that is the enlightened state. In this profound condition he gave rise to a great wish, thinking, 'How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings could share in this realization which is now my own.'

Having attained enlightenment, Siddhartha Gautama, now the Buddha, entered into the most sublime and indescribable state of bliss and emptiness that is the enlightened state. In this profound condition he gave rise to a great wish, thinking, 'How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings could share in this realization which is now my own.'

[Request to Teach] Buddha wished that it were possible to share his discovery with every being, yet he realized that sentient beings were far too deeply immersed in ignorance to join him there. And so he spoke to himself these famous words: "I have found a Dharma which is like nectar; it is noncomposite clear light, profound and peaceful, and beyond conceptual elaboration. Were I to explain it, others would not understand, and so I shall remain in the forest without speaking." Having said this to himself, he vowed to remain in silence for seven years. The Buddha

dwelt in the state of contemplation, abstaining from any teaching role. Brahma, the great sovereign of the universe, and Indra, the lord of the gods and angels, knew that the great enlightened wisdom of a Buddha was now manifest in this world. Brahma appeared and offered to the Buddha a thousand-spoked golden wheel and Indra offered the most rare clockwise spiralling conch shell. These supremely auspicious tokens of veneration they offered to the Buddha, beseeching him to turn the wheel of Dharma for the benefit of all sentient beings. In response to this majestic supplication made by Brahma, lord of the universe and Indra, king of the gods, Buddha Shakyamuni consented to turn the wheel of the teachings. Over the course of the rest of his life, Buddha Shakyamuni set in motion what are known as the three great turnings of the wheel of Dharma, the wheel of the teachings.

[Turning the Wheel of Dharma] The first turning of the wheel took place in the ancient Indian city of Varanasi. Buddha initiated the first turning with his central theme of the four noble truths. The collection of teachings of the first turning of the wheel of Dharma are known as the Theravada, or commonly held precepts. The Theravada teachings mainly focus on what are known as the four great seals of the Dharma. The four seals are:

- All phenomena are impermanent
- All phenomena are suffering
- All phenomena are selfless
- Nirvana alone is peace

The Buddha tells us that all compounded phenomena, everything that is composed of various elements and factors, is transient, impermanent; it does not last. Second, we are told that all phenomenal experience is of the nature of suffering. Third, the Buddha concludes that there is no self to be found in the phenomenal world. Fourth, the Buddha reveals

that nirvana, liberation, is peace. These four teachings were the primary principles of the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, taught and set in motion in Varanasi by Buddha Shakyamuni.

[Second Turning] From the second turning of the wheel of Dharma came the teachings belonging to the Mahayana, or great vehicle. This turning was initiated in the Indian city of Rajgir, at a place known as the Vulture's Peak. There the Buddha taught the Prajnaparamita, or Perfection of Wisdom sutras. These sutras are of varying lengths, such as the one-hundred-thousand verse sutra, the twenty-thousand-verse sutra, the eight-thousand-verse sutra, and so on. All of these teachings reveal the truth of emptiness, that all phenomena, everything that appears to be, actually lacks any inherent, true existence.

[Third Turning] The third and final turning of the Wheel of Dharma focused on the subtle, definitive meaning of the Dharma. Though the Buddha expounded a myriad of teachings, he himself contemplated the effectiveness of each of these teachings. He pondered how people would interpret the teachings, and tailored his message to suit the minds of his listeners. In this way, there came to be what are known as the commonly understood teachings that follow the provisional meaning, and then also what are known as the teachings that reveal the definitive or ultimate meaning of the Dharma, and the commonly held, interpretive meaning. These discourses were given in the ancient town of Vaishali. Vaishali became famous in the sutras as the place where a monkey made offerings to the Buddha. The complete Dharma spoken by Lord Buddha is said to comprise eighty-four thousand teachings in total. These serve as direct remedies for the eighty-four thousand emotions or concepts with which sentient beings may be afflicted. Of these, Buddha taught that there are twenty-one thousand defilements that all beings can experience

and which relate to greed, desire, and attachment. As an antidote for these obscurations, Buddha taught twenty-one thousand discourses on the Vinaya, the higher training of moral and ethical precepts for lay persons and ordained monks and nuns.

Buddha Shakyamuni further distinguished twenty-one thousand types of negativity associated with aversion, anger, and hatred. As a remedy for these afflicted states of mind, Buddha gave the twenty-one thousand teachings of the sutras. As the antidote for the defilements arising based on ignorance, Buddha taught the twenty-one thousand discourses on the Abhidharma. In addition, a further twenty-one thousand talks were given which discussed the defilements of attachment, aversion, and ignorance as they interact with one another. In this way, Buddha gave direct remedies for all the eighty-four thousand defilements experienced by sentient beings. When considering the three turnings of the wheel of Dharma, one may wonder where and when the Buddhist Tantras were taught. The tantras are related to the third turning of the wheel of Dharma.

All phenomena are impermanent
All phenomena are suffering
All phenomena are selfless
Nirvana alone is peace

[Oddiyana & King Indrabhuti] During the course of Buddha's life and activity, many of his disciples had reached various levels of realization. It is even said that whenever the Buddha moved from one place to another, these disciples would fly in the sky, spreading their golden dharma robes like wings. In this way they might move from eastern India to the western regions, from south to north. In the western region of India was a kingdom known as Oddiyana. In Buddha's time, the King of Oddiyana was Indrabhuti, who was

the same age as Buddha, having been born in the same year. One day, as the king and his ministers were enjoying the palace gardens, a vast flock of monks flew by in the sky above them. Indrabhuti asked the wise elders among his ministers, "Who are they, and how can it be that they fly through the sky like birds?" A senior minister replied, "Your Majesty, we dwell in western India. I have heard that in eastern India there is the kingdom of the Shakyas, out of which arose the miraculous display of a prince known as Siddhartha. He is said to have renounced his kingdom and become an enlightened one. These must be some of his disciples in the skies above." Astonished, King Indrabhuti exclaimed, "This is remarkable. How can it be? If even the disciples demonstrate such miracles, what a wonder the master himself must be! Might someone go and invite him to come to us?" The elder minister answered the king, "Your Majesty, there is no need to physically travel there. If those possessed of great faith and devotion make fervent, heartfelt prayers, the Buddha will know and hear their prayers through his omniscient wisdom. If you wish, pray thus, and invite the Buddha to come here and teach you." Hearing this, King Indrabhuti composed a famous verse of supplication, acknowledging the Buddha as the leader and guide of all sentient beings, and asking to be included within the Buddha's protective wheel of refuge. At this very time, Buddha Shakyamuni was residing in Rajgirha. He summoned various disciples, such as the Bodhisattvas Manjushri and Vajrapani, as well as the realized Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, all of whom had the ability to fly with him. The Buddha told them that on the coming full moon he would go to the western kingdom of Oddiyana at the invitation of King Indrabhuti. Those who were able to fly were invited to accompany him there. In this way the Buddha and his disciples came to arrive at the palace of Indrabhuti, King of Oddiyana. Buddha reached

Oddiyana with these disciples and an assembly of the guardian kings of the four directions, as well as Brahma, Indra, and many of the gods, such as had never been seen before. King Indrabhuti could not believe his eyes when he saw that even the great lords of the celestial realms moved in the entourage of the Buddha. The Buddha addressed King Indrabhuti, "For what purpose have you invited me here?" Indrabhuti replied, "You are a prince of eastern India, and I am a prince of western India. We are even of the same age, and yet you are such a sublime one. Please teach me how to become like you. This is my only request." Hearing the king's request, Buddha replied thus: "If you wish to attain the same state as I, then you must abandon all worldly attachments and all the pleasures of the senses. Without renouncing the qualities of sensual experience and practicing the ascetic way, without this kind of renunciation, it will not be possible to attain liberation." Now King Indrabhuti was an extremely astute and intelligent person. He knew that the profound depth of the Buddha's realization must include methods that would allow one to attain liberation without abandoning the qualities of the senses. The king responded, "Lord Buddha, I have been spoiled by living my whole life in such luxurious surroundings. At this stage of my life, how can I give up my queens and elegant lifestyle? Even if I must be born as a fox or a dog that feeds on excrement, I cannot abandon all attachment to sensory pleasures. Neither can I abandon the responsibilities of my kingdom. Please grant me a teaching that does not require me to do so." Hearing the king's genuine plea, Buddha replied that he did indeed possess such a teaching. The Buddha consented to impart the esoteric teachings of the Vajrayana, the diamond vehicle of Buddhist Tantra, in particular the teaching of the tantric Buddha in the form of Guyasamaja.

In addition, Buddha offered the transmission

of all the empowerments of the Anuttarayogatantra to King Indrabhuti, including those of all the major tantric emanations of the Buddha such as Kalachakra, Hevajra, and Chakrasamvara. As Buddha bestowed these transcendent initiation ceremonies, the king, being possessed of unusually sharp faculties, was actually able to spontaneously accomplish and attain each stage and level of realization transmitted by the Buddha during the course of the empowerments. At each successive stage of empowerment, Indrabhuti instantly gained the same realization that a successful practitioner of that stage would enjoy. At the moment of the supreme phase of initiation known as the fourth empowerment, King Indrabhuti entered the highest level of enlightenment, and was able to simultaneously demonstrate all the miraculous displays of a fully enlightened one. This story from the life of the Buddha clearly shows us that people of keen intelligence may practice the Vajrayana diamond way and accomplish its vast benefits. One may follow the example of the disciples of the Buddha such as King Indrabhuti and enter the path through the tradition of major Vajrayana initiations which began in Oddiyana.

[Dharmyakataka] In another region of India not so far away was the southern kingdom of Dharmyakataka, the 'place of heaped rice'. This is a place that attracted scholars, yogins and mendicants from a great variety of spiritual traditions. It was a famous dwelling place for those who wished to spend most of their time in meditation and prayer. Dharmyakataka was known as 'heap of rice' in reference to the abundance of hermitages and meditation retreats that covered the mountainside. It was at the magnificent stupa of Dharmyakataka that Buddha Shakyamuni imparted the world-renowned tantra known as Kalachakra. This empowerment attracted the Kulika rulers of Shambala, a kingdom near Oddiyana, to attend as its honoured recipients. The kingdom of Shambala

is said to have unique inhabitants; although they are human beings, they are said to have been and to be more intelligent and with far more acute faculties than humans. They are even said to have had wings! The king of Shambhala at that time, Suchandra, travelled to Dhanyakataka to receive the Kalachakra initiation from Buddha Shakyamuni.

[The Three Vehicles] One could give infinite details regarding all the boundless activities of the Buddha, but this will suffice for now. Here we merely wished to give a brief account of the turnings of the wheel of Dharma, to summarize the history of the Buddha's teaching career. The paths outlined by the Buddha in his teachings are grouped into three principal vehicles. The first is the vehicle of the Theravada or 'elders', which is mainly focused on the path of renunciation and follows the teaching of the four noble truths.

[Mahayana: Loving Kindness] The quintessence of the second vehicle, the Mahayana or great vehicle taught by Buddha Shakyamuni, comes down to two central practices, the practice of loving kindness and the practice of compassion. We should try to understand together the meaning of these. As an example of loving-kindness, we can reflect on the kindness received from our own mother until a feeling of gratitude and appreciation naturally arises. We can reflect that from the day we were born into this world, we were utterly helpless, and could have easily been abandoned. Yet our own kind mother protected us from every danger, fed and clothed us, taught us what to do and what to avoid. She gave us everything we needed, sacrificing her own needs for ours. To help loving kindness grow inside of us, we contemplate the kindness received from our own dear mother. With this in mind, we give rise to the genuine wish that she be happy, and further generate the wish that we ourselves be able to provide her with the causes of happiness.

From this benevolent wish, we proceed to cultivate a very creative, positive energy of loving kindness. In so doing, we both increase our affection for others and strengthen the wish to repay the kindness shown to us by our own mother, the wish to increase her happiness. This is what is known as loving kindness. Anyone can reflect on this example, and then begin to extend the feeling generated by remembering their mother's kindness to include other living beings.

[Compassion] Similarly, compassion arises when, through appreciating the kindness and love shown by one's own mother, one feels indebted to her and finds it impossible to bear the thought of her suffering and undergoing hardships. We never want to see her experiencing any troubles or difficulties. If such situations befell her, one would make sincere efforts to rescue her from even the smallest infirmity, from even the most trifling circumstance that might cause her pain. We learn active compassion by empathizing with the sufferings of our own mother and by truly trying to reduce this as well as to eliminate whatever is causing her pain. Active compassion is the wish and intent to relieve others from misery and from whatever is causing them anguish. These two principles are at the very core of the teachings of the Mahayana, the great vehicle, which is the Buddha's second turning of the wheel of the teachings. No matter what esoteric meditations of the Vajrayana we may engage in, we must base ourselves on the essence of Mahayana Buddhist teaching, the practice of loving kindness and compassion. This will lead to a point where we are actually able to renounce our own self-interest in favour of cherishing the welfare of others. This is genuine altruism. Even if we are not quite ready or able to adopt such a noble attitude, we train ourselves step by step to really consider what will help others as much as we look out for our own welfare. You really can try to be an instrument of happiness for other

living beings, even in the smallest ways. It is equally important that we never ignore or turn a blind eye to any causes that might bring suffering to others. As long as there is suffering, and it doesn't need to be ours, it still needs to be resolved or healed. One who has this attitude is able to develop active or engaged compassion. If there is happiness in a family or between a couple, this happiness hinges for the most part on how loving, caring, and giving the family members and partners are toward one another. It does not depend on their accumulation of wealth and their material success. It is exactly the same as far as the wellbeing of one's community, as far as the level of happiness in the greater world around us, is concerned. Whether or not a leader can set a good example that others can follow depends for the most part on how much they really care about others. It depends on how giving he or she is able to be when conducting their daily affairs. This type of leadership sets a noble standard that people will admire and will naturally wish to emulate. It cannot help but benefit us if we are able to live according to the teaching and practice of loving kindness toward whomever we share our lives with. Whether we are at home or out in the world, if we show more love and empathy for others, we will find more happiness in our lives. If individuals are able to dedicate themselves to a life of loving kindness and compassion, then such people will make a great contribution to the wellbeing of the world, as a whole, to the cause of peace and happiness.

What is called 'world peace' only depends on how the citizens of the world behave toward one another. Love and compassion lead to the happiness of the individual, and this will naturally bring about a peaceful world. Although in this particular lifetime each of us has received the kindness of our own mother, this does not mean that there is only one person to whom we should feel indebted. It

has been said by the Buddha that there have been countless occasions on which we have been reborn. We ourselves have experienced births in all the six realms of existence, in every possible situation, in every possible circumstance. In each of these lives, we have had a kind mother, so in fact we are indebted to all of those mothers just as much as we are to the mother of our present life. Bearing this in mind at all times can lead us to harbour genuine concern for other beings. Due to our involvement with the karma of this present life, we cannot recognize around us those who actually were our previous mothers. Even so, we still can choose to conduct ourselves so as to repay each of them for all the good they have shown us. This is the way to develop loving kindness. There is great variety among the different religions in regard to how to approach the spiritual path, as well as concerning their doctrines and their assertions of what is true. But one thing that we can find in common is that all religions promote love and compassion and caring for one another. Without a doubt the spirit of Christianity is the same as that of Buddhism in promoting and upholding the value of love. The Christian teaching says that God is love, and, remembering this, one should show love toward others. This must be the most essential belief of Christians, and they try to practise it in their daily lives. It is no different with Buddhism. The Buddhist teachings guide us in how to treat one another. They teach us to understand and resolve for ourselves the moral and ethical choices we make, since only these choices will become the causes for whatever results we ourselves wish to achieve. This practice of mindful attentiveness to one's conduct emphasized in the Buddhist teachings encourages us to cultivate beneficial causes. These good causes arise from our intention to benefit others. Any deed that is performed with a good intention to benefit others will eventually bear fruits of happiness. This will come

about due to what is known as the law of cause and effect, the law of karma. Whether one believes in God, or whether one believes in the law of cause and effect, both teach us to be good people, to do good so as to promote the happiness of others. When we ourselves shun and avoid negative conduct, the suffering of others is also avoided. Both views accept the same fact, that we ought not to do things that create the causes of unhappiness, and that rather we should sow seeds of virtue that become causes for the happiness of others. All religions teach love between oneself and others, and bid us to be a source of benefit to others rather than being a cause of pain for them.

No matter what esoteric meditations of the Vajrayana we may engage in, we must base ourselves on the essence of Mahayana Buddhist teaching, the practice of loving kindness and compassion. This will lead to a point where we are actually able to renounce our own self-interest in favour of cherishing the welfare of others. This is genuine altruism.

[Kindness & Compassion] It is important to see that these teachings of loving kindness and compassion are not some sort of formal doctrine that one has to profess loyalty to or belief in. They are concerned with the way we live. What determines our happiness or lack of it is what we do with ourselves. We can conduct ourselves in a way that shows care and concern for whatever sufferings we see around us, however small or apparently insignificant. We see suffering in the lives of others, and we wish that they did not have to experience such discomfort and unhappiness. We wish that we ourselves might be

instrumental in the relief of their suffering. We also wish that they be happy, and that we ourselves can help them to be happy and add to their wellbeing. For example, in the lives of a couple, if each partner wishes the best for the other, and each wishes that the other not have to experience pain and misery, then there will be greater harmony between husband and wife, between partners. Likewise, if such a relationship exists for example between an employer and those who work for him or her, this promotes happiness in those situations where some are in a leadership role and others are following their directions. It is through each individual assuming their share of this basic responsibility to other beings and conducting their relationships based on love and compassion, that we are able to make our world a different place. People speak about world peace. Peace only comes about when people extend love towards one another. These are essential points of the Mahayana Buddhist teaching.

[Vajrayana] Having understood what is the basis of the Mahayana or greater vehicle of Buddhism, one may now ask where the Vajrayana, the esoteric tantric vehicle, fits into the Buddhist tradition. Vajrayana, the diamond vehicle, is a branch of the Mahayana tradition. If one has developed a good basis of loving kindness and compassion, one may make use of methods which are the special skilful means of the Vajrayana. The benefit of these methods is that they provide a far more skilful and much swifter means of attaining enlightenment than can be gained by relying on the other vehicles on their own. It is said that even if one follows the perfection of wisdom or Prajnaparamita of the Mahayana, still it will require three incalculable aeons to attain enlightenment. On the other hand, resorting to the skilful methods of the Vajrayana diamond vehicle, it is taught that it is even possible to attain enlightenment in one lifetime. There

have been a great number of practitioners of India and Tibet who through following Vajrayana Buddhism have indeed attained complete enlightenment in a single lifetime. It is for this purpose of greatly accelerating the path to enlightenment that the Vajrayana vehicle is available as a special means within the great Mahayana vehicle. If one has a heart that overflows with love and compassion as a stable foundation, then resorting to esoteric practices will guarantee rapid spiritual development. In this way, one may gain the capacity to benefit so many more sentient beings so much more quickly.

[Anuttarayoga Tantra] Within the esoteric vehicle of the Vajrayana, there are four general levels of tantras or scriptures. The highest, ultimate of these four is known as Anuttarayoga Tantra or 'Highest Yoga Tantra'. The Anuttarayoga tantras themselves are classed as Father tantras, Mother tantras, and Non-dual tantras. In the category of Non-dual tantras, there are only two scriptural traditions, that of Buddha Hevajra and that of Buddha Kalachakra. In order to understand a little bit about Buddhist tantra, let us consider for example the tradition of Kalachakra. The empowerment of the Kalachakra tantra has been widely given throughout the world in recent times. As a non-dual tantra, Kalachakra is the quintessence of all the Anuttara, or Highest Yoga tantras. Kalachakra itself is divided into four types of tantra, giving us an elaborate framework to understand the specifics of the tantra. First there is the outer Kalachakra. In large part, these sections are concerned with visualizing and meditating on the Buddha in the form of the meditational deity Kalachakra, and chanting his mantra.

[Kalachakra] Second comes the inner Kalachakra. Inner Kalachakra addresses itself to applying the profound internal meditations upon the subtle channels, vital winds, elements, and essential drops

which make up the subtle or psychic body. The third section of Kalachakra, secret Kalachakra refers to meditating upon and within the ultimate meaning of the truth of emptiness. The fourth subject within Kalachakra is 'other' or 'alternative' Kalachakra, and relates to the study and meditation on the outer cosmos of our realm of existence. Alternative Kalachakra teaches us how all the physical appearances of this world are the manifestation of our collective karma. In this way, it teaches us the causes that bring about this universe. Alternative Kalachakra describes the outer universe and how it directly corresponds with, and reflects, the inner propensities and karmic vision of all the beings within this universe. Thus the Kalachakra tantra contains the deepest meaning of the four types of tantras within one single tradition. Due to its profound meaning and the blessing that it carries, it is very good if one can receive the Kalachakra initiation or at least the oral transmission of the mantra of Buddha Kalachakra. As an example of the power and benefits of mantras of the Highest Yoga Tantras of the Vajrayana, it is said that by merely hearing the sound of the Kalachakra mantra, with the proper attitude and faith, many difficulties and obstacles are removed for us. If you take the opportunity to recite the Kalachakra mantra during the course of your life, this will allay outer obstacles and create peace within you. Even reciting the mantra once definitely has the power to pacify one's afflictions and promote a general sense of happiness and wellbeing.

The Sutra of Recollecting the Three Jewels

A commentary by Khenchen Appey Rinpoche
(Part 3)



The Sutra of Recollecting the Three Jewels

Prostrations to the Omniscient One.

Thus the Blessed Buddha is the One Gone to Suchness, the Foe Destroyer, the Perfectly Accomplished One, the One Who Possesses Knowledge and Its “Feet,” the One Who Has Gone to Bliss, Knower of the World, the Unsurpassable Charioteer Who Tames Sentient Beings, and Teacher of Gods and Humans.

That Blessed Buddha is the One Gone to Suchness. He arose through corresponding causes of merit, and his root of virtue is inexhaustible. He is adorned with patience and is the foundation of the treasures of merit. His body is adorned with the noble minor marks and decorated with the flower

blossoms of the noble major marks. Conforming to the stages of the field of enlightened activities, his appearance is not unpleasant to one's sight and is delightful to devoted aspirants. His wisdom cannot be overpowered by others, and his powers are invincible. He is the teacher of all sentient beings and the father of all Bodhisattvas. He is the king of all noble beings and the captain who leads others to the City of Nirvana. He is the possessor of transcendental wisdom, inconceivable confidence, perfectly pure speech, a melodious voice, and a matchless body that is endlessly insatiable to behold. He is unaffected by desire, unaffected by form, and unmixed with formless ones. He is completely liberated from all suffering, thoroughly liberated from the aggregates, and unaffected by the elements. Possessing disciplined sensory perceptions, he has thoroughly cut all knots. He is completely liberated from all profound sufferings and freed from the world of existence. He has crossed the river. Having realized perfect wisdom, he is the one who abides in the transcendental wisdom of the past, future, and present Blessed Enlightened Ones. Not abiding in Nirvana, he dwells in the state of perfection that sees all sentient beings. These are all the great attributes that explain the qualities of the Blessed Buddha.

The noble Dharma is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. It possesses wholesome meaning, wholesome words, and is unmixed. It is utterly complete, utterly pure, and utterly spotless. This doctrine, well taught by the Blessed One, is perfectly seen, free from sickness, timeless, praiseworthy, meaningful to behold, and understood by the discriminating wisdom of learned ones. It is firmly based on the Blessed One's teachings of moral discipline and renunciation that lead to the state of perfect Buddhahood. Lacking contradictions, it is complete, reliable, and cuts off going.

The Sangha of the Great Vehicle dwell appropriately, knowledgeably, truthfully, and harmoniously. They are objects worthy of being venerated with joined palms and with prostrations. They are a magnificent merit-field capable of using offerings in a proper way. Being a proper object for receiving gifts, they should be given great offerings in any place or at any time.

[Translated by Jhampa Losal and Jay Goldberg at the International Buddhist Academy under the auspices of the Khenpo Appey Foundation, 2014. Reproduced by their kind permission].

The next epithets from the sutra read, “*He is the teacher of all sentient beings and the father of all Bodhisattvas. He is the king of all noble beings and the captain who leads others to the City of Nirvana.*” These four epithets show that the Buddha is capable of helping sentient beings by performing any kind of task that will fulfill their needs.

“He is the teacher of all sentient beings and the father of all Bodhisattvas. He is the king of all noble beings and the captain who leads others to the City of Nirvana.”

The first, *“the teacher of all sentient beings,”* indicates benefitting sentient beings by giving all of them teachings. Some sentient beings in the three lower realms are caused to be born in the higher realms just by seeing light rays issue from his body. On occasion, the Buddha will go to the lower realms, and by the sight of his body those beings feel happy. This sighting of the Buddha purifies their unwholesome actions, and they gain rebirth into the higher realms. This is the manner in which the Buddha helps living beings in the lower realms. In order to assist those beings who live in the higher realms but who have not entered the path that leads to liberation, the Buddha establishes them in the practice of moral conduct and giving. It is in this way that the Buddha benefits these living beings. For people who have the opportunity to gain liberation since they have already entered the path, the Buddha gives teachings that lead them directly to liberation.

“The father of all Bodhisattvas” signifies the idea that the Bodhisattvas are the children of the Buddha, and the Buddha is the father of the Bodhisattvas. It is said that the Buddha performs the duties of a father to those Bodhisattvas.

The word *“noble”* in the phrase *“the king of all noble beings”* refers to the Arhats, Shravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas of the Hinayana Vehicle. This phrase actually shows that the Buddha plays the role of king and that the noble beings are like attendants of the Buddha. For example, a Universal Monarch has many queens as well as many sons. Among them, one of these sons possesses distinguishing marks on his body. The Universal Monarch would give that son his most precious possessions, especially the *“precious wheel,”* and choose him as his successor. In that way, that very son is the son of the Universal Monarch and the Universe Monarch is the father of that son. Similarly, since the Buddha transfers all his special qualities to

the Bodhisattvas, the Buddha becomes the father and the Bodhisattvas become the sons. Since the other sons of the Universal Monarch listen to their father and obey whatever he asks them to do, they become like subjects to him. In an analogous way, since the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas carefully observe the rules and engage in Dharma practices, such as maintaining the moral conduct taught by the Buddha, they obtain their aimed-for results. So those Shravakas are the subjects of the Buddha, and the Buddha is like their king. The explanation given above is in relation to those who have already entered the path.

For those who have not entered the path, the Buddha is given the title *“captain.”* So, the next phrase of the sutra reads *“the captain who leads others to the City of Nirvana.”* Conforming to their individual dispositions and tendencies, the Buddha guides those beings who have not yet entered the path leading to the City of Nirvana. Therefore, the Buddha is addressed as the guide or charioteer who leads sentient beings into the City of Liberation. So, in this instance, the Buddha plays the role of a guide. Accordingly, *“guide”* refers to the leader who directs someone from one place to another.

The next section of the sutra reads, *“He is the possessor of transcendental wisdom, inconceivable confidence, perfectly pure speech, a melodious voice, and a matchless body that is endlessly insatiable to behold.”* There are six epithets here that describe different skillful means possessed by the Buddha. These different skillful means, or tools, are used to perform enlightened activities, though the main one is giving teachings. Among all the spiritual activities performed by the Buddha, the giving of teaching is the most important one.

Among the six different types of skillful methods, the first is the enlightened activity of the mind of the Buddha that is shown by the phrase *“transcendental*

wisdom.” This means that the Buddha’s wisdom and mind know all the limitless knowable things. So, it is said that the Buddha is acknowledged as possessor of immeasurable wisdom.

The three phrases that read “*inconceivable confidence, perfectly pure speech, a melodious voice*” exemplify the enlightened activities of speech. Within these, the phrase “*inconceivable confidence*” shows that the Buddha possesses self-assurance that is never exhausted and is without fault. When speaking about confidence, we see two types: confidence in relation to words, and confidence in relation to meaning.

The first, confidence in connection to words, is that no matter how much explanation is needed to explain even a single term, the Buddha can give an explanation lasting many eons. Even then, his explanation of that term would not be exhausted. Second, confidence in relation to meaning is, for example, that the Buddha has the self-assurance to answer in a single moment hundreds of thousands of questions asked over a period of many eons by hundreds of thousands of disciples. In this way he has the ability to answer boundlessly.

The Buddha is able to answer any question asked of him, though disciples may hear it differently. Though the Buddha says one thing, the disciples understand it in accordance with their own needs and abilities. For example, in the collection of the Tibetan Tripitaka [i.e., the complete teaching of the Buddha known as the Three Baskets], there are three different versions of The Sutra of Recollecting the Three Jewels that were taught by the Buddha. The Buddha actually gave just one teaching, but it was heard and understood in different ways and was thus recorded as three separate sutras.

The phrase “*perfectly pure speech*” indicates there are no mistakes in the Buddha’s speech and that his speech is not unpleasant to listen to. The Buddha’s

voice does not have the flaws of being imprecise or faltering. In brief, his speech is free from all defects and possesses all [excellent] qualities. Therefore, one can say that the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind possess all capabilities and are free from all faults.

The next phrase, “*a melodious voice*,” indicates that the Buddha’s voice is pleasing and calming to listen to. The melodious speech of the Buddha is said to possess five or sixty types of qualities. In either case, the Buddha’s speech also has inconceivable [excellent] qualities.

One epithet is identified as “*a matchless body that is endlessly insatiable to behold*.” This attribute indicates that even if you look at the Buddha’s body for a long time, still the joy you receive from this is not satiated. Since the Buddha’s body is not unpleasant, you just feel like looking at it again and again.

Next, we have the appellation “*matchless body*.” This designation shows that the form, the physical body, of the Buddha outshines the bodies of all others. We should understand that the Buddha always manifests himself in a physical form similar to those beings he is attempting to train. For example, if the disciples are from the Realm of Desire and are human beings or womb-born beings, the Buddha himself manifests in a similar form. His physical form and his behavior will be in accord with those whom he is training. In this way the Buddha is never affected by the faults of the place where he dwells or wherever he performs the benefits of sentient beings.

There are three realms of existence where the Buddha accomplishes the benefits of sentient beings. Within these three realms of existence, the Buddha usually dwells in the Realm of Desire and the Realm of Form for the sake of sentient beings. The reason for this is that the principal method of the Buddha is to give teachings in order to train sentient beings. The teaching has to reach into the ears of the disciple who

is receiving the teaching. Since living beings dwelling in those two realms have physical bodies, the Buddha bestows teachings there. Because sentient beings in the Formless Realm do not possess physical bodies, the Buddha does not abide or teach there.

The word “*desire*” in the [next] phrase, “*He is unaffected by desire,*” is to be understood as the Realm of Desire. The Realm of Desire here means the place where we human beings reside. The greatest fault of the Realm of Desire is attachment. Since we value our desires so much, it is easy to become attached to them. Even though the Buddha lives in this Realm of Desire for the sake of sentient beings, he is affected neither by the craving to experience this realm’s happiness nor by the fault of reacting with anger.

The [next] phrase, “*unaffected by form,*” refers to the Realm of Form. The Realm of Form is the dwelling place of the higher gods. Here the gods have many attachments, such as dwelling in one-pointed meditative states, enjoying the celestial palaces where they abide, and the like. Even though the Buddha visited and taught in this realm, he was never affected by any of the beatific qualities found there. In this way, the Buddha remained unstained by the faults of the Realm of Form.

With respect to the next phrase, “*unmixed with formless ones,*” the Buddha never actually took birth into the Formless Realm, and he was free from the afflicting emotions of that realm. For that reason, the Buddha is synonymously known as “unmixed with formless ones.”

“He is completely liberated from all suffering, thoroughly liberated from the aggregates, and unaffected by the elements.”

The next part of the sutra demonstrates that the

Buddha accomplishes the benefits of sentient beings without becoming attached to any phenomena. This shows that the Buddha is never plagued by the afflicting emotions that are dependent on attachment to the aggregates, elements, or sensory perceptions. So, the next part of the text states, “*He is completely liberated from all suffering, thoroughly liberated from the aggregates, and unaffected by the elements.*”

The first phrase here, “*completely liberated from all suffering,*” refers to being free from all three: form, elements, and sensory perceptions. Since all three of these are of the nature of suffering, it is said that the Buddha is general free from all suffering. However, this phrase is not found in some versions of this sutra.

The next part, which reads “*thoroughly liberated from the aggregates,*” states that the Buddha is free from all faults in relation to the five aggregates.

The final part of this section says, “*unaffected by the elements.*” This refers to the set of eighteen elements [that are a part of human existence]. Being unaffected means that the Buddha does not have faults that arise from the eighteen elements. For example, in relation to the element of form, there does not arise attachment or aversion to forms. Therefore, it is said that Buddha does not have any faults arising from perceiving the elements, such as form.

Further, the [next] phrase, “*possessing disciplined sensory perceptions,*” shows that the Buddha is free from the field of the twelve sensory perceptions.

The following four phrases explain that the Buddha has already perfectly relinquished all afflicting emotions. For that reason the Buddha is known as “*the one who possesses the perfection of relinquishment.*” The word “*knot*” in the next phrase, “*he has thoroughly cut all knots,*” refers to the faults of the unwholesome afflicting emotions, such as desirous attachments. Since we are deeply habituated and shackled to the afflicting emotions, which are

like the knots in threads and ropes, it is difficult to untie ourselves from them. So for ordinary beings it is difficult to relinquish the knot-like afflicting emotions. It is said, though, that the Buddha is the one who has abandoned the afflicting emotions.

The words “*suffering*” in the [next] phrase, “*He is completely liberated from all profound sufferings and freed from the world of existence,*” means to be free from the faults of the afflicting emotions. Why is this so? The more you are habituated to the afflicting emotions, the more your mind is troubled by them. However, it is said that the Buddha does not possess this kind of defilement. So, the Buddha is “*freed from the world of existence*” due to his relinquishment of craving and desire.

The word “*river*” in the [next] phrase, “*He has crossed the river,*” is a name for the afflicting emotions. For instance, a river with a strong current can freely carry away objects such as logs. Similarly, overpowered by the afflicting emotions, sentient beings are carried away by the great ocean of samsaric sufferings. Therefore, here “*river*” is used as a metaphor for the afflicting emotions. And since the Buddha has relinquished those afflicting emotions, he is known as one who has crossed the river.

If the meaning of these previous four phrases is explained in relation to desire in a little clearer way, it is shown that there are two different types of desire. The first one is the desire to meet someone who, or to meet with something that, you have not previously encountered. The other type of desire is the desire to enjoy what you already possess.

Craving to obtain something you have not acquired before, your mind becomes bound in the field of desire. Due to this, the knot of the afflicting emotion of desire arises. It is said that the Buddha has already relinquished both the knot-like faults of desire that are based on craving.

By enjoying an object of your desire that you have already obtained, you become more attached to it. Due to this, the afflicting emotion of desire becomes greater and greater, just as a river’s current becomes more and more powerful. Since the Buddha has already crossed this type of river, he never experiences the mental agony of profound suffering.

The next four phrases explain the perfection of the realization of the Buddha. There are three types of wisdom possessed by the Buddha. The first is the transcendental wisdom that is all-knowing; the second is the transcendental wisdom that is unmistaken; and the third is the non-abiding transcendental wisdom.

The first type of transcendental wisdom is called “*the transcendental wisdom that is all-knowing.*” Generally, transcendental wisdom refers to the mind of the Noble Ones. It also refers to the transcendental wisdom that has gone beyond [i.e., the Perfection of Wisdom]. Commonly, all phenomena are designated to possess two different characteristics: nature and special attribute. Their “*nature*” refers to the fundamental knowing of all phenomena just as they are, starting from form and going up to omniscience. For example, the nature of form means knowing form in itself. The “*special attribute*” means the defining quality of all the objects of phenomenal existence. The special attribute of form refers to its qualities, such as beauty, ugliness, and the like. Since the Buddha knows all of these, that type of knowledge is recognized as “*the transcendental wisdom that is all-knowing.*”

The second [type of wisdom possessed by the Buddha], “*unmistaken transcendental wisdom,*” refers to the idea that there are many Buddhas who reside in different Buddha Fields or in different countries. Since these Buddhas reside in different places, they will appear in different forms—some being tall, some short, etc.—in accordance with the place they are residing. However, the mind or Dharmakaya of all

these Buddhas is non-different. So it can be said that there are no differences, big or small, in their qualities.

[The next phrase in the sutra,] *“He is the one who abides in the transcendental wisdom of the past, future, and present Blessed Enlightened Ones,”* means that there is no difference in the transcendental wisdom and qualities of their minds. So, it is said that the Buddhas abide in the very same transcendental wisdom.

The third type [non-abiding transcendental wisdom] is shown in the next phrase where the sutra reads, *“Not abiding in Nirvana, he dwells in the state of perfection that sees all sentient beings.”* This indicates that the Buddha never abides in the Parinirvana of the Hinayana Vehicle. So it shows that the transcendental wisdom attained by the Blessed One relinquishes the result of the Hinayana practitioner. In other words, the Buddha does not abide in the Nirvana of the Shravaka. When it says *“he dwells in the state of perfection,”* this refers to the Buddha’s abiding in the Mahayana Nirvana, the ultimate state of enlightenment. This *“state of perfection”* is the true nature of mind that is purified from temporary stains. Therefore, the Blessed Buddha is abiding in that ultimate state.

“Not abiding in Nirvana, he dwells in the state of perfection that sees all sentient beings.”

When the text states, *“he dwells in the state of perfection that sees all sentient beings,”* this is explained to mean that the Buddha abides in three different enlightened forms [i.e., kayas]. The Dharmakaya (Dharma Body) of the Buddha looks over all sentient beings, the Sambhogakaya (Bliss Body) benefits the great Bodhisattvas, and the Nirmanakaya (Emanation Body) performs beneficial

actions for the sake of living beings in the three realms of existence. In this way, since the Dharmakaya and the Rupakaya [which consists of the Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya] benefit sentient beings, these three kayas are known as the basis that looks after all sentient beings. Thus it is said in the sutras.

With respect to the Buddha, all that has been explained up to this point illustrates the great attributes and virtues of the Blessed One. What do perfect qualities mean? The qualities that have been described are perfect because there are no exaggerations in terms of saying something that is not there. This shows that those are the real qualities the Buddha possesses. For example, when going for refuge, the field of refuge, the Three Jewels, is seen to possess great qualities, whereas the teachings and teachers of other schools not only lack similar qualities but also contain faults. Therefore, just as the great qualities of the Buddha are revealed here, so you should reflect on them and understand that our teacher, the Buddha, possesses those great qualities that have just been explained.

To be continued...

[The Sutra of Recollecting the Three Jewels and its commentary by Khenchen Appey Rinpoche were translated by Jhampa Losal and Jay Goldberg at the International Buddhist Academy under the auspices of the Khenpo Appey Foundation, 2014. Reproduced with gratitude by their kind permission].

Dharma Activities

His Holiness The Sakya Trizin in Nepal and India

On the 30th of January 2016, His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin undertook His first journey of the new year. His Holiness was visiting Nepal, where He was to bless with His presence the “World Peace Puja” held in Pokhara on the 2nd and 3rd of February. The event had been organised by the Nepal Mountaineering Association as part of an effort to revive the country’s failing tourist industry, so bitterly decimated by the devastating earthquake of April 2015.

Also participating in the event was the newly-elected President of Nepal, Mrs. Bidhya Bhandari. Over 3,000 visitors and devotees from Nepal



His Holiness greets the President of Nepal



His Holiness officiating at Jamchen Lhakhang

and further afield came to pay their respects to His Holiness and receive from Him the *Rig Sum Gompo* initiation.

His Holiness' visit to Pokhara included a programme at the nearby Sakya Pema

Ts'al monastery and concluded with a visit to the Jamchen Lhakhang monastery and the International Buddhist Academy in Boudanath, Kathmandu.

On the 6th of February, His Holiness returned to His residence in Dehradun, only to leave again barely a week later, this time for Tsopema, where He was to preside over this year's annual Tschechu puja. This year's celebration was special, as it coincided with the birth year of Guru Rinpoche, with whom Tsopema has a special connection. Some 40,000 devotees thronged the sacred site to receive His Holiness' blessing.

His Holiness took the occasion to travel to the Dorje Drak monastery in Simla, which was



His Holiness at Tsopema

the main seat of Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche, Supreme Head of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism until his passing in December 2015. There, His Holiness performed a memorial ritual in honour of the great master, before once again returning to Dehradun.



Tsimara Kangsol puja and tsok

Comings of Age



Our youngest generation of Khön family members are fast growing, and are already taking their places as ambassadors of the Sakya Dolma Phodrang, both in India and abroad. They are undergoing rigorous training, both academic and religious. The eldest, Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya, now speaks fluent English, Hindi and

Chinese in addition to her native Tibetan, and her younger siblings are making rapid strides along the same path. Even at their young age, they feel a deep sense of the responsibility that their position entails, and they assume their role with great seriousness. All five of them celebrated their birthdays during the first four months of the year.



2nd January – Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya's 9th birthday at Sakya Nunnery

24th January – Jetsunma Kunga Chimey Wangmo Sakya's 3rd birthday at Sakya Nunnery.



19th March – Khöndung Dungsey Siddharth Vajra Sakya Rinpoche's 2nd birthday at Sakya Centre.



27th March – Khöndung Dungsey Akasha Vajra Sakya Rinpoche's 6th Birthday at Sakya College.



2nd April – Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo Sakya's 5th birthday at the Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri centre in Taiwan.

Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche in Taiwan



On the 17th of March 2016, Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche was greeted at the Taoyuan International Airport by a delegation of eager devotees. This was the first stop on Rinpoche's Phurdup tour that would take him and his group of monks to the Philippines, Mongolia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Rinpoche was to spend nearly a month in Taiwan, where he would conduct an intense programme of rituals and initiations, held in their

majority at the new Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri Center.

Rinpoche was later joined by his family, Khöndung Dungsey Siddharth Vajra Rinpoche, Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo Sakya and their mother Dagmo Kushok Sonam Palkyi Sakya.

Rinpoche's programme began on 19th March with his conferral of the Vajrakilaya empowerment over the course of two days, followed by the celebration of the Phurdup ritual, and concluding



Rinpoche conducting the Vajrakilaya ritual



Phula Rinpoche participated in the ceremonies



Rinpoche teaching at the Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri Center



Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche greeting Luding Khen Rinpoche in Taipei



Rinpoche and his monks performing the Vajrakilaya ritual



Luding Khen Rinpoche offers the mandala



Lungta at Sanshia, each paper a prayer for the wind to carry (Photo: Vajrayana Sakya Manjushri Center)



Khöndung Dungsey Siddharth Rinpoche and Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo

with the performance of the Vajrakilaya Fire Puja held in Sanshia, overlooking a breathtaking mountainside view.

Fortunate circumstances would have it that Luding Khen Rinpoche also found himself in Taiwan at the time and that the two masters could

enjoy some time together. They were also joined briefly by Rinchen Paljor Rinpoche and Khenpo Ngawang Jorden.

On the 14th of April, the Taiwan sangha members bade Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche goodbye, as he left Taiwan for the Philippines, the second stop on his Phurdup tour.

Photos: Dawa Dolma



Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche Excellence in Leadership and Management Workshop at The Sakya Academy



On the 25th of March 2016, a group of over 40 people gathered at the Sakya Academy, Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche's new monastic school in the outskirts of Dehradun, to participate in the "Excellence in Leadership and Management Workshop". The sixth of its kind, the workshop took place at the request of Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, who had attended the previous two, held at the Khyentse Foundation in Bir and at the International Buddhist Academy, Kathmandu respectively.

A concept of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, the workshops are aimed at providing *tulkus*, *khenpos*, and heads of monasteries and related institutions, with the tools necessary to successfully bring their respective establishments into the 21st century. The workshops consist of group exercises

designed to develop leadership and management skills. Albeit conducted in an atmosphere of fun and playfulness, the exercises address key aspects of efficient leadership and leave the participants better equipped to proficiently take on their responsibilities.

Jointly organised by the Khyentse Foundation and the Sakya Centre, this year's workshop enjoyed the generous support of the Vana Foundation in Dehradun, whose founder and owner Veer Singh has close ties to the Khyentse Foundation. Vana very graciously offered the course teachers accommodation at the luxurious well-being institution, as well as providing the expertise of one of its chefs to guide the team of young culinary apprentices who keep the participants well fed throughout their stay at Sakya Academy.

The workshop was attended by Sakya *tulkus*, *khenpos*, scholars, nuns, and both religious and lay representatives of Sakya institutes. The sessions were lively, to say the least, and all who participated were hugely enthusiastic about their experience and were left rearing to put their lessons into practice.



Ratna Vajra Rinpoche and his group of participants



Team-building games



Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche offers Veer Singh a token of appreciation

His Holiness The 41st Sakya Trizin in the USA

On the 31st of March, His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin embarked on His yearly teaching tour, which was to take Him to the USA and Europe. This year, His Holiness was to bestow extensive Vajrayogini teachings in Spain, as well as the Holy Lamdre in Germany.

With news of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche's failing health, a programmed visit to Seattle was brought forward and, on 31st March, His Holiness and His entourage made haste to reach the Sakya

Phuntsok Phodrang, where His Holiness was to perform ceremonies to prolong H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche's life.

His Holiness spent some days at H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche's side, during which time He offered Dagchen Rinpoche the Lama Zhi Tro Tenshug, based on the Hayagriva and Guru Yoga practice. With this, and a notable improvement in H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche's health, His Holiness left Seattle and made His way to His monastery on the East coast.



H.H. the Sakya Trizin meets with H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche



Tsechen Kunchab Ling





Khöndung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche



Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche and Lama Kunga Thartse Rinpoche



Gyalyum Chenmo offers the mandala



Jetsun Kushok with Sey Kushok

On 5th April, His Holiness arrived at Tsechen Kunchab Ling, in Walden N.Y., His main seat in the United States, where hundreds of students were to participate in the Vajrayogini programme of teachings that His Holiness would impart there over the following three weeks.

In attendance were Khöndung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche, Jetsun Kushok, Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche and Lama Kunga Thartse Rinpoche.

Other important events and ceremonies were to take place during His Holiness' visit to New York, including a Long-

life initiation and advice conferred to the Tibetan and Himalayan community at Tsechen Kunchab Ling, as well as the blessing of animals and prayer flags granted by His Holiness, also at His Walden monastery.

His Holiness was guest of honour at the celebration of the Tibet Fund's 35th Anniversary,



His Holiness greets Khenpo Kalsang Gyaltzen



His Holiness bestowing the Hevajra initiation



His Holiness giving the Long-life initiation to the Himalayan community



His Holiness performing a blessing ceremony



Guest of Honour at the Tibet Fund anniversary



His Holiness receives an Honorary Certificate from the City of New York



His Holiness shares a joyous moment with Jetsun Kushok

held in New York, and was offered an Honorary Certificate by the City of New York at the time of His visit to the Jean Marchais Museum in Staten Island.



His Holiness in Minneapolis

His Holiness' visit to New York was followed by a short programme in Minneapolis, where His Holiness also received an Honourary Certificate from the State of Minnesota.

Parinirvana of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche



In the early morning of the 29th of April 2016, His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche Ngawang Kunga Sonam passed away in Seattle, Washington, remaining in the state of thukdam until he passed into Parinirvana on the 5th of May.

Rinpoche's demise left the Sakya Phuntsok Phodrang members and the entire Sakya School in a state of deep mourning. When informed of the news, His Holiness the Sakya Trizin, who was at His monastery in Walden, N.Y. at the time, sped to Seattle to recite prayers and perform ceremonies on Rinpoche's behalf.

His Holiness Dagchen Rinpoche's family had gathered

around him at this crucial time, including his grandsons Khöndung Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche, Khöndung Abhaya Vajra Rinpoche and Khöndung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche.

Dagchen Rinpoche's family and disciples found solace and wonderment in the extraordinary and auspicious signs that accompanied his passing into parinirvana.



Extraordinary signs accompany the parinirvana of H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche



Rinpoche's kudung is brought to his monastery



The kudung of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche



Finally on the 7th of May, a week after Dagchen Rinpoche had stopped breathing, his kudung was carried by his sons and grandsons to his monastery, where His Holiness the Sakya Trizin was to lead the Vajrayogini puja and other special prayers.

Many devotees came to express their heartfelt devotion and make sincere offerings to the kudung of His Holiness

Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche. While His Holiness the Sakya Trizin returned to the east coast to resume His programme of teachings, prayers continued to be recited for seven weeks, led by Sakya monks and nuns everywhere.

All pray for His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche's swift rebirth.



Gyalyum Chenmo, Jamyang Dagmo Kushok and Jetsun Kushok in prayer

Khöndung Ratna Vajra Sakya Rinpoche In Bhutan



On the 7th of April, Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche arrived in Paro, Bhutan, where he was greeted by Miniak Tulku Rinpoche, khenpos, monks, nuns and a number of lay followers. Rinpoche was there on the invitation of Her Royal Highness Princess Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuk to perform a pilgrimage of the country's holy sites as Her Royal Highness' personal guest.

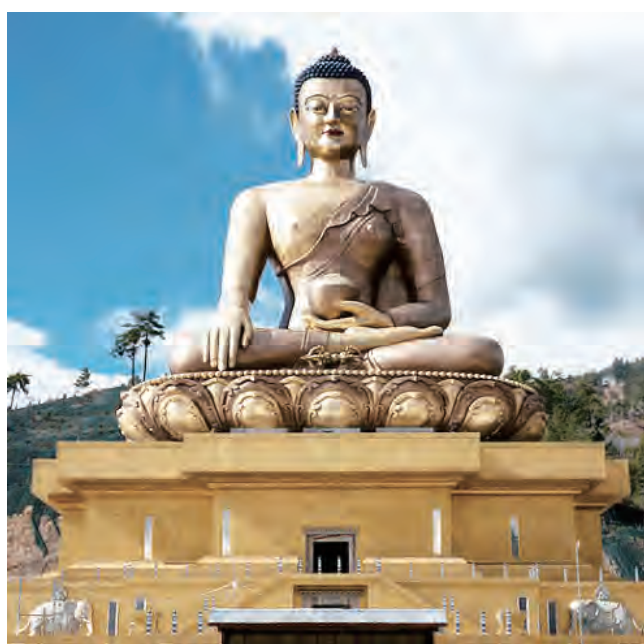
Immediately upon his arrival, Rinpoche was



Khondung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche at the Royal Palace

taken to Her Royal Highness' Motihand Palace, where audiences with herself and with H.M. the Queen Grandmother of Bhutan, Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuk, were followed by lunch.

In the early afternoon, Rinpoche bade his farewells to his eminent hosts and began his weeklong pilgrimage in Bhutan. Rinpoche began his tour that very day with visits to the oldest temple in Thimphu, Changangha Lhakhang, and to Kuensel Phodrang, where sits the great Dordenma, one of the world's largest statues of the Buddha. Rinpoche's day closed with a visit to Thangtong Dewachen Nunnery at Zilukha, where he gave a Dharma talk. Home to some sixty nuns, the nunnery was built in 1981 by the 15th emanation of the great Thangton Gyalpo, and it is a hive of activity.



Dordenma Buddha



Samazingkha Lhakhang



Drupthop Dewachen Nunnery at Zilukha



Shemagangkha Sakya Temple



Sisina Nunnery

Bhutan is a country steeped in Buddhism, bestrewn with ancient temples, Dzongs (fortress monasteries) and sacred

sites, especially ones associated with Padmasambhava. The vast majority of its population follows Vajrayana Buddhism, which

is at the core of its jealously protected culture. As is widely known, Bhutan gauges its progress according to 'Gross National Happiness'.

During his days in Bhutan, Rinpoche was to visit many of the heritage sites that the country boasts, notably Tachog Lhakhang, built in the 15th century by the great mystic and engineer Thangtong Gyalpo. This meant for Rinpoche having to cross the great siddha's iron chain bridge, one of the many built by Thangton Gyalpo in Bhutan. Rinpoche closed his



Tachog Lhakhang and Thangton Gyalpo's iron chain bridge



Dinner at the residence of Thangton Gyalpo's reincarnation



visit there with a dinner at the residence of Thangton Gyalpo's tulku, Drubtrul Ngawang Thinley Lhundrup.

Rinpoche was to visit several other important landmarks, including Simtokha Dzong, where he was hosted by local devotees. Simtokha was the first among the many fortified monasteries that took hold in Bhutan as a defence from a possible attack by neighbouring

Tibet. While there, Rinpoche was to have lunch with H.R.H. Princess Ashi Kesang, at the invitation of Miniak Tulku Rinpoche. The rest of Rinpoche's day was spent giving blessings to the groups of followers that hosted him for the day.

On the 10th of April, Rinpoche travelled north to Bumthang, considered the spiritual heartland of Bhutan. On his way he stopped at the



Simtokha Dzong

famous Wangdi Phodrang and at the Trongsa Dzong, the largest fortress monastery in Bhutan and seat of the Wangchuck dynasty to which the current king belongs. Rinpoche was hosted for tea at the residence of Thangton Tulku's mother in Chumey.



In Dochula with Sakya devotees



Giving blessings at Wangdi Phodrang



Rinpoche in Trongsa with tea sponsors

Rinpoche's stay in Bumthang was filled with visits to holy sites, including Mebar Tso, known as the Burning Lake and to Kurjey Lhakhang, famous for being the final resting place of the first three kings of Bhutan,



Mebar Tso



Kurjey Lhakhang

as well as for harbouring a tree believed to be a terma hidden by Padmasambhava.

On the 12th, Rinpoche flew back to Paro, where he had dinner at Satsam Chorten with Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche, grandson and spiritual heir to Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, whose Yangsi officially resides there.

The next day, Rinpoche



Rinpoche is greeted by devotees



Rinpoche with Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche

visited Paro Taksang, famously known as the 'Tiger's Nest', a temple complex where Guru Padmasambhava is believed to have meditated for some years. Hanging on a mountain cliff in Paro, it is considered one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world. Rinpoche closed his pilgrimage with a visit to the Dilgo Khyentse Memorial Museum in Kyichu, formerly this eminent teacher's main residence in Bhutan.

On the 14th of April, after an intensive but enriching week filled with wondrous discoveries, Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche left Paro International Airport for Dehradun, where he was to rejoin his family at the Sakya Dolma Phodrang.





Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche's Phurdup Teaching Tour



Rinpoche bids his farewells to devotees, monks and to his daughter Jetsunma Tsejin Lhamo

On the 14th of April, Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche ended his month-long stay in Taiwan to embark on the next stop of his Asian Phurdup tour. Accompanied by his group of monks, Rinpoche left Taoyuan International Airport aboard a Philippines Airlines flight heading to Manila.

Rinpoche had been invited by the Buddha Light Temple in Cebu City to celebrate the Grand Vajrakilaya Ritual there.

It was the second time that the ritual was being held in the Philippines and, in spite of the scarcity of Buddhist practitioners in an overwhelmingly Catholic country, it was well attended. It is worth noting that around the closing of the first millennium most of the archipelago's population practised Vajrayana Buddhism. The latter's presence receded with the spread of Islam in the 1300's and eventually disappeared with the fall of the

region to the Spanish colonial empire and the predominance of the Catholic Church. And so, it is significant that Rinpoche's visit to the Philippines formed part of a thousand-year old tradition that has survived, albeit within a small niche of the population.

Rinpoche's next stop on his tour was Mongolia where, among other things, he was to conduct the Grand Vajrakilaya ritual at the Sakya Pandita



Phurdup in the Philippines



Phurdup at the Sakya Pandita Dharma Chakra monastery in Ulaan Baatar

Dharma Chakra Monastery in Ulaan Baatar.

Although Mongolia is one of the largest countries in the world, it is the most sparsely populated, with a meager 3,000,000 inhabitants, nearly half of whom live in Ulaan Baatar.

As part of his stay in Ulaan Baatar, Rinpoche also visited the Ganden Tegchen Ling monastery, where he conducted the three-day *Nagpu Demchog Dumchoi* (Black Chakrasamvara)



Chenrezig Temple at Ganden Monastery

ritual. Built in the early nineteenth century, Ganden Monastery, whose name means 'Great Place of Complete Joy', escaped the fate that so many monasteries suffered during the Communist regime during the second half of the last century. Although it was not destroyed, however, it was abandoned and left in a state of utter disrepair until the end of the century, when it was restored and



Nagpu Demchog Dumchoi at the Ganden Tegchen Ling monastery

revitalised. It is now a handsome monastery, with some 150 monks residing and practising there.

Rinpoche then travelled to Kharkhorin, the ancient capital of the Mongol Empire, where



Erdene-Zuu monastery in Kharkhorin





Phurdog ritual at Erdenezuu monastery

stands Erdene-Zuu, the oldest surviving Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the country. Built in 1585 with stones salvaged from the ruins of the erstwhile capital Karakorum, it boasts an impressive surrounding wall that protects the only three temples that survived the Communist era. Rinpoche spent two days at the monastery, conducting the *Purdog Vajrakilaya* ritual.

On the 8th of May, Rinpoche and his entourage left Mongolia for Hong Kong, where Rinpoche

to the Chinese tradition. Gig Lok Monastery is a remarkable place, an oasis of beauty, peace and spirituality cradling in a dense landscape of skyscrapers. Founded in 1955, it boasts two temples, one in the traditional Chinese tradition and the other in the Tibetan Buddhist one. Rituals from each tradition are held in their respective temples and are often attended by disciples of both persuasions, in an admirable display of openness and generosity.

Rinpoche's last stop on his tour was Singapore, where he conducted the Vajrakilaya ritual at the Sakya Tenphel Ling centre.

Sakya Tenphel Ling is an unusually active centre and

had been invited for the second time by Ven. Master Bei Yao to perform the Vajrakilaya Ritual at the superb Gig Lok Monastery.

Although Hong Kong is a secular state, Buddhism is widely practised, particularly according



Rinpoche conducting the Vajrakilaya ritual at the Gig Lok monastery in Hong Kong



◀▲ Rinpoche conducting the Vajrakilaya puja at Sakya Tenphel Ling in Singapore

it has, throughout the years, regularly hosted His Holiness and the Khöñ Dungseys, as well as many Sakya lamas, monks and nuns.

On the occasion of Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche's visit in May, an intensive programme had been prepared by the centre sangha, beginning with the celebration of Vesak, centering on the Grand Vajrakilaya ritual, and concluding with the *Dham-sig Kangso* ritual. These were three weeks of continuous religious activity in which, as is their custom, the centre members participated with great zeal and proficiency.

At the thanksgiving dinner that closed his visit, Rinpoche emphatically commended the sangha on all their hard work in organising the ceremonies and offered his heartfelt thanks to all who, in one way or another, had participated in creating such a



meritorious event.

Thus, Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche's *Phurdup* tour concluded, leaving behind him hundreds of fulfilled and grateful students. A new tradition has taken root whereby the most important annual ritual held at

Sakya Centre each year is now also being celebrated annually at centres across Asia, embracing more and more sentient beings with its incomparable blessings and clearing obstacles to their happiness and ultimate liberation.



Rinpoche with his students



His Holiness The Sakya Trizin In Europe



A moment of solitude

On the 20th of May 2016, His Holiness the Sakya Trizin arrived in Madrid, accompanied by Gyalyum Chenmo and an entourage of monks. His Holiness' main destination in the country was the Fundación Sakya, where His Holiness was to bestow the precious Vajrayogini cycle of teachings.

His Holiness and His group stopped for the weekend in Madrid, where He was to give the Avalokiteshvara Mahamudra initiation and teachings to a congregation of old students as

well as newcomers.

On the 23rd, His Holiness arrived in Pedreguer, home to Fundación Sakya, a complex of awe-inspiring dimensions, seemingly carved out from the steep mountainside that it sits on. Seven storeys high, it is grand and yet sober and keeps its denizens in excellent physical condition as they tackle its numerous flights of stairs several times a day to attend functions in its temple. In spite of the high numbers of participants, the spacious monastery offers ample space for private reflection.

Awaiting His Holiness were Jetsun Kushok and her husband Sey Kushok, who had travelled from Canada to attend the teachings. Also in attendance were Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche and Rangdrol Rinpoche.

Before undertaking the main Vajrayogini programme, His Holiness spent the day of the 25th at nearby Sakya Drogon Ling, where He gave the Guru Rinpoche Long-life initiation known as *Buton Gonkhugma*, the *Manjushri Namasangiti* oral transmission and teachings on



His Holiness teaching at Sakya Drogon Ling



Khenpo Thupten Nyima offering the mandala

interdependent origination.

The programme at Fundación Sakya began the next day. A large body of students had gathered for the occasion, as the vast meditation hall found



The temple with its majestic Sakyamuni statue



His Holiness arrives at the temple for the teachings



His Holiness kindly giving the teachings



Khenpo Pema Wangdak gave the reteachings



Seasoned translator Rafael Ferrer



Centre director Ven. Rinchen Gyaltsen



Many students benefitted from the teachings



Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, Tulku Pema Rinpoche, Rangdrol Rinpoche



His Holiness giving teachings and blessings



Gyalyum Chenmo preparing an offering





A conscientious student



A musical offering: traditional 'Cante Jondo'



Feeding many mouths



Service with a smile



Dining with a view



Sunset revision session with Gelungla



A well-deserved blessing

itself filled from wall to wall, under the benign eye of the temple's new Sakyamuni statue, a generous offering by Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche and Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche.





His Holiness in Barcelona



His Holiness imparting initiations and teachings in Barcelona



His Holiness at the Tibet House



Blessed days at Fundación Sakya came to a close on 14th June with a *Tsok* celebration, after which a group of students went into Vajrayogini retreat while others returned to their respective lives.

His Holiness closed his Spanish trip with a visit to Barcelona, where He was joined by Sogyal Rinpoche as He gave three days of precious initiations, including the Amitabha Powa, Vajrakilaya

and the Chime *Pakme Nyingtik* Long-life initiation, as well as teachings on 'Parting from the Four Attachments'. His Holiness also gave a talk at the Tibet House.

LISBON, PORTUGAL

And on 20th June, His Holiness left Spain for Portugal, where He had been invited by Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche and Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche to give four days of initiations and teachings in its capital, Lisbon. It was the first time that His Holiness was visiting Portugal, and He was delighted to see how strongly the Buddha Dharma has taken root there.



His Holiness teaching in Lisbon, Portugal



While a considerable number of students had the privilege of taking refuge with His Holiness, all those who had gathered found themselves

enriched with the Guru Rinpoche empowerment as well as teachings on the power of compassion and, importantly, on mind training.



His Holiness teaching in Lisbon

His Holiness' busy schedule nevertheless allowed Him enough time for a short visit of Western Europe's oldest city and take in some of its sea air. His Holiness' stay in Portugal was far too brief, and He promised to return soon.

But for now, His Holiness' tour was to take Him to Brussels, Belgium, where He was greeted by Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche and his family.

KALACHAKRA INITIATION IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



His Holiness is greeted by Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche and his family



Rinpoche with the organising committee

Gyana Vajra Rinpoche had arrived in Brussels with some anticipation in order to guide the Brussels Sakya Tsechen Tsokpa in organising the two-day Kalachakra empowerment that His Holiness was to give to a 3,000-strong multitude of sangha members, overseas students and local communities. An enormous

amount of work and effort was invested by the organising committee and the corps of volunteers that prepared the event, and the result was truly extraordinary. The decorations of the venue were magnificent and the event went outstandingly smoothly.

This was the very special Vajra Mala Kalachakra initiation



Rinpoche guides the preparations for the Kalachakra empowerment

(Photo: anonymous)

from the Great Mahasiddha Abhayakhara Gupta tradition, and in attendance were Jetsun



Kushok and Luding Khen Rinpoche.

These were an unforgettable two days for the Buddhist



His Holiness arrives at the venue with Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



Jetsun Kushok arrives



Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo attended the initiation

community of Belgium and surrounding countries. For most, the possibility of travelling to

India is remote, and so to have His Holiness bestowing such



Over 3,000 people received the Kalachakra initiation



(Photo: Ngor Luding Foundation)



a pivotal empowerment was a boon of inestimable value to all who were able to take part in it.

The two days of empowerments were followed on the 27th of June by a White Tara Six Rays Long-life ceremony to His Holiness,

as Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche made an offering of the precious substances and

H.E. Luding Khen Rinpoche offered the mandala.



Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche offers the precious substances



Luding Khen Rinpoche offers the mandala
(Photo: Ngor Luding Foundation)



The Organising Committee and Local Community members make offerings to His Holiness

SAKYA TSECHEN LING, KUTTOLSHEIM



His Holiness teaching at the Sakya Tsechen Ling centre in Kuttolsheim



The following day, on the 28th of June, a caravan of cars accompanied His Holiness and His entourage to Kuttolsheim, France, where His Holiness was to spend the following week giving a treasury of teachings at the Sakya Tsechen Ling, a centre shepherded by Khenpo Tashi Sangpo Amipa.

The programme in

Kuttolsheim began the next morning with a welcome ceremony, followed by a teaching on Chogyal Phagpa's seminal work *The Jewel Ornament*, which would also fill the following two days.

Many sangha members had gathered for this special occasion. Not only to celebrate His Holiness' precious visit,

but also to be present at His Holiness' blessing of Khenchen Sherab Gyaltzen Amipa Rinpoche's memorial stupa. Khenchen Rinpoche's memory is still vivid among his sangha members, who looked to him as a father as well as a spiritual mentor. The blessing of his stupa was an intense moment for each one of them.



His Holiness performing a blessing at Khenchen Sherab Amipa Rinpoche's memorial stupa



His Holiness with Khenpo Tashi Sangpo and Khenpo Dakpa Woeser



His Holiness with His Kuttolsheim students

The programme ended that afternoon with a Tenshug ceremony, with Khenpo Dagpa Wöser offering the mandala and Khenpo Tashi Sangpo offering the precious substances.

After a day's rest, His

Holiness and His entourage left by car for Germany, where the ensuing month would be dedicated to the Lamdre teachings at Sakya Kalden Ling in Frankfurt.

*Fundación Sakya photos: Alejandro Mari Escalera (www.fotografosibiza.com).
Barcelona photos: Matías Nadal
Portugal photos: Alexandra Silva
Kalachakra initiation photos: Bianca Wisser
Kuttolsheim photos: Hervé Leibolt
Our gratitude to them and to all our kind anonymous contributors.*

THE HOLY LAMDRE IN FRANKFURT



to attend the precious teachings.

It was 23rd time that His Holiness was bestowing the Lamdre and, as always, it was an unimaginable blessing for all who were present. His Holiness gave the teachings and initiations in the morning, while Khöndung Gyana Vajra

Rinpoche conducted the reteaching and meditation sessions in the afternoon. Jetsun Kushok and her husband Sey Kushok were also present, as were Jigme Khyentse Rinpoche, Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche, Rangdol Rinpoche and other high lamas.

On the 6th of July, a new cavalcade of cars accompanied His Holiness the Sakya Trizin across the border to Germany, where His Holiness was to give the holy Lamdre teachings.

The teachings were held at Jetsun Kushok's Sakya Kalden Ling centre in Griesheim, a small suburban town next to Frankfurt. For over a month the normally quiet streets, guest houses and restaurants of Griesheim were permeated with the more than two hundred devotees who had travelled from Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australasia





Khondung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche gave the re-teaching



A tent had been erected in the garden to accommodate the large numbers of devotees. Translations were provided in several languages, and everyone was provided with cable-free earphones to follow the teachings in the language of their choice. This was a welcome feature, as repairs were going on in the neighbouring church and the constant hammering seemed to be happening in the tent itself. It was amusing to see how students walked in and out of the tent for a breath of fresh air (the weather was sweltering hot) and strolled in the garden, engrossed in the words that came out of their earphones and oblivious of their surroundings.

As the Lamdre progressed, its blessings

became more and more visible on people's faces. As they strolled along the riverbank adjoining the centre, local residents would comment on how their presence was bringing joy and peace to their neighbourhood.





On 9th August, the teachings reached their conclusion and, with the dissolution of the sacred space that had held the congregation for the past four weeks, each one of its

members prepared to return to their normal lives, enriched and fortified by the invaluable teachings that they had received.

Two days later, His Holiness

and His entourage left Frankfurt for Helsinki, where He had been invited by Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche to give a four-day teaching, similar in content to the one given in Portugal. It was His Holiness' first visit to Finland, and He was very pleased to find that a Dharma community was also thriving there.

On the 16th of August, after four and a half months of ceaseless teaching in the USA and Europe, His Holiness left for Delhi to resume His dharma activities in India.





Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche in Ladakh



Rinpoche arrives at Mangtro Monastery



Vajrakilaya puja



Mandala offering at Mangtro Monastery



Rinpoche performs a blessing

On 26th June, Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche arrived at the Mangtro Monastery in Ladakh. He was greeted there by representatives of local monasteries and communities.

Rinpoche was to spend nearly three weeks in the region giving blessings, teachings and initiations. Among other activities, Rinpoche was to conduct a five-day Vajrakilaya exorcism and subjugation ritual at Mangtro Monastery.

During his stay, Rinpoche met with H.H. the 102nd Ganden Tripa Rizong Rinpoche, Head of the Gelugpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. He also visited the Tiseru stupa, one of the most important in Ladakh. It was built to subdue four demons that were causing destructive winds that destroyed the local crops.



Rinpoche conducting the Vajrakilaya subduing ritual

Rinpoche returned to India on the 15th of July in order to perform religious activities there.



Rinpoche with H.H. the 102nd Ganden Tripa



Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche in Ulaan Baatar

Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche arrived in Ulaan Baatar on the afternoon of the 24th of July 2016.

Rinpoche had visited Mongolia before – only recently in April this year – as part of his annual Grand Vajrakilaya Puja tour. But this particular visit was to serve a different purpose.

Upon His Holiness the Sakya Trizin's request, Rinpoche had come this time to prepare the ground for social and educational projects that he plans to carry out in Ulaan Baatar.

During his visit, Rinpoche met with several representatives of the Mongolian government, whose members are currently intent on rediscovering the country's traditional Buddhist roots, which had been severed during Communist times.

The president has commissioned a delegate to look closely into the fusion of religion and state

law during the reign of Mongolian Emperor Kublai Khan who, during the 13th century, developed an intense patron-Guru relationship with Drogön Chogyal Phagpa, the 5th Founding Master of the Sakya Tradition.

As a result of this intense relationship, Chogyal Phagpa was made Imperial Preceptor and Tibetan Buddhism became the official religion throughout the Empire, with the Sakya master at its head. Buddhist principles according to the Sakya doctrine were integrated into the imperial code of law, penetrating every aspect of life and defining Mongolian identity throughout the centuries until the present time.

Rinpoche was accompanied during his visit by Ven. Tenzin Choephak Ringpapontsang, a scholar with a vast knowledge of Chogyal Phagpa's influence on the imperial government of Kublai Khan and of its legacy. Government



Rinpoche with presidential legal policy advisor Unurbayar Chadraabal



Rinpoche giving a blessing to Minister of Energy Gankhuu Purejav and his family



Rinpoche with Ven. Tenzin Choephak Ringpapontsang



Rinpoche blessing a group of construction company workers

representatives were delighted to gain an understanding of Ven. Tenzin Choephak's insights on this key period of Mongolian history, and they were hugely gratified by Rinpoche's proposal of renewing these age-old links with his social and educational projects, pledging their unmitigated support for the latter.

Much of Rinpoche's time in Ulaan Baatar was spent meeting community members and visiting the city's impoverished areas – most of the

country's population lives under the international poverty line. Government social care and education are lacking and are mostly left in the hands of non-governmental organisations. His Holiness the Sakya Trizin feels that it is the duty of the Sakya School to do whatever it can to better the lives of the country's needy, both materially and spiritually. And so, it is Rinpoche's intention is to build world-class childcare centres in the poorest areas of the capital, where the children's basic needs are tended to and where they can receive an adequate education.

Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche left Ulaan Baatar on the 29th of August, with the promise to return promptly for the next stage in the development of his projects.



Rinpoche with Ven. Otgonbaatar



Jetsun Kushok In Taiwan

On the 6th of October, Her Eminence Jetsun Kushok arrived in Taiwan, where she was to bestow the invaluable Vajrayogini teachings over a period of one month. This was a rare and precious opportunity for all those who could attend. One centre member who had this unique privilege wrote the following words of appreciation.



"October in Taipei was blissful.

Her Eminence Jetsun Kushok Rinpoche was earnestly requested by the Taipei Manjushri Vajrayana Center to bless Taiwan with her presence in order to spread the Vajrayana teachings in this land. To the infinite gratitude of her devotees there, Her Eminence bestowed the Blessing and the profound Teachings

of Vajrayogini.

Everything conspired to make this a sacred occasion. The sun modeled light drizzles into radiant rainbows and auspicious flower petals dancing in the sky. Rinpoche's presence wrapped everyone in a hallowed space, in which all felt purified, inspired and filled with indescribable joy... This is the true power of a Dakini, warm, bright, and

straight to the heart.

October in Taipei was auspicious.

For those who wish to hear her name, see her image, connect with her in any way, all obstacles outer, inner and secret have been eliminated through the blessing of Vajrayogini, clearing the way to accomplishment and perfection.



October in Taipei was fortunate.

On the afternoon of October 30th, Jetsunma Rinpoche conducted the Vajrayogini fire puja. Many auspicious signs appeared.

We fortunate disciples who received this bountiful blessing are infinitely grateful, and we will do our utmost to practice well."

Dungsey Siddharth Vajra Rinpoche and Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo Sakya In Tibet



On the 4th of November 2016, after receiving the blessing of His Holiness the Sakya Trizin, Khöndung Dungsey Siddharth Vajra Rinpoche and his elder sister Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo left their residence in Dehradun for Delhi, the first leg of an historic journey. Accompanied by their mother, Dagmo Kushok Sonam Palkyi Sakya, the Khön children left the next day for Chengdu, China, from where they were to gradually make This was the first time ever that Dolma Phodrang members had ever visited Kham.

The trip to Derge took three days and involved nearly 20 hours of driving, a good part of which is a challenge to even the most seasoned traveller. At an altitude of 5,050 metres, the Tro La pass is one of the highest and most dangerous roads in the world, much of which is bordered by a vertiginous precipice



and usually calls for the use of oxygen masks. Fortunately, these were not needed and the party reached their destination safely thanks, affirmed Jetsunma, to the blessing of the deities, whom she had invoked throughout the perilous drive.

Rinpoche, Jetsunma and their mother were dotingly shepherded on their journey by Khenpo Kalden Tsering, abbot of Derge Göichen, the Great Sakya Temple in Derge, who had so successfully organised Luding Khen Rinpoche's trip to Tibet on a previous occasion.

The group's visit was a surprise and it was only announced shortly before their arrival at Derge Göichen that Sakya Lamas were coming. The monks at the temple were perplexed, because as far as they knew, all the high Sakya Lamas were attending H.H. Dagchen Rinpoche's cremation ceremony in Delhi. And so there was amazement when Rinpoche and Jetsunma became discernable, growing into excitement and jubilation as parasols and gyalings escorted them to their apartment on the top floor of the monastery. There sat three of the four thrones that had been crafted for the 2010 visit to Tibet by Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, Gyalyum Chenmo and Dagmo Kushok Sonam Palkyi Sakya. Sadly that visit had been cancelled and the thrones had remained unused. Now, all rejoiced that the thrones were finally being occupied by Khön family members as tea, *desi* (blessed rice), *kapse* (Tibetan pastry) and other delicacies were served and the monastery lamas and monks offered



The family at Derge Gönchen

khatas to their guests.

It had been a long day, and Rinpoche, Jetsunma and their mother retired to their quarters for a well-deserved rest. This, however, was interrupted at early dawn by a murmur that seeped through the window and grew steadily louder as minutes and hours passed. By mid-morning the courtyard had filled with a throng of devotees who had come to seek the blessing of their Lamas. It had taken only a few hours for the news of their arrival to spread throughout the region.

After a day's respite, a regime began where Dungsey Rinpoche and Jetsunma would start at ten in the morning to tend to devotees and would end at seven in the evening, with a two-hour break for lunch and a brief rest, not a small feat for such young children (Rinpoche and Jetsunma are two and five years old respectively). In all, some 160,000 people came to seek their blessing, for each of whom the emotion of



Dungsey and Jetsunma blessing young devotees



Devotees come to receive a blessing



Rinpoche performing sa-phu (*blessing with the breath*) on the assembled devotees

being in the presence of Khön family members was clearly overwhelming. Remarkably, Dungsey Rinpoche and Jetsunma both rose admirably to the occasion and performed their duties to perfection, leaving all devotees filled with deep joy and affection.

Coinciding with Rinpoche and Jetsunma's arrival was the unusual sprouting of the Sukha Meto, a flower that has of memory only ever grown in



Sukha Meto for the shrine

springtime. This curious anomaly was emphatically attributed to the children's presence in the region and was widely circulated on social media. Devotees brought with them bouquets of Sukha Meto to adorn the temple shrine.

The remainder of the group's stay in Derge was occupied by the performance of Cham dance, visits to the Gönchen Shedra, the outstanding Derge Parkhang printing press, the Derge Men-Tsee-Kang, monasteries, and mountain retreats. On the occasion of one such visit, a statue stood in the shrine room of a temple, which no one could identify with certainty. All were amused when Dungsey Rinpoche insisted that it was Sakya Pandita, only to be chastened when this was later averred to be true.

The group also visited schools



Derge Parkhang



Derge Shedra



Visiting a school in Derge



The family with Khenpo Kalden Tsering – Thupa Thronchenma Buddha at Dhamado

Dungsey Siddharth Vajra Rinpoche, Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo and Dagmo Kushok Sonam

and found it remarkable to see how much emphasis is placed on the preservation of Tibetan culture, with the teaching of regional dance, the traditional preparation of butter tea, the making of momos, khapse and tsampa, and the teaching of diverse other aspects of the Tibetan tradition.

Much to everyone's regret, the family's time in Derge came to an end and, following emotional farewells, the return journey began. Upon arrival in Chengdu, the family was taken to the new Sakya Centre there, which has been inaugurated three months earlier by Luding Khen Rinpoche. Again, there was much exhilaration that the

apartments reserved for Sakya Dolma Phodrang members were being used for the first time. And again, Dungsey Rinpoche and Jetsunma sat on their designated thrones as they gave blessings to the many who had come to seek them.

On the 30th of November,

Palkyi Sakya returned to their home in India. This had been an unforgettable month, both for them and for all who had been blessed with their presence, and promises were solemnly made from all sides that they would meet again in the not too distant future.



Rinpoche and Jetsunma at the Chengdu Sakya Centre

The Final Rites Of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche



The afternoon of 7th November marked the final journey of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche, as his Kudung arrived at Indira Ghandi Airport in New Delhi, India.

Although His Holiness had spent his post-exile years in the United States, it was deemed fitting that his last rites should be held in the blessed land of the Lord Buddha. Rinpoche's holy body was greeted by the Khön Dungseys of both the Phuntsok Phodrang and the Dolma Phodrang and was carried in a procession to the



Sakya Heritage Society, home to the Phuntsok Phodrang monastery in the southern part of New Delhi.

Over a thousand devotees, in their great majority monks and nuns, had gathered at the monastery to welcome Rinpoche's Kudung. All the high Sakya Lamas accompanied it as

it was carried to the shrine-room that would be its sanctuary until it was committed to the flames during the cremation ceremony that was to take place four days later. A vigil was then held by the highest Sakya Lamas, while devotees came to pay their last respects.





Conducted by the Khön
Dungseys, a three-day
Vajrasattva Guru Yoga ritual
began the following day as
a farewell homage to H.H.
Dagchen Rinpoche, while the

9th of November saw the arrival
of His Holiness the 41st Sakya
Trizin, who had come to preside
over the last day of the ritual.
His Holiness was accompanied
by H.E. Luding Khenchen

Rinpoche, who had also come
to pay his last respects.

On the 11th of November,
after the highest Sakya
Lamas paid their respects by
circumambulating Dagchen





His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin with Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche and Khöndung Avikrita Vajra Rinpoche



Luding Khenchen Rinpoche with Thartse Khen Rinpoche and Khangsar Shabdrung Rinpoche



Luding Khen Rinpoche with Rinchen Paljor Rinpoche and Chogye Shabdrung Rinpoche



Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche with Khöndung Asanga Vajra Rinpoche and Khöndung Abhaya Vajra Rinpoche



Gyalum Chenmo and Dagmo Kushok Dagmo Kalden Dunkyi Sakya attended the ceremony



Rinpoche's funeral stupa, His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin set alight the pyre that was to consume the remains of Dagchen Rinpoche's holy body.

As is customary on these occasions, four simultaneous ceremonies were held as His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin,

facing the stupa opening on the east side, presided over the Hevajra puja, while Luding Khenchen Rinpoche conducted the Vajrayogini ritual, Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche the Vajrasattva and Luding Khen Rinpoche the Mahavairocana.

His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen



Rinpoche left behind him loving sons and grandchildren among whom three Khön Dungseys, who show every promise of becoming eminent Sakya masters.

All pray for the swift return of His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche.

(Photos: Sakya Heritage Society; Dawa Dolma; Cristina Vanza; Kunga Rinchen; Matias Nadal)

Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya In Bodh Gaya



From the 11th to the 13th of November, the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya witnessed a unique and wonderful event: the Siddhartha Festival.

Organised by Jamyang Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, the World Centre for Creative Learning Foundation and

the Dehradun-based Vana and Antara establishments, the festival brought together luminaries of the Buddhist tradition in India.

Representing the Sakya Dolma Phodrang was Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya, elder daughter to Khöndung Ratna Vajra Sakya and Dagmo



Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche calls the faithful to prayer with the conch shell



Jetsunma offers the mandala to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche



(Photo: Kirsty Chakravarty)



An offering to Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche and Jetsunma



A charming encounter



(Photo: Kirsty Chakravarty)

Kushok Kalden Dunkyi Sakya. Jetsunma was guest of honour at the Festival and, in spite of her still tender years (she celebrated her 10th birthday on the 2nd of January 2017), she fulfilled her role admirably as ambassador for the Khön

family and was an inspiration to all. It was remarkable to watch how composed and dignified Jetsunma was throughout the entire event, and all commented on the bright future that awaited her as a great Sakya Lama. Jetsunma was accompanied



Jetsunma praying at the Mahabodhi shrine
(Photo: anonymous)

by her mother, Dagmo Kushok Kalden Dunkyi Sakya and by her maternal grandmother, Mrs. YangDol Tsatultsang.

Jetsunma took some time off from the festivities to offer her prayers to the Buddha inside the Mahabodhi temple.

The event was described as “Indians remembering an Indian from the past” and





and its future.

The festival was a great success, and there is every promise that it will not be the last of its kind.

offered a platform for three days of prayers, teachings, talks, meditation, chants and offerings to the Buddha, all held under the Bodhi Tree, the site of Gautama Buddha's enlightenment in Bodh Gaya. It offered an extravagant, yet sober, display of beauty and devotion that would leave an indelible imprint in the minds of all who had the privilege of attending.

It was also an opportunity for all who gathered at the holy place to experience Indian dance and music at its

best, and to exchange ideas about Buddhist philosophy, its relevance in Indian culture, and its importance in today's world





Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche at the Consecration of the Boudhanath Stupa



The Boudhanath stupa in Kathmandu is one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world and a favoured place of pilgrimage for countless devotees from nearly every corner of the earth.

Last year's tragic earthquake that claimed thousands of victims left it heavily damaged, with its spire direly in need of repair. As a result, the entire structure standing over the dome and the precious relics it contained, had to be removed. Reconstruction of the stupa began in November 2015 with the ritual placement of a new central pole surmounting the dome.

One year later, the dome had been restored to its former magnificence, and on the 18th of November 2016, some 600

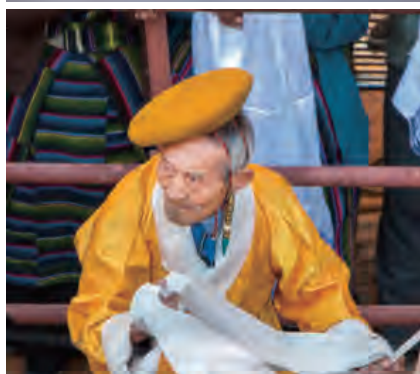




Rinpoche with Dudjom Yangsi Rinpoche

representatives of all the main schools of Buddhism in India gathered in Kathmandu to consecrate the stupa.

All the schools of Tibetan Buddhism were represented by their highest lamas, each school holding a different ritual. Representing the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism, Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche led a group of monks in the celebration of the elaborate Hevajra ritual.



Local brands of Buddhism were also represented, as were the Theravadan and Mahayana traditions.

The stupa and its periphery

had been further embellished for the occasion, with festoons of prayer flags hanging down its flanks and a profusion flowers adorning its outer wall. It now stood in all its magnificence, its dome pristine white and yellow, and its spire glistening gold. Its splendour told of the passionate love and labour that had been invested in its restoration. And now, it was being suffused with the blessing of hundreds of priests and lamas, and fully reinvesting it with its sacred character. Deep in prayer, hundreds of devotees quietly circumambulated the stupa, pervading it with their intense devotion.

The stupa has now fully regained its place as a sacred site, ready to share its blessings with all that come to seek them.



The 25th Great Sakya Monlam In Lumbini



The programme of Dharma activities for 2016 closed with the celebration of the 25th Great Sakya Festival of Prayers for World Peace, held in Lumbini Nepal from the 25th of December to the 2nd of January. This year's Monlam was conducted by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin and was attended by Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, Khöndung Gyana

Vajra Rinpoche, Khöndung Abhaya Vajra Rinpoche, Thartse Khen Rinpoche and several high Sakya Lamas.

The festival was highlighted by the bestowal of the Vajrasattva initiation by His

Holiness the Sakya Trizin and by the celebration of the Vajrasattva Guru Yoga ritual held in memory of H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche.

The Monlam gathering concluded with the offering





of the Long-life mandala to His Holiness the Sakya Trizin by Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche.

Accompanied by Khöndung

Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, His Holiness the Sakya Trizin then left for Bodh Gaya to be present at the celebration of the 34th Kalachakra to be held by His

Holiness the Dalai Lama, this time in the holy site of Bodh Gaya. Concluding the event, on the 14th of January, was the offering of the Tenshug to His Holiness the Dalai Lama by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin.

On the 18th of January, His Holiness the Sakya Trizin returned to His residence in Rajpur in order to pursue religious activities there.



His Holiness the Sakya Trizin offering the Long-life mandala

Year of the Male Fire Monkey

Calendar of Events

Annual Grand Pujas at the Sakya Centre, Dehradun

Every year the Sakya Centre in Rajpur, Dehradun, holds various grand pujas:

1. Annual Grand Vajrayogini Puja 8 th of the 1 st lunar month for 3 days	7. Dhamtsig Kangso 25 th of the 10 th lunar month for 8 days
2. Annual Grand Vajra Nairatmya Puja 8 th of the 2 nd lunar month for 7 days	8. Annual Grand Cakrasamvara Puja 9 th of the 11 th lunar month for 7 days
3. Annual Grand Mahavairocana Puja 11 th of the 4 th lunar month for 5 days	9. Dochen Puja 23 rd of the 11 th lunar month for 7 days
4. Wrathful Guru Rinpoche Puja 10 th of the 5 th lunar month for 1 day	10. Gu-Tor 23 rd of the 12 th lunar month for 7 days
5. Annual Grand Vajrakilaya Puja 11 th of the 7 th lunar month for 11 days	11. Mahakala Day Each 26 th of every lunar month for 5 days
6. Annual Grand Hevajra Puja 8 th of the 9 th lunar month for 8 days	

Auspicious Dates

Six Auspicious Days

The 8th, 14th, 15th (full moon day), 23rd, 29th & the 30th (new moon day) of every month.

Losar – (Feb 27, 2017)

Losar is the Tibetan New Year. It starts on the first day of the first lunar month. It is said that, during this month, the effects of positive and negative actions are magnified 100,000 times, and that therefore the benefits of practice are hugely enhanced.

The Four Great Festivals (düchen)

These days commemorate great deeds performed by the Buddha. On these days, the effects of positive or negative actions are magnified 10 million times.

1. Chotrul Düchen: 1-15 (Feb 27-Mar 12)

Shakyamuni Buddha displayed a different miracle each day for 15 days in order to increase the faith and devotion of disciples. The 15th of the 1st month is called "Day of Miracles".

2. Saga Dawa Düchen: 4-15 (Jun 6)

The day Shakyamuni Buddha entered His mother's womb, attained Enlightenment and passed into Parinirvana.

3. Chökhör Düchen: 6-4 (Jul 27)

This celebrates the Buddha's first Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. It was only seven weeks after His Enlightenment that, exhorted by Indra and Brahma, He consented to teach the Four Noble Truths in Sarnath.

4. Lha Bab Düchen: 9-22 (Nov 10)

The day Shakyamuni Buddha descended from Tushita heaven and taught for three months in the Heaven of Thirty Three, where His mother had been reborn. This was in order to benefit the gods in the desire realm and to repay His mother's kindness by liberating her from Samsara.

✿ NB: Lamp offerings in the monastery or food offerings to the monks are welcome during all important pujas and ceremonies. If you wish to make any offerings, please contact the Sakya Centre in Rajpur Dehradun directly (contact details on the last page)

AUSPICIOUS BIRTHDAYS	TIBETAN (M/D)	WESTERN
Jetsunma Kunga Trinley Palter Sakya	11-14	Jan 2
Jetsunma Kunga Chimey Wangmo Sakya	12-13	Jan 24
Khondung Siddharth Vajra Rinpoche	1-18	Mar 19
Khöndung Akasha Vajra Rinpoche	2-12	Mar 27
Jetsunma Ngawang Tsejin Lhamo Sakya	1-29	Apr 2
Khöndung Gyana Vajra Rinpoche	5-10	Jul 5
His Holiness the Dalai Lama	5-5	Jul 6
His Holiness the Sakya Trizin	8-1	Sept 7
His Holiness Jigdal Dagchen Rinpoche	9-15	Nov 2
H.E. Luding Khenchen Rinpoche	9-14	Oct 25
H.E. Jetsun Kushok Chimey Luding	9-22	Nov 14
Khöndung Ratna Vajra Rinpoche	10-5	Nov 19

Holy Days

TIBETAN	HOLY DAYS
1-3	Parinirvana Day of Dagshul Thinley Rinchen (Grand-father of H.H. the 41 st Sakya Trizin)
1-21	Parinirvana Day of Kunkhyen Gorampa Sonam Senge & Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo
2-8	Parinirvana Day of Yabje Kunga Rinchen (Father of H.H. the 41 st Sakya Trizin)
2-12	Parinirvana Day of Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen & Khangsar Shabrun Ngawang Lodroe Tenzin Nyingpo
2-23	Parinirvana Day of Khenchen Dorje Chang Jampa Jampal Sangpo
2-26	Parinirvana Day of Khuwo Rinpoche Kunga Gyaltsen
2-30	Parinirvana Day of Jamgon Loter Wangpo
3-15	Parinirvana Day of Phende Khenchen Ngawang Khedup Gyatso
3-18	Parinirvana Day of Dezhung Tulku Kunga Tenpei Nyima
3-25	Parinirvana Day of Gongkhar Dorje Denpa Dzongpa Kunga Namgyal
3-29	Parinirvana Day of Gatön Ngawang Lekpa, Luding Khenchen Jamyang TUEpten Lundok Gyaltsen
4-12	Parinirvana Day of Khenchen Dhampa Dorje Chang Ngawang Lodoe Shenpen Nyingpo
4-23	Anniversary of Mahasiddha Virupa's attainment of the First Bhumi

TIBETAN	HOLY DAYS
4-25	Parinirvana Day of Ngorchen Dorje Chang Kunga Sangpo
5-2	Parinirvana Day of Sachen Kunga Lodro
5-6	Parinirvana Day of Khyentse Dorje Chang Jamyang Chokyi Lodro
6-20	Parinirvana Day of Ngawang TUEtop Wangchuk
6-29	Parinirvana Day of Dorje Chang Ngawang Lodro Rinchen
7-14	Parinirvana Day of Ngakchang Kunga Rinchen
7-15	Parinirvana Day of Tsarchen Losal Gyatso
7-19	Parinirvana Day of Ngakchang Kunga Tashi
9-14	Parinirvana Day of Bari Lotsawa, Khön Konchok Gyalpo & Sachen Kunga Nyingpo
9-21	Parinirvana Day of Ngorchen Konchok Lhundrup
10-8	Parinirvana Day of Munchen Konchok Gyaltsen Sempa Chenpo
11-10	Parinirvana Day of Jamgon Ameshab
11-11	Parinirvana Day of Lopon Sonam Tsemo
11-14	Parinirvana Day of Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen Pal Sangpo
11-22	Parinirvana Day of Drogon Chogyal Phagpa & Dezhung Anjam Rinpoche
11-23	Parinirvana Day of Khenchen Appay Rinpoche
12-4	Parinirvana Day of Chogyé Trichen Dorje Chang Ngawang Khyenrab Lekshey Gyaltsö

Melody of Dharma

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“Delight in heedfulness! Guard well your thoughts!”

The Dhammapada



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