
The Merit of Practicing Unsurpassed Vajrayana

A2: Main Text

B1: Encourage to Practice Vajrayana

C1: The Merit of Practicing Unsurpassed Vajrayana

*The Great Perfection, profound and luminous,
Just upon hearing its verses allows one to break the roots of samsara,
And through the six-month practice of its essence to achieve liberation,
May you all engrave this in your hearts.*

a. The Incredible Merit of Dzogchen

The unsurpassed Great Perfection, proclaiming the luminous essence of tathagatagarbha, is difficult for ordinary people to fully understand, and is often criticized by those with poor wisdom. However, one can cut off the root causes of samsara simply by listening to its verses, and those with great capacities are able to attain liberation if they practice its essence diligently for six months. Therefore, we must have this Great Perfection deeply engraved in our hearts.

The Great Perfection is the essence of all sutras and tantras, and its merits are beyond all description. People can attain liberation by merely hearing its words, touching its texts, attaching it to one's body, or understanding its meaning. According to Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way*, people with doubts about emptiness are still able to break from the cyclical existence of the three realms. This is even more true for those who have learned the unsurpassed Vajrayana.

If someone with extraordinary faith and strong conviction practices Dzogchen by following the sequence of preparation, main practice, and conclusion, that person may attain liberation in six months. It is stated in the *Vajra Panjara Tantra*¹, "If one has been practicing for six months with unshaken faith and conviction, one will be able to attain the fruit of Vajradhara." It is also mentioned in the *Tantric Solemn Oath*, "With determined faith and conviction, one will attain the fruit of Vajradhara in six months." This is also further stated in the *Chetsun Nyingthig*² and the *Longchen Nyingthig*³.

Hence the Great Perfection is very transcendent. Ju Mipham Rinpoche said in his teachings, "In this degenerate age, sentient beings are loaded with deep and heavy afflictions, which cannot be easily tamed by other dharma methods. But one can completely cut off all the afflictions with the unsurpassed Great Perfection."

Here, His Holiness told us that since the Great Perfection is so extraordinary, we must not abandon or defame it. If one really cannot arouse faith in it, it is okay to leave it alone, or to bring up ones doubts in front of authentic teachers. However, one must not have

¹ http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Vajrapa%C3%B1jara_Tantra

² http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Chets%C3%BCn_Nyingtik

³ http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Longchen_Nyingtik

preconceived negative ideas about Vajrayana without sufficient reason.

b. An Amazing Example of a Dzogchen Practitioner

In Khenpo Sodargye's teaching, he said that he had personally witnessed quite a few Dzogchen practitioners who achieved the realization of Dzogchen and had auspicious appearances before death. He said he was particularly impressed with a Han bhikshuni named Ming Hui, and below is her story.

Ming Hui had enormous faith in the Vajrayana. Originally, she was being treated for an illness in the Han area. Later, she learned that His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche was going to teach Dzogchen at Larung Gar. She felt that life was impermanent, and not knowing how much longer she had to live, she insisted on going back to receive the teaching. His Holiness lectured on Longchenpa's *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind* for about 100 days and she studied very diligently during that period.

On September 1st, 1993, after the teaching ended, she returned to the Han area to receive further treatment from the doctor. On March 1, 1994, her caretaker and dharma friend Zhen Ru bhikkhuni called Khenpo Sodargye from Jinfeng Monastery, where they were living, and said that Ming Hui had died and at the moment of her passing, she was in a dignified sitting position praying to her lineage guru and Amitabha. Her body began to shrink and all kinds of auspicious signs appeared. It was exactly six months to the day from when she finished receiving the teachings until her death.; There was not even the discrepancy of a day. This was, indeed, a very rare occurrence.

As Khenpo Sodargye said, Ming Hui bhikshuni did not always appear to be highly intelligent, but her faith was indeed very strong. The prerequisites, for those with great capacities, to practice the Great Perfection are primarily their faith and conviction. Those with the strongest faith in their gurus and in the Three Jewels, and especially in Vajrayana, will never part with such faith, even at their deathbeds. These people, indeed, will achieve great accomplishments. Hence His Holiness made a comment that "It is very difficult to encounter the Great Perfection during this degenerate age, for it is such an extraordinary path." We must have these words engraved on our mind.

c. The Preliminary Practice of Dzogchen

Many Vajrayana followers nowadays believe one must contemplate with primordial purity or luminosity in order to effectively discover one's nature of mind. Indeed, as an ordinary practitioner, one must start with the preliminary practice, which is followed by receiving empowerment and then the main practice. Venerable Longchenpa, Mipham Rinpoche, and His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche have all set out rigorous requirements for the practice of Dzogchen. It is crucial to abide by this order of practice, otherwise one cannot achieve proper realization. As such, it is like painting beautiful motifs on the walls of a building while the foundations have not yet been stabilized. The risk is that, after a while, the whole building will collapse. Therefore, we should paint motifs on the walls only after the foundations are made secure and safe.

The Conditions for Practicing Dzogchen

C2: The Conditions for Practicing Dzogchen

*Those who with the great fortune encounter such supreme teaching,
Must have been accumulating merit in their previous lives through numerous eons
And possess the same conditions for achieving enlightenment with Buddha
Samantabhadra,
Dharma friends, may you all be joyful for yourselves.*

a. The Same Conditions with Buddha Samantabhadra

Here “*supreme teaching*” refers to the great teaching of Dzogchen, and “*those with the great fortune*” refers to those who have received the initiation for or listened to the teaching of the Great Perfection, or those who have similar auspicious connection with Dzogchen. His Holiness says, “For those who have had the opportunity to encounter the Great Perfection, this is as a result of accumulated merits over many lives. To be able to meet such great teaching is, in fact, sharing a similar karmic circumstance with Buddha Samantabhadra, and therefore, all dharma friends should be delighted.”

All of us have had the good fortune in this life to have met our gurus, to receive their teachings on Vajrayana, and to have received empowerments and pith instructions. Such wondrous affinities with Vajrayana are the result of the good karma accumulated through numerous previous lives. Venerable Longchenpa made two inferences in *The Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle*⁴:

1. Since we have encountered the unsurpassed Vajrayana in this life, we must have made offerings and attended to an infinite number of buddhas in our past lives, and have also been their followers or disciples.

2. Since we have encountered the unsurpassed Vajrayana, we will definitely accomplish realization in this present life, during the Bardo, or in a future life.

So according to the inferences of Buddhist Logic, if one has heard and studied Vajrayana, this person must have transcendental affinities with Vajrayana. We are in fact, sharing a similar circumstance with Buddha Samantabhadra, for we are able to encounter Dzogchen in this present life. It is because of this transcendental tantric dharma that Samantabhadra attained the state of self-liberation in one split second. It is an accumulation of our good karma in numerous previous lives to encounter this supreme teaching.

As it is said in *Prajnaparamita Sutra*, a person who is lost and wandering in the forest would have the sense that he was close to a village once he saw a cattleman. By seeing a cattleman he knew he could be leaving behind his fear of being lost. Similarly, once we have encountered a Vajra guru who guides us on the Vajrayana path, like a fish that has been hooked and will surely be pulled to the shore, we will soon be liberated.

⁴ http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Treasury_of_the_Supreme_Vehicle

b. Do not Break the Vows of Vajrayana

However, if one slanders Vajrayana or betrays the guru and his teachings, the consequences will be very serious. The Vajrayana vows are very rigorous, and if one breaks the vows, this person will indeed accumulate negative karma that can lead this person to the lower realms. This applies not only for Vajrayana vows, but also for the Bodhisattva vows, and even the precepts for lay Buddhists which are also very stringent. If one takes refuge in the Three Jewels today, and criticizes the Three Jewels tomorrow, one will definitely sink into the three lower realms. Therefore, His Holiness said in his other teachings that, as long as one does not break the vows in this present life, one will become accomplished in next life, even if one does not practice diligently. Vajrayana practitioners must have such determination of keeping the vows in this very life.