



INVOKING GURU RINPOCHE

A PRACTICAL COMMENTARY ON
THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

KHENPO SODARGYE

2026 EDITION

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A Practical Commentary on
the Seven-Line Prayer**

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 **KHENPO
SODARGYE**



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Lecture One

September 25th, 2009

WELCOME TO THE PATH OF VAJRAYANA

Course Introduction and Prerequisites

Each year, I offer Vajrayana teachings to some of my dharma friends at Larung Gar. These teachings cover a wide range of topics, from the merits of the Vajrayana path to specific tantric practices and essential pith instructions. This year, I will place special emphasis on the merit and benefits of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava. For this purpose, I will use Ju Mipham Rinpoche's renowned commentary, *White Lotus: An Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava*, as the primary text, providing a direct and literal explanation.

During these teachings, I will not introduce additional scriptural sources or extended reasoning, as a concise explanation of this commentary is sufficient for comprehending the profound merits of this prayer. Through this, you will come to appreciate the extraordinary blessings and power inherent in the vajra words of accomplished masters such as the Omniscient Mipham Rinpoche.

Ju Mipham Rinpoche's *White Lotus* is structured into several sections, beginning with the outer practice, which expounds the literal meaning of the prayer, and then progressing to the profound and hidden meanings found in the inner and secret practices. For this course, I will offer a brief teaching on the outer practice. As for the inner and secret practices, we may explore them in the future if the opportunity arises.

The Seven-Line Prayer practice I will introduce is among the most accessible practices in Vajrayana. However, as it is a tantric practice, it is highly recommended that you receive a Vajrayana empowerment before attending. If you have not yet received such an empowerment but wish to participate, please ensure that you listen with faith in Vajrayana and Guru Padmasambhava. If you hold views such as "Vajrayana leads to erroneous paths" or "Vajrayana teachings are invalid," it would be best not to attend, as the course may not offer you the intended benefit.

Why Foundational Knowledge Matters in Vajrayana Practice?

When one embarks on the tantric path without a foundational understanding, there is a risk of abandoning or even disparaging it. Vajrayana presents the profound and advanced teachings of Tibetan

Buddhism. Those who develop a genuine understanding of these teachings can experience transformative benefits. Conversely, a lack of basic knowledge may lead one to turn away from the path or engage in actions that accrue significant negative karma. Therefore, if you wish to follow this path, it is essential to study tantric teachings and cultivate a correct understanding of Vajrayana. Whenever favorable conditions arise for the study of Vajrayana, especially when teachings are available in your native language, you should seize the opportunity to learn from multiple perspectives, including its origins, history, and merits. This will help safeguard you from abandoning or disparaging this sublime path in the future.

Systematically Embarking on the Vajrayana Path

Many of you have traveled great distances, leaving behind your families, jobs, and other cherished aspects of your lives to this remote place in pursuit of Buddhist teachings, especially those of the Vajrayana. Your devotion is evident, and your yearning for the dharma is fervent. If you wish to follow Buddhism—particularly the Vajrayana—it is most beneficial to begin with a systematic approach, learning and practicing step by step.

Some students seek only the most profound tantric instructions without first establishing the necessary foundation for the Vajrayana

path. I am concerned that such an approach will make it difficult for them to progress in their practice, as the tantric path is not as accessible as it may seem. Influenced by family and social environments, some may not develop a conviction in the law of cause and effect at a young age, let alone a basic understanding of Vajrayana. Later, due to karmic connections, they encounter Buddhism and quickly receive tantric teachings—even the most profound pith instructions—without much opportunity to build a solid foundation. This lack of preparation can easily lead them astray.

For this reason, it is essential to establish a strong foundation by following a systematic approach before engaging in the more advanced practices of Vajrayana. Beginners are encouraged to study the origins of Vajrayana, the biographies of lineage masters, the benefits of this path, and accessible foundational practices. Thereafter, one can progress sequentially to more profound practices, from the generation and completion stages to the highest teachings of Mahamudra or Dzogchen.

Neglecting this sequential approach can lead to regret for both the teacher and the student. If a student jumps right into the deepest tantric practices without understanding the basics, the teacher may regret having given the teachings, as the student may not be able to assimilate them. The student, in turn, may feel disappointed when

the results do not meet expectations. In such cases, no matter how extraordinary the teachings, they will offer little benefit.

This is why the Buddha emphasized in various sutras that teachers should instruct according to their students' inclinations—a principle of utmost importance. In the past, the great masters of India and the Land of Tibet understood their students' capacities and provided appropriate teachings, whether basic or advanced, at each stage of practice. Today, this remains a challenge for both teachers and students. However, if they recognize the importance of giving and receiving tantric teachings in sequence, more Vajrayana practitioners will develop a correct view and be less likely to falter on the path.

Here at our academy, practitioners place great emphasis on learning and practicing Vajrayana in the proper sequence, and I really appreciate that. Recently, in conversations with dharma friends, many have shared that they once focused primarily on Buddhist philosophy. However, after starting to apply the tantric teachings they had studied in recent years, they came to realize the importance of completing the preliminary stages before moving on to the main practices. As a result, they now devote themselves to foundational training, such as contemplating the impermanence of life and guru yoga.

They have become convinced that when the blessings of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and gurus permeate their minds, they are most likely to make significant progress in their dharma practice, regardless of the specific practice they engaged in. Without such blessings, it is difficult to attain realization through theoretical study or philosophical debate alone, as these are largely confined to conceptual thought. Many practitioners have come to a deep understanding of this truth, which is of great importance. Furthermore, they have become more careful and discerning about giving and receiving tantric teachings, and they stress the necessity of beginning Vajrayana practice with the preliminary practices.

Devotion and the Extraordinary Nature of Vajrayana

Cultivating faith and conviction in Vajrayana is more important than academic study alone. While some scholars and dharma teachers diligently study and research Vajrayana texts, they may nonetheless lack a basic understanding of this path and its most foundational practices. Because they focus solely on the academic perspective, the nectar-like tantric teachings may not truly penetrate their mind streams, which is unfortunate. As Vajrayana practitioners, it is essential to cultivate devotion to Vajrayana through dedicated study.

With such faith, it becomes easier to recognize the extraordinary nature of Vajrayana.

The extraordinary nature is inherent in all Buddhist teachings but is especially evident in the tantric tradition. Based on my years of studying the Buddhadharmā, my confidence in Vajrayana has grown each time I have engaged with the tantric teachings—whether through theoretical study, actual practices, or even mantra recitation. This experience has led me to realize that Vajrayana reveals the ultimate truth, and my heart resonates with and embraces it. I am convinced that Vajrayana is not only deeply attractive but also profound in its teachings and supreme in its practices. Only through comprehensive study and practice of the tantric path can one develop genuine confidence in its nature.

Understanding the value of Buddhism as a whole also helps us appreciate the excellence of Vajrayana, a tradition that holds a prominent place within Buddhism. Today, Buddhism is widely recognized as a sophisticated philosophical system. Many scientific researchers and religious scholars, approaching it from a fair and objective standpoint, consider Buddhism to be exceptionally unique. This distinction primarily stems from the Buddhist emphasis on compassion and wisdom, qualities rarely encountered in such depth within other spiritual traditions. Buddhist compassion

extends equally to all sentient beings, not just humans. Furthermore, Buddhist wisdom is so inclusive and tolerant that it does not promote violence or negative behaviors that provoke afflictive emotions, which may indeed be present in some other spiritual paths. The Buddhadharma, in its entirety, encompasses the essence of insights from diverse schools and traditions.

Nonetheless, some masters within the Sutrayana tradition may not have readily acknowledged the extraordinary nature of Vajrayana. This is understandable, as they rarely had access to tantric teachings during their dharma studies. However, if they had the opportunity to become familiar with the Vajrayana path, they would have certainly recognized its value; the more they studied, the more they would appreciate its excellent qualities, such as its powerful blessings and extraordinary merit. Therefore, it is fair to say that those with virtuous connections and faith in Buddhism will embrace Vajrayana once they understand its true merit.

THE MOST SUPREME PRAYER TO GURU RINPOCHE

Namo Guru Padma Manjushri Vajra Tikshnaya!^a

**Holder of the Vajra, you who are in truth all buddhas
of the triple time,
Lake-Born Lord, appearing as an emanation in this
world,
Body of undying wisdom, sovereign of vidyadharas,
Padmakara, O glorious one, protect me now this wanderer.**

The *Holder of the Vajra* embodies the nature of all buddhas throughout past, present, and future. He manifested in this world as the Lake-Born Lord, known as Padmasambhava. Having attained undying wisdom, he reigns as sovereign over tens of thousands of vidyadharas. We beseech the glorious Guru Rinpoche to protect us, pitiful beings wandering in this age of degeneration.

^a The English translation of the root text is based on *White Lotus: An Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava*, translated by the Padmakara Translation Group. Slight adaptations have been introduced by the editors solely to maintain consistency with the contextual meaning presented in Khenpo Rinpoche's Chinese teaching.

The more fervently we pray to Guru Rinpoche, the more powerfully his blessings flow to us. When these blessing dissolve into our minds, our practice naturally unfolds without hindrance. In this degenerate age, negative forces and those who hold wrong views are especially active. Wrongful attachments and negative thoughts can arise within us at any moment. In such dark times, it is nearly impossible to accomplish our practice through our own limited efforts. Without relying on the support of an extraordinarily powerful force, we cannot overcome the challenges of the path. Therefore, again and again, I urge you, my vajra friends, to fervently pray to Guru Padmasambhava with fierce devotion. If you do so, your practice will progress smoothly from beginning to end.

**The lotus of my heart, endowed with threefold faith,
Is turned toward the day-star of the mighty Conqueror
And opens in the splendor of blessings.
May the honey dewdrops of this explanation sweetly
fall
And satisfy the wishes of the fortunate!**

This verse is a metaphor. The Buddha's blessings are like the sun. When it shines forth, the wisdom lotus of Mipham Rinpoche's faith blossoms. From this unfolding flows the honey-like nectar of

this commentary, which those with virtuous karmic connections may enjoy, thus fulfilling their wishes. In essence, just as sunlight causes the lotus to blossom, and attracts honeybees to gather its sweet nectar—bringing satisfaction to the fortunate—so too do these teachings fulfill the aspirations of those who are blessed to receive them.

Of all the prayers to the great and glorious master of Oddiyana, embodiment of all buddhas past, present, and to come, the invocation composed of seven vajra verses is supreme. It arose spontaneously as the natural resonance of indestructible ultimate reality and is an immense treasure-mine of blessings and accomplishments.

Among the countless supplications to Guru Rinpoche, the Seven-Line Prayer holds the highest place. This prayer was not composed by Guru Rinpoche himself, nor is it merely a supplication addressed to him. Rather, it arose as the unified supplication of the buddhas of the ten directions. Like the *Sole Heir of the Doctrine Tantra*, this prayer spontaneously manifested from space when the blessings and wisdom of the buddhas of the three times converged. It stands as the source and treasury of all blessings, merit, and accomplishments.

Even without delving into its profound inner or secret meanings, simply understanding the outer meaning as explained by Mipham Rinpoche reveals the extraordinary nature of this seven-line supplication. The prayer's remarkable benefits account for its presence in terma texts revealed by all 108 tertons. For this reason, every dharma assembly in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition—especially those of the Nyingma school—begins with three recitations of the Seven-Line Prayer.

When you pray with genuine faith and devotion, Guru Rinpoche, the buddhas of the ten directions, the Three Roots, dharma protectors, and all noble beings gather before you, bestowing blessings and empowerments. As ordinary beings, we are like a young, homeless child wandering a crowded street—lost and alone, with no one to care for him. When that child calls out desperately for his mother, she rushes to him at once, providing comfort and protection. In this dark time of degeneration, even if we aspire to practice dharma without obstacles, relying solely on our own efforts may not be enough. Therefore, it is essential to pray to our gurus, dharma protectors, and deities.

“YOU WILL NEVER PART FROM ME, THE LOTUS-BORN”

In the sadhana upon the Seven-Line Prayer taken from a dharma treasure of Pema Garwang Chimé Yudrung Lingpa, Guru Rinpoche declares [to King Trisong Detsen and his companions],

The following verses come from a terma revealed by Padma Garwang Chimey Yudrung Lingpa, also known as Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, which describes the benefits of the Seven-Line Prayer. A contemporary of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, Jamgon Kongtrul was both a great tertön and Mipham Rinpoche’s spiritual teacher. His biography appears in *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History* along with numerous other historical records. During his life, he composed more than 100 volumes, including the renowned *Five Great Treasures*. Some biographical accounts highlight Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche’s extraordinary merit: His literary output suggests he devoted his entire life to writing; while his treasure revelations indicate he dedicated himself wholly

to benefiting sentient beings through revealing termas. In every aspect, his activities in benefiting sentient beings and spreading the dharma were remarkably vast and extraordinary.

Dharmakaya and Sambhogakaya

**When I, the Lotus that Upholds All Things,
Was resting in absorption in the vast, primordial expanse,
I was invoked by Vajra sound, the play of ultimate
reality,
A self-arisen melody in seven lines.
I rose then in the boundless majesty of the sambhogakaya,
Revealing an array of the buddha and his field
Pervading space and endowed with fivefold certainty.**

When Padmasambhava abided in the dharmadhatu—the primordial state free from all fabrications and beyond expression—the wonderful sound of the Seven-Line Prayer arose spontaneously from the play of ultimate reality. This occurred through both the power of ultimate reality and the accumulated merit of sentient beings. Invoked by this wondrous sound, from the primordial expanse of dharmakaya, Padmasambhava rose in the sambhogakaya,

manifesting with immeasurable majesty. The entire sublime display of the sambhogakaya buddha and his buddhafield—pervading space and intrinsically possessing the fivefold certainty—was fully revealed. The fivefold certainty refers to the certain form, certain disciples, certain teaching, certain time, and certain place. In this context, it means that within the sambhogakaya realm, the sambhogakaya buddha Padmasambhava spontaneously teaches the sublime dharma, which is beyond expression, to his retinue.

Semi-Nirmanakaya Semi-Sambhogakaya

**Then the five exalted mothers of the ultimate expanse
Implored me with a seven-line song to work for beings'
good.**

**And therefore on a lotus blossom raised upon its stem,
Within the milky ocean in the field of supreme bliss,**

I was made manifest,

**Renowned as Thötreng, Garlanded with Skulls, in
fivefold lineage.**

My life and deeds are past imagining.

At that moment, the five mothers of the five buddha families—Mamaki of the Ratna family, Buddhalochana of the Vajra family, Dhatvishvari of the Buddha family, Pandavarasini of the Padma family

and Samayatara of the Karma family—jointed their voices in the wondrous melody of the Vajra Seven-Line Prayer, supplicating the Sambhogakaya form of Padmasambhava to act for the benefit of all beings.

In response, a lotus blossom appeared in the milky ocean of Sukhavati, the field of supreme bliss, and Guru Padmasambhava manifested upon it as Thötrengetsal in the fivefold lineage: Thötrengetsal of the Ratna family, Thötrengetsal of the Vajra family, Thötrengetsal of the Buddha family, Thötrengetsal of the Padma family, and Thötrengetsal of the Karma family. His life and enlightened activities for the benefit of beings are boundless and inconceivable.

This reveals how, in Sukhavati, Guru Padmasambhava benefits sentient beings in a form that is both semi-nirmanakaya and semi-sambhogakaya.

Nirmanakaya

**And then a hundred million wisdom dakinis,
With one voice called to me
That I might propagate the doctrine of the Secret Mantra,
Entreating me with seven-lined song
To come into this world,**

**The field that Shakyamuni tamed.
And so in Orgyen’s land, the cradle of the mantras,
On Dhanakosha Lake, upon a wondrous lotus raised
upon its stem,
Appearing from the field of bliss I came.
As ‘Lake-Born Vajra’ I am therefore known.**

A hundred million wisdom dakinis sang the wondrous Seven-Line Prayer with one voice. They supplicated Guru Padmasambhava to descend from Sukhavati into this world to spread the supreme Secret Mantra Vajrayana throughout Jambudvipa where Buddha Shakyamuni had tamed beings. Through their prayers, the proper causes and conditions arose. Within Buddha Shakyamuni’s field, in the land of Oddiyana—the cradle of the Mantrayana—a rare lotus bloomed on an island in Lake Dhanakosha. Buddha Amitabha sent forth the syllable *hrih*¹ from his heart in Sukhavati. This syllable descended onto the lotus and transformed into a beautiful young boy. When King Indrabhuti came to the lake, he encountered the boy, brought him back to his kingdom, and installed him as crown prince. For this reason, Padmasambhava became known as Tsokyé Dorje, Lake-Born Vajra. This account illustrates how Padmasambhava appeared in Jambudvipa in his nirmanakaya form.

Many great masters have taught that Guru Padmasambhava represents the conjoined manifestation of Buddha Amitabha, Buddha Shakyamuni, and Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Ordinary people, and even some bodhisattvas, may find it difficult to comprehend or accept Guru Rinpoche's extraordinary conduct and realization. This may explain the considerable disagreement regarding the length of Guru Rinpoche's stay in the Tibetan regions. Various accounts suggest he remained for only three, six, twelve, or eighteen months; others say three, six, or twelve years; still others maintain he stayed more than fifty years or one hundred eleven years. The most widely accepted view is that Guru Padmasambhava manifested in the Tibetan regions for more than fifty years among most Tibetans and fortunate sentient beings. Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* records that Guru Rinpoche arrived in the Tibetan regions when King Trisong Detsen was twenty-one years old. He remained for another sixteen years after the king's death at the age of fifty-nine. Why then do some historical documents state that Guru Rinpoche's stay was much shorter? Dudjom Rinpoche explains that, before the evil ministers, he appeared for only a brief period. When he seemed to depart from the Tibetan regions, his actual body traveled from place to place, bestowing blessings throughout the entire Land of Snows.

Through Guru Rinpoche's miraculous power and blessings, combined with the activities of numerous dharma protectors, Tibetan Buddhism has remained intact and continues to flourish to this day. No other religious traditions have succeeded in establishing themselves in the Tibetan regions. Therefore, it is essential for every practitioner to pray to Guru Padmasambhava for the protection of one's monastery, dharma center, or personal practice. In fact, many great masters have placed great importance on the practice of Padmasambhava and incorporated it seriously into their daily practice. Even during chaotic times, some practitioners secretly engaged in Padmasambhava practice while in prison. This included practitioners of Han Buddhism and even some Chan masters. Only after their passing did it become known that they had engaged in tantric practice, especially the practice of Padmasambhava. There are numerous such cases among the disciples of Norlha Khutugtu and Gangkar Lama.

The above recounts how Guru Padmasambhava manifested before beings in the human realm.

The Seven-Line Prayer, the Root of All Dharmas

**Revealing marvels inconceivable,
My wondrous forms are infinite.**

**For dakinis and dakas of the lake,
The secret essence of the greatly secret teachings I set
forth:
One hundred million tantras, agamas, and upadeshas
Of the Magic Net of Padma,
To help the living and all those who yet will come,
According to their different inclinations.**

When Padmasambhava appeared in the human realm, he manifested countless wondrous forms before sentient beings, benefiting them through a variety of extraordinary displays. He imparted innumerable and inconceivable secret essences of the Secret Mantrayana—tantras, transmissions, and upadeshas such as *The Magic Net of Padma* and many others—addressing the capacities and inclinations of dakinis, dakas, and humans, both of his own time and of future generations.

**These doctrines all have been distilled
In sadhanas upon the Guru—
Myself, embodiment of the Three Roots.
The prayer in seven lines is root of all these sadhanas.
Within the Ground, these lines denote
The seven kinds of consciousness;**

**Upon the Path, they represent
The seven branches of enlightenment;
And when the Fruit is won, they are perfected
As the seven sacred riches of the ultimate.**

Although Padmasambhava taught a vast array of profound tantras, transmissions, and upadeshas to beings of varying inclinations, in fact, all of these can be summarized as practices of the Three Roots—Guru, Dakini and Yidam. In fact, all Three Roots practices can further be condensed into the practices of Guru Padmasambhava. There are many such practices, revealed as terma by tertons or composed by great masters, some focusing on Padmasambhava in peaceful form, others in wrathful form. Even among peaceful practices, the sadhanas revealed in different terma vary. Nevertheless, the essence of all these practices is contained within the Seven-Line Prayer. Moreover, this prayer encapsulates the essences of the Ground, Path, and Fruition. On the level of the Ground, it denotes the seven kinds of consciousness; on the Path, it embodies the seven factors for enlightenment; and at Fruition, it is perfected as the seven sacred riches of the ultimate. Thus, this prayer encompasses all.

For most of us, engaging in various sadhanas of Guru Rinpoche may be challenging, but reciting the Seven-Line Prayer is accessible

to all. [At this point, Khenpo chanted the Seven-Line Prayer in a distinctive melody and remarked, “I was imitating someone who chants in this way, which differs slightly from our usual melody. He said this style was passed down from his own guru. It is perfectly fine for him to follow his guru’s style.”]

Many people have different pronunciations or chanting styles. For example, the way the chanting style in Lhasa differs from that in regions like Dokham. Take the Guru Rinpoche mantra: some recite *Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung*, while others say *Om Ah Hung Vajra Guru Padma Siddhi Hung*. Achieving complete uniformity is nearly impossible. Generally speaking, as in the story I previously mentioned about reciting the Vajrakilaya mantra,² as long as your mind is pure, the exact pronunciation of the mantra is not of primary importance. For instance, when chanting *Om Mani Padme Hung*, some use Mandarin, others Cantonese, and still others have a Gansu accent or Sichuan accent—pronunciations vary from place to place. One cannot claim that the Gansu pronunciation is standard while the Hong Kong pronunciation is not. It is entirely natural for pronunciations to differ.

Signs of Blessings

**If thus you simply call upon me
With this melody of vajra sound,
I, Padma, cannot help but come to you.
I will give to you my blessings and will grant
Empowerment of great primordial wisdom.**

If you rely solely on the Vajra Seven-Line Prayer and recite it with a beautiful and melodious voice in supplication to Guru Padmasambhava, then Guru Rinpoche, as he says, “cannot help but come to you.” He will immediately grant you blessings and bestow the empowerment of great wisdom. This is Guru Rinpoche’s vajra speech—absolutely true and unfailing.

Today, many practitioners are unable to find lamas to grant them empowerments. Even if they do, the lama may be unable to give empowerment due to various reasons, such as being busy or in poor health. In such cases, reciting the Seven-Line Prayer daily is beneficial. Through this supplication, Padmasambhava will come to you in his wisdom body and grant you empowerment. As long as you have faith, you will undoubtedly receive these blessings.

**The multitudes of deities of the Three Roots will
gather like the clouds,
To grant, unhindered, common and supreme
accomplishments.
And in your waking life, or in your meditation,
Or in the visions of your dreams, you will encounter
me.
Swirls of rainbow light you'll see, and smell sweet
scents,**

When you supplicate by reciting the Seven-Line Prayer, the Three Roots will gather before you like clouds, bestowing blessings and granting both common and supreme accomplishments without obscuration. Through this practice, you may have special experiences or a sense of receiving the blessings of Padmasambhava and various deities. You may encounter them in daily life, during meditation, or in dreams. Additionally, you may see rainbow light or notice sweet fragrances in your place of practice.

While translating this commentary, though I cannot claim to have had direct experience, I have indeed dreamed of Padmasambhava many times. However, this does not indicate any particularly high

attainment. As Venerable Longchenpa said in his *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions*, one of the six definite results is that if a person diligently engages in dharma practice, one will definitely gain experiences and realizations. Therefore, whether it is spiritual experiences, blessings, or empowerments, anyone with faith can receive them—the key is whether you actually practice or not.

**And hear celestial airs and gentle tapping of the damaru.
Your body, speech, and mind with blessings drenched,
You will gain realization in a single leap
By virtue of the strength of your awareness.
Eight classes of proud spirits will be subject to your
word.**

Practicing the Seven-Line Prayer may lead you to hear the damaru of celestial beings and the sounds of dharma protectors and dakinis. Indeed, wondrous sounds could often be heard around the caves or cabins of past practitioners in solitary retreat. Along with this, your body, speech, and mind will be greatly blessed. Through this Seven-Line Prayer practice, if your body is tense and inflexible, it will become relaxed and at ease; if your speech is harsh and careless, it will become gentle and refined; if you are troubled by deep-rooted negative emotions, the powerful blessings of Guru

Padmasambhava will dissolve into your mind, bringing about a tremendous transformation of your greed, anger, and ignorance. Some practitioners change very quickly, as the blessings of Guru Padmasambhava merged with their minds. Those with sharper faculties will even instantly recognize the intrinsic awareness and realize the true nature of reality. The eight classes of proud spirits will submit to your instructions. They will no longer harm you; instead, they will become your protectors and supporters, allowing your dharma activities to flourish and expand.

**All those linked with you will be benefited and you
will gain my blessing's power
And, swift to gain attainment as vidyadharas,
You will never part from me, the Lotus-Born.
Samaya!**

By practicing this prayer to Padmasambhava, you will benefit countless sentient beings who share a karmic connection with you. Even if you are not yet able to help others, as your dharma practice deepens, you will benefit all those linked to you, whether through positive or negative karma. At the same time, you will gain great power yourself. Some people find that their words lack influence, their motivation is weak, and whenever they attempt something meaningful,

they encounter obstacles and fail to complete their aims. Why is this? It may be due to strong karmic obstacles or interference of demonic forces. However, having encountered such an extraordinary practice, we should apply ourselves diligently. If we do so, we will not only gain strength and remove obstacles, but also swiftly attain the realization of a vidyadhara, becoming inseparable from Guru Padmasambhava.

Guru Rinpoche's Prophecy

**The Three Roots I myself personify,
The vajra form arisen from the lake,
Appearing as a magic net of emanations.
If you pray to me according to your aspirations,
I will grant accomplishments that correspond to them.
For you, who are now king and subjects,
And for the sake of my disciples yet to come,
I teach with love the essence of my heart.**

Guru Padmasambhava is the true embodiment of the Three Roots. Before sentient beings, he manifested a vajra body on a lotus in the lake, appearing as a magic net of emanations. If you cultivate faith in his noble qualities and pray to him, you will receive accomplishments in accordance with your aspirations. Those who make

the most excellent supplications will receive the superior empowerments and blessings, while those whose supplications are lesser will receive blessings accordingly. For the benefit of King Trisong Detsen, his subjects, and future disciples, Guru Rinpoche, with great compassion, imparted instructions that are the very essence of his heart.

**Not divulged, but as deep treasure it must now be hid.
In evil times to come, my own disciple will appear;
And at that time, endowed with wisdom,
Through the power of Vairotsana's prayer,
He will reveal this means for taming beings,
Gleaming with symbolic lettering of light.
Thus far and wide will spread a source of help for
wanderers.
Samaya!**

This teaching of Guru Rinpoche, rather than being disseminated at that time, was concealed as a terma. Guru Rinpoche prophesied that in a future time of degeneration, when his fortunate disciples appear, this teaching would be revealed through the power of Vairotsana's aspirations, appearing in symbolic letters of light or dakini script.

Many extraordinary practices are related to the Seven-Line Prayer. Numerous such teachings, including this sadhana of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche,³ were hidden as terma in diverse locations—within bodies of water, the sky, sacred mountains, and other consecrated places. According to some historical accounts, Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal spent about a hundred years concealing all of Guru Rinpoche’s profound teachings after he departed for the rakshasas’ continent of Chamaradvipa. Later, great masters such as Nyak Jnanakumara, Vairotsana, and Vimalamitra also concealed many supreme tantric teachings, awaiting their revelation by future tertons.

The Unique Nature of Terma

Understanding the exceptional qualities of terma teachings is essential. The tradition of hidden treasures, is not exclusive to Tantrayana; it also appears in Sutrayana. For example, in Dudjom Rinpoche’s *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Sutrayana scriptures like the *Sutra of the River’s Play* are cited to illustrate this point. According to these texts, certain special teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni were concealed in specific locations, to be revealed by designated individuals in the future. However, such occurrences are less common in Sutrayana than in the lineage of Guru Rinpoche.

Throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, there have been 108 widely recognized tertons, whose biographies are collected in *The Hundred Tertons*. Other historical works, including Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, also feature the lives of great tertons such as Jigme Lingpa, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, and Mipham Rinpoche. By reading the treasure texts revealed by these great tertons and understanding their merit and profound influence, one develops deep conviction in the power of terma.

Terma, as a short-lineage transmission, possesses qualities distinct from those of long-lineage transmission. It remains untainted by the potential contamination that can result from broken samayas and is not subject to the lengthy and complex process of transmission from teacher to disciple across generations. Padmasambhava personally blessed these terma teachings before they were concealed and prophesied who would reveal them in the future.

When the favorable conditions—such as the appropriate time and place—arise, through the power of Guru Rinpoche's aspirations and the spiritual realization and aspirations of the destined terton, these treasure teachings are revealed for the benefit of sentient beings. Many sadhanas of Guru Padmasambhava have been revealed by

later tertons, who, upon arriving at specific locations, recalled their past lives.

In 1990, when Chojé Yidzhin Norbu⁴ visited Paro Taktsang in Bhutan—a sacred site where Padmasambhava manifested in wrathful form, riding a tigress to subdue demonic forces—His Holiness revealed the *Daily Dorje Drola Practice*,⁵ a terma sadhana of wrathful Padmasambhava. The entire process of this terma revelation is documented in his biography, which is available for study.⁶

Tantric practices and teachings contain profound meanings that far surpass ordinary conceptual understanding. It is important for followers of Vajrayana to recognize this.

The above is a concise and literal explanation of verses from Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche's terma sadhana upon the Seven-Line Prayer.

WHY TEACH THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER?

As I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, I do not intend to offer an extensive teaching on the Seven-Line Prayer at this time. My purpose is to help those who have faith in Vajrayana understand the merit and benefits of this supreme prayer. I believe that after this teaching, many of you will recite this prayer daily, even while walking or eating. Personally, I always feel great faith in a book immediately after reading it. I think your enthusiasm for this teaching would be the same as my feeling of a just-read book. However, the minds of ordinary beings are changeable, and over time, you may not feel as inspired or diligent. Even so, once you have a basic understanding of the benefits of this prayer, your conviction and confidence in it are unlikely to diminish significantly.

Once again, I want to emphasize the great importance of praying to Guru Padmasambhava during this age of degeneration. I hope you will reflect on this point. It is not simply because I am a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism that I share these teachings and practices.

Anything that benefits sentient beings—whether it is a Buddhist teaching or something else—deserves to be promoted equally. This is the ultimate goal. As Buddhists, we should all reflect deeply on which teachings are most meaningful for the benefit of all sentient beings, both in this life and in future lives?

Lecture Two

September 30th, 2009

In the previous lecture, I offered a concise explanation of several verses from the Seven-Line Prayer sadhana, as revealed by Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche. Today, we will continue by discussing the recorded history of these seven vajra lines. The merits, history, and extraordinary blessing power associated with this prayer have been extensively described in the terma texts of many great tertons. Now, let us explore how Mipham Rinpoche explains these aspects in his commentary.

A GREAT TREASURY OF BLESSINGS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Supplication from Dakinis

As recorded in its history, the Seven-Line Prayer is famous as the invocation used by the vajra dakinis to invite Guru Rinpoche to their sacred feasts.

Moreover, once, long ago, five hundred non-Buddhist masters, experts in grammar and logic, met at the glorious monastery of Nalanda, intending to put an end to the Buddhadharma. When the Buddhist scholars proved unable to contend with them, the dakini Supreme Peace appeared to most of them in their dreams and admonished them with the following prophecy. "How can you defeat the non-Buddhists?" she cried. "If you do not invite my brother Dorje Thötrengtsal, now dwelling in the Dark Charnel Ground, the Buddha's teachings will be completely overthrown!"

“But the way there is hard,” they said. “We cannot make the invitation.”

“Go up to the roof of the temple,” the dakini said, “and prepare a great offering. Burn incense and play music, and with deep devotion pray together as I shall teach you.”

The scholars recited the Seven-Line Prayer that the dakini taught them, and in that very instant, Guru Rinpoche appeared to them out of the sky. Taking his position as the leader of the five hundred scholars, he overcame the five hundred non-Buddhist masters with reasoning and by appeal to scriptural authority. Then, when it came to a contest in miraculous power, Vajravahni gave Guru Rinpoche a leather box and told him to subjugate the heathens. Lightning fell and all the non-Buddhists who had evil intentions were annihilated, while the rest were converted to the Buddhadharmā. So it was that the Seven-Line Prayer spread far and wide.

There are two accounts of how the panditas received the Seven-Line Prayer. According to the first, as mentioned here, the panditas simultaneously experienced the same dream of the dakini Supreme Peace. In the second version, while five hundred Buddhist panditas were struggling to find a way to achieve victory, a dakini appeared

in the sky before them and revealed the solution. In both narratives, the dakini instructed them that unless they invite Dorje Thötrengt-sal, the Buddha's teachings would be completely overthrown. Dorje Thötrengt-sal is one of the manifestations of Guru Rinpoche.

The panditas then expressed their concerns about the arduous journey ahead, which would require them to traverse charnel grounds and complete darkness. In response, the dakini taught them how to recite the Seven-Line Prayer, emphasizing that Guru Padmasambhava would appear if they recited it with deep devotion. Following the dakini's instructions, the panditas prepared abundant offerings on the temple roof, played music, and began their prayers.

In that very instant, Guru Rinpoche appeared before them, descending from the sky, and led them in the contest against the non-Buddhist masters. In the philosophical debate, the five hundred upholders of wrong views were completely defeated, and the Buddhists were victorious. During the contest of miraculous powers, the non-Buddhists performed various supernatural manifestations. At that point, Vajravarahi presented Padmasambhava with a leather box and requested him to subjugate the opponents. Following her instructions, and employing the power of a wrathful mantra, Padmasambhava caused thunder to resound from the sky and manifested numerous other miraculous displays.

In some other historical accounts, it is said that Guru Padmasambhava performed the subjugation mudra, pointed his vajra at the non-Buddhists, and shouted “Hung! Hung!” Instantly, they were all overcome and fell to the ground. From this, we can see that the appearance of Guru Rinpoche, the mudra he performs, and the vajra he holds all possess extraordinary power to subdue non-Buddhists with harmful intentions, as well as demons, malevolent spirits, and ghosts.

Before the Seven-Line Prayer flourished in the Tibetan regions, it was already immensely popular in India and areas that include present-day Sri Lanka and Pakistan—people everywhere cherished its recitation. After its introduction to the Land of Tibet, the prayer became a common practice among both monastics and laypeople. While it is difficult to say whether today’s younger generation continues this practice, among the older generation, it remains customary to recite the prayer with palms joined in reverence, especially when facing difficulties or obstacles.

Succeed on Your Spiritual Path with the Seven-Line Prayer

The history of the Seven-Line Prayer, as presented by Mipham Rinpoche, shows that we can always rely on this prayer whenever we

encounter difficulties in our lives or on the dharma path. When I first aspired to become a monk, I faced many obstacles. Various signs suggested that I would not succeed. So I set aside time specifically to recite the Seven-Line Prayer. Although I didn't fully understand the practice at that time, I had heard from many gurus and elderly people that if one prays to Guru Rinpoche with the Seven-Line Prayer, all wishes can be fulfilled. Through especially devoted prayer, I was eventually able to receive ordination smoothly. Many obstacles miraculously disappeared, leaving no opportunity for them to arise. This gave me deep confidence in the blessings of Guru Rinpoche. Of course, if I were to share this with people who do not believe in Buddhism or who hold skeptical views, they might think I am exaggerating. But in fact, through many years of practice and prayer, I have truly and repeatedly experienced the great power of this prayer.

Therefore, whenever you encounter psychological disturbances or obstacles in your dharma practice, it is extremely important to pray to Guru Rinpoche. Orgyen Tendzin Norbu states in his work *In Praise of Precepts*,

*By fervently praying to the Guru Padmasambhava,
One will definitely not be swayed by adverse conditions.*

Chojé Yidzhin Norbu often quoted this verse—and not only did he quote it, but whenever obstacles arose for his disciples or within the academy, he would instruct us to pray in this way. In this challenging age, such prayers have a remarkable effect, whether for the propagation of the dharma or for one's own practice.

Many dharma friends here aspire to become good practitioners, but without a strong support or refuge, it is quite difficult for many to live up to their expectations. In this degenerate age, our resolve on the dharma path is like the sun obscured by clouds—sometimes obscured by demonic forces, sometimes blocked by karmic obstacles, and at other times veiled by misguided teachers or mistaken paths, etc. Therefore, I have always believed that if one wishes to bring one's dharma practice to perfection, it is essential to pray to Guru Rinpoche consistently.

If you are a monastic and wish for your monastic vows to remain pure forever, and to truly live up to the name of a monastic, you should consistently pray to Guru Rinpoche. In this way, he can protect you wherever you are and at all times, helping you to effortlessly overcome all kinds of obstacles. If you are a lay practitioner and wish to practice perfectly and bring your path to completion,

especially in this challenging environment, then it is even more important to pray to Guru Rinpoche, as this will help remove obstacles and bring about accomplishment.

As Mipham Rinpoche noted above, when the five hundred panditas prayed to Guru Rinpoche with sincere devotion, he immediately appeared and helped them overcome all the non-Buddhists who challenged them. In the same way, if we pray to Guru Rinpoche with unwavering faith and single-pointed devotion, he will instantly appear before us and, with inconceivable power, dispel all our suffering. On the other hand, if we do not supplicate him, then even though he possesses inconceivable blessings, they may not reach us. It is like a magnifying glass that has the ability to focus sunlight and create fire, but if it is not directed toward the sun, it will never produce a flame. However, once it is aligned with the sun, even though the sun is incredibly far away, when its rays are focused through the lens, a miraculous fire can be produced. Therefore, our prayers and daily supplications are of utmost importance.

Some people often say that just observing the mind is sufficient, and there is no need to recite mantras or prayers. Of course, if you are someone with exceptionally sharp faculties, you can indeed perfect all qualities simply by abiding naturally. Such individuals do exist, but they are extremely rare. But for most ordinary people,

it is only through practices such as prayer and mantra recitation that they can truly connect with buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Some lamas say that prayers and mantras are like phone numbers, with chanting them being similar to making a call. In terms of establishing a connection with Guru Rinpoche and the buddhas and bodhisattvas, this analogy is somewhat fitting. However, from another perspective, it is not entirely accurate. When you make a phone call, if the person you are trying to reach has changed their number, you will no longer be able to contact them. In contrast, the mantras and prayers of the buddhas and bodhisattvas never change. Take the Seven-Line Prayer for example: it served as a bridge to connect with Guru Padmasambhava in the past, and it remains just as effective today, even in the modern era.

When we recite prayers and mantras in our daily practice, our minds become very peaceful. Apart from occasional discursive thoughts, it is difficult to give rise to strong anger or greed during mantra recitation. In the past, some great masters recited several hundred million mantras in their lifetime. They considered mantra recitation to be extremely important and were not particularly attached to worldly trivialities. Because of this, their minds remained pure most of the time. Therefore, regularly reciting mantras and prayers can reduce the afflictions in our mind streams.

In short, we need to understand that Guru Rinpoche's Seven-Line prayer brings immense benefit.

Source of Blessings and Accomplishments Across Generations

When in later times Guru Rinpoche came to Tibet and established the Buddha's teaching there, he gave this prayer to the king and his subjects, who had the karmic seeds to receive it. He was mindful too of the generations to come, so much so that there is not a single terma, or hidden dharma treasure, in which the Seven-Line Prayer is not present. And to this very day, this prayer is a great treasury of authentic blessings and accomplishments.

The king and his subjects here refer to King Trisong Detsen, Vairotsana, and other fortunate disciples among the king's ministers. With future generations in mind, Guru Rinpoche included this Vajra Seven-Line Prayer within all the terma texts. In the history of Tibetan Buddhism, there have been one hundred renowned tertons. There is a book called *The Hundred Tertons: A Garland of Beryl*, which records the biographies of these famous tertons. I am not sure if this book has been translated into Chinese, but it has been translated

into English and compiled into a rather substantial volume that you might find worth reading.

The terma tradition is quite unique within Tibetan Buddhism, and I believe it will be important to introduce it to you all in greater detail in the future. As mentioned in the previous lecture, the tradition of hidden treasures is referenced in Sutrayana scriptures, though only briefly and indirectly. However, the specific doctrines and practices related to terma are found primarily within the tradition of Padmasambhava. Terma contains exceptionally profound teachings, and numerous terma have been revealed throughout the Tibetan regions.

Notably, the Seven-Line Prayer appears in every terma text. However, the instructions for practicing and reciting the prayer, along with the accounts of Guru Rinpoche's life, vary across these terma. According to some historical sources, there are more than 4,900 different accounts of Guru Rinpoche's life story, with various tertons offering differing descriptions. Many terma also include practices related to Padmasambhava, featuring a variety of guru yoga practices centered on him.

Any practitioner who consistently recites the Seven-Line Prayer will find their practice progresses smoothly and leads to success.

Various experiences and realizations will arise, internal and external demonic obstacles will naturally dissolve, and the blessings, wisdom, and siddhis of the lineage masters will quickly unite with their mind.

Within our academy, many dharma friends have been regularly reciting the Seven-Line Prayer. For many years, they have recited 100 Seven-Line Prayers and 1,000 Padmasambhava mantras daily without interruption. Such perseverance helps to dispel many obstacles on the path and allows our practice to progress smoothly. Consequently, our body and mind become naturally attuned to the dharma, enabling us to receive the continuous blessings of buddhas and bodhisattvas. This naturally deepens our faith in the Three Jewels and makes the realization of the ultimate nature of all phenomena effortless. Conversely, if our mind is not aligned with the dharma, we cannot receive the blessings of gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas, dharma protectors, and dakinis. Without their blessings, if we rely solely on our own limited strength, no matter how diligent or persistent we are, our final results will be far from ideal.

Therefore, with a blessing prayer of such extraordinary merit, we must practice it continuously, just as a seriously ill patient would

carry a potent medicine at all times and in all places. In fact, everyone has afflictions, obstacles, and adverse conditions—this is something we all know in our hearts, though many people simply do not speak of it. We often hear people complain: “It seems only I am burdened with so many afflictions, only I face so many hindrances. Why is my practice never successful? Other fellow practitioners are so admirable; they wake up so early, dedicate so much time to memorizing root verses daily, and seem to have few troubles. But as for me, I’m always getting sick or suffering. What should I do?” Actually, at such times, it is possible that many unseen non-humans and spirits are afflicting you. To ensure the smooth progress of your practice, it is essential to recite the most powerful mantras or prayers.

In the past, many great masters who succeeded in their practice did the same. They engaged in many secret methods themselves and did not easily reveal to others. These were not necessarily unknown teachings, but often well-known pith instructions such as the Seven-Line Prayer. Looking back on their lives in old age, they often said: “I am so fortunate to have encountered and practiced such a profound prayer throughout my whole life. It has brought me the blessings of the Three Jewels, so that I have not been swayed

by adverse conditions during my lifelong practice.” Mipham Rinpoche also states in his *Song of Happiness*: “Although it is unfortunate that I live in the dark age of degeneration, I have encountered the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava and such excellent lineage masters—how fortunate I am amidst misfortune, how happy I am day and night!”

Nowadays, although we are in the dark era of the five degenerations—a time when spirits and obstacles run rampant—we are fortunate to have encountered the authentic dharma, which is beyond any doubt, as well as the profound and blessed teachings of Guru Rinpoche. This is truly something to rejoice in! I do not say this lightly; these words come sincerely from the depths of my heart. I often think to myself: “Even though the current environment is so challenging, I have met such wonderful gurus and received such precious teachings. This is truly the result of having accumulated merit over countless eons—how incredibly fortunate I am!” I believe many of you feel the same way.

In brief, this prayer may be expounded on three levels. Outwardly, the literal sense is explained; inwardly, the hidden meaning of the vajra words is unraveled; finally, an explanation is given of how this prayer is implemented on the path.

The explanation consists of three parts. This time, I will provide a comprehensive explanation of the first section. The second section explores the profound, hidden meaning of the Seven-Line Prayer, based on the teachings of the path of liberation and the path of skillful means. However, engaging with this material requires receiving the proper empowerment and completing the preliminary practices. Although I have already translated that part, we will not discuss it at this time. The third section describes the actual practice of guru yoga for Padmasambhava, which I also intend to cover in this teaching.

THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

Now, we begin with the first section: An Explanation of the Outer, Literal Meaning of the Seven-Line Prayer.

Hum!

In the north-west of the land of Oddiyana

In the heart of a lotus flower,

Endowed with the most marvelous attainments,

You are renowned as the “Lotus-born,”

Surrounded by many hosts of dakinis

Following in your footsteps,

I pray to you: Come, inspire me with your blessing!

guru pema siddhi hum

In brief, the first line indicates where Guru Rinpoche was born; the second line describes how he manifested; the third line reveals his extraordinary qualities; the fourth line praises the excellence of his sacred name; the fifth line refers to his supreme retinue; the sixth line expresses the devotion practitioners hold for him—showing that they follow Guru Padmasambhava wholeheartedly; the seventh

line invokes his blessings, which bestow accomplishments; and the eighth line is sealed with the mantra.

“I AM THE EMBODIMENT OF ALL BUDDHAS”

I, the master of Oddiyana, the embodiment of all the buddhas of the three times, am indivisible from Samantabhadra, the self-arisen primordial dharmakaya, who, from the very beginning, is utterly liberated. Within the dharmakaya expanse, I am naturally and spontaneously present as the sambhogakaya in five lineages. And the natural radiance of the sambhogakaya manifests as the inconceivable display of the nirmanakaya. This is the sphere of buddhas and of no one else.

Primordially, Orgyen Padmasambhava is indistinguishable from Samantabhadra; within the dharmakaya expanse, he appears as the sambhogakaya, the body of enjoyment endowed with five certainties; and the natural radiance of the sambhogakaya manifests as the inconceivable display of the nirmanakaya. In brief, he possesses dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and the various displays of nirmanakaya. His supreme state of realization and enlightened

activities that benefit countless beings belong exclusively to the buddhas and are beyond the experience of ordinary beings.

To ordinary people, Guru Rinpoche appears to be an extraordinary mantrika, yet his true realization is utterly beyond worldly comprehension. As stated in Orgyen Lingpa's terma *A Concise History of Orgyen Padma's Enlightened Deeds*,⁷ a brief biography of Guru Rinpoche:

*I have been the Buddha of Infinite Light, Amitabha,
The Protector Avalokiteshvara of Mount Potala,
And Padma Jungné of Dhanakosha.
Although these each arise as the expression of the three kayas,
They are ultimately inseparable and indivisible.*

Although Amitabha of Sukhavati, Avalokiteshvara of Mount Potala and Padmasambhava of Dhanakosha appear different in form, they are in fact identical in essence. Furthermore, another verse from the same terma by Orgyen Lingpa emphasizes the same point that Mipham Rinpoche mentioned here—namely, that Padmasambhava embodies the three kayas indivisibly. It states:

*Abiding in the dharmadhatu is Samantabhadra;
In Ghanavyuha is the great Vajradhara;*

And in Bodhgaya is the Great Sage himself.

*Inseparably, they are all spontaneously accomplished within
myself, Orgyen.⁸*

This means that the dharmakaya Buddha Samantabhadra in the primordial expanse, the sambhogakaya Buddha Vajradhara of Akanishtha (the pure sambhogakaya field), and the nirmanakaya Buddha Shakyamuni of Jambudvīpa are ultimately no different from Padmasambhava.

Orgyen Lingpa was one of the hundred great tertons, an extraordinarily accomplished master who revealed more than twenty volumes of treasure teachings. In fact, besides Orgyen Lingpa's brief biography, there are many biographies of Padmasambhava in the Tibetan regions, including those found in the termas of Chöying Dorje and Sangye Lingpa. When I was young, I personally copied these texts by hand, and I still have them in my possession. As a youth, while herding cattle, I memorized the brief biography of Guru Rinpoche revealed by Chöying Dorje. Although I cannot recite Orgyen Lingpa's brief biography from memory, I still remember many of its verses quite clearly. There is also a great biography called *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. Simply enshrining these texts in your home or shrine room can dispel many obstacles.

Some who do not believe in Buddhism may not accept this, but if you truly have faith, you will know that Guru Rinpoche possesses extraordinary power to dispel demonic forces. Therefore, I have always given this advice to dharma friends who feel troubled by demons or are facing particularly severe obstacles: earnestly recite Guru Rinpoche's heart mantra.

Perhaps someone might doubt: "Do you have clairvoyance? If not, how do you know I should recite Guru Rinpoche's mantra?" Although I lack clairvoyance, I do have specialized theoretical knowledge in this area. It is similar to a medical doctor: when someone is ill, the doctor can understand the condition by checking the pulse and examining the tongue. In particular, some traditional Chinese medicine practitioners can diagnose illness just by looking at the tongue, saying, "Your qi is insufficient." Almost every Chinese medicine doctor I have encountered has told me my qi is insufficient. (Laughter)

Similarly, having studied Buddhism for so many years, I can generally tell at a glance what mantra someone should recite—it does not necessarily require clairvoyance. If one were to probe into others' minds, that would indeed be difficult without the power of reading others' thoughts. However, the suggestion of certain mantra recitation is based on general observation and does not require

special power. Therefore, everyone must clearly understand that Guru Rinpoche's heart mantra possesses inconceivable power in dispelling obstacles.

THE INFINITE DISPLAY OF GURU RINPOCHE

As this quotation of Guru Rinpoche's vajra words shows, the display of the Guru's three kayas is infinite. Within this very field of Buddha Shakyamuni, in our three-thousandfold cosmic system named Endurance, in its hundreds of millions of pure fields and within each of the six realms or states of being within the thirty-six universes situated above, below, and in the four cardinal directions, Guru Rinpoche appears in a varied display of different forms and with different names. In our own world of Jambudvipa, he has eight manifestations, twenty other different emanations, and so forth, together with an inconceivable array of secondary emanations. And thus he propagates the teachings of the Buddha.

The display of Guru Padmasambhava's three kayas is limitless and he manifests in countless forms and names to benefit beings across different universes. If you are familiar with the teachings on *Liberation upon Hearing*, you will know that, like Buddha Shakyamuni,

he appears in different emanations throughout the six realms to liberate sentient beings. In this world, Guru Rinpoche is especially known by his eight names, or the eight manifestations.

The Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche

Guru Rinpoche's eight manifestations are depicted in the well-known thangka of the Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche. The central figure is Padmasambhava in the form most commonly visualized during practice, while the surrounding images represent his eight manifestations. Let us introduce them one by one.

Tsokyé Dorje: The first manifestation is Tsokyé Dorje, the Lake-born Vajra. Why is he called the Lake-born Vajra? Because Buddha Amitabha initially emanated the syllable *hrih* from his heart center, which descended into a lotus blossom on Lake Dhanakosha in Oddiyana. There, it transformed into an exquisitely beautiful eight-year-old child. The King of Oddiyana, Indrabhuti, had no heir to succeed him as ruler. At that time, he had exhausted his treasury due to his offerings to the Three Jewels and his generosity to the needy. Therefore, he set out on a voyage on Lake Dhanakosha to find a wish-fulfilling jewel. As he returned with the jewel, his minister encountered the remarkable child and informed the king. Great faith arose in the king's mind upon seeing the child; so the king

invited him back to the kingdom and installed him as the crown prince. This is why Guru Rinpoche is known as both the Lake-born Vajra and the Lotus-Born.

Dorje Drolö: Later, Padmasambhava subdued the son of a treacherous minister. For this reason, Padmasambhava was banished and wandered amidst charnel grounds. There, he taught the sublime dharma to humans and non-human beings with fortunate karma. In this wild, wrathful form, he subdued unfortunate evil spirits who held wrongful views against the dharma. Thus, he is known as Dorje Drolö, the Wild Wrathful Vajra. In the thangka of Eight Manifestations, Dorje Drolö is depicted in a fierce form, riding upon a pregnant tigress. Guru Rinpoche also assumed this wrathful form at Paro Taktsang in Bhutan in order to bring the local deities and guardians under his control.

Shakya Sengé: At the Vajra Seat in Bodhgaya, India, Padmasambhava proclaimed, “I am a self-manifested Buddha,” but many did not believe him. Some even slandered him. In order to guide these beings to liberation, he received monastic ordination from his master Prabhasti, and received the name Shakya Sengé, the Lion of the Shakyas.

Loden Choksé: Padmasambhava received numerous teachings of Sutrayana and Tantrayana from different gurus, such as Shri Singha and Buddhaguhya, and immediately understood and mastered them. Therefore, he was given the name Loden Choksé, the Wise Seeker of the Sublime.

Pema Thötrenqtsal: Later, in Zahor, he displayed various magical manifestations. At that time, the King of Zahor did not acknowledge the signs of his accomplishment. The king and his ministers built a pyre of firewood and placed Padmasambhava atop it, intending to burn him alive. Yet Padmasambhava miraculously transformed the pyre into a lake, where he was seen sitting peacefully on a lotus blossom in its center. Adorned with garlands of skulls, the precious master emerged completely unharmed—not even a single hair was harmed. For this reason, Padmasambhava became known as Pema Thötrenqtsal, the Powerful Lotus of the Garland of Skulls.

The lake is now known as the Rewalsar Lake, Tso Pema. When Chojé made a pilgrimage to India, he made a special visit to this sacred lake. Following Rinpoche’s arrival, a song entitled *Lament Recalling the Great Guru of Oddiyana*⁹ spontaneously arose in his wisdom expanse.

Pema Gyalpo: When witnessing the miraculous display of Padmasambhava, the king of Oddiyana and his retinue generated extremely strong faith in him. Padmasambhava was venerated as the object of offering for thirteen years. The king offered Guru Rinpoche his most precious garments and robes, as well as a hat called “The Lotus which Liberates on Sight.” Padmasambhava is thus known for this as Pema Gyalpo, the Lotus King.

Nyima Özer: Later he went to charnel grounds such as Kuladzokpa, Perfected in Body, and practiced yogic discipline. There he conquered demonic spirits and gave them precious dharma teachings. Then he manifested many magical displays on the rays of the sun. At that time, he was known as Nyima Özer, the Rays of the Sun.

Sengé Dradrok: Later, in Bodhgaya, he defeated five hundred upholders of wrong views in debate and reversed their magic; and all the opponents surrendered. At that time, he was known as Sengé Dradrok, the Lion’s Roar.

Each manifestation is associated with specific prayers. *Le’u Dünma, The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara, the Second Buddha*,¹⁰ contains descriptions of the eight different manifestations of Padmasambhava. The stories of the eight manifestations I share here are based

on a treasure text recounting Padmasambhava's brief biography. There may be minor differences compared to the accounts found in the termas of other tertons. This is because the images and life stories of Padmasambhava are presented with slight variations across different terma texts.

Guru Rinpoche at the Copper-Colored Mountain

At the present time, he appears in three forms, in the upper, middle, and lower stories of the palace of Lotus Light on the Copper-Colored Mountain in the heart of the land of Chamara. Different manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, known by various names, dwell in each of the twenty-one countries of the demons that surround that region.

Later, Guru Padmasambhava left for the land of the rakshasas. Abiding in three different forms, he resides in the Palace of Lotus Light, usually known as the Glorious Copper-Colored Palace, which is located in Chamaradvipa, the rakshasa continent. There, Guru Rinpoche manifests under different names and forms in each of its twenty-one lands.

The Copper-Colored Mountain of Glory is called Zangdok Palri in Tibetan. Many monasteries build replicas of this glorious palace,

some of which have three floors and some thirteen floors. However, it is generally understood to be a three-story structure. Many monasteries in Serta, Derge, and Palyul are constructing replicas. Recently, I visited Qinghai, where many monasteries of the Nyingma lineage were doing likewise.

Dudjom Rinpoche described in his autobiography that when he visited the land of the rakshasas, he saw many of Guru Rinpoche's different manifestations there. If you have the opportunity, you may wish to read this biography. However, these appearances manifested before the pure wisdom of a yogi, and not everyone necessarily sees them in the same way. This is why each tertön gives a different description of the land of the rakshasas in his or her respective terma texts. There are many regions the land of the rakshasas, just as a country today is divided into many provinces, or as the United States is divided into fifty states. In each of these regions, Guru Rinpoche manifests in different ways to benefit sentient beings.

Guru Rinpoche's Manifestations Are Everywhere

In short, just as the dharmadhatu is infinite, so too are Guru Rinpoche's activities.

He appeared also during the lifetimes of the buddhas of past ages, and it is said that in our present age, the dispensation of Buddha Shakyamuni, most of the learned and accomplished beings in India and other places were, and are, his emanations. His blessings and guidance are bestowed on all the holders of the teachings. In India, China, Shambhala, Indonesia, and other realms, his manifestations work strenuously for the benefit of the Doctrine and of beings.

Many Indian masters were emanations of Guru Rinpoche. According to a secret biography of Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal, Padampa Sangye was one such emanation of him. In fact, Guru Rinpoche's emanations appeared throughout India, China, Shambhala, Indonesia, the rakshasa continent, and other regions. He manifests in countless forms—as human beings, animals, and even inanimate objects like buildings—all for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings.

In spite of that, some people seem to regard Padmasambhava as no more than an ordinary lay practitioner. They criticize Padmasambhava's teachings, saying, "This teaching is not right," "That view does not comply with the dharma." Hearing such statements just makes one want to laugh, with no desire to argue with them. It is similar to how some people comment on Han Buddhism, saying,

“Reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha is unreasonable,” or “The Chan school’s views do not make sense.” Those who truly understand the dharma can only see that such people have problems themselves, and there is no need to directly refute them.

Nowadays, in Han regions, there are quite a few people who, due to differences in language, culture, and ethnic traditions, do not understand Tibetan Buddhism. In particular, they know nothing about Guru Rinpoche’s noble qualities—that he embodies three kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya—nor do they aware of how Guru Rinpoche spread the dharma and benefited sentient beings in India, Tibetan regions, Chinese regions, and other places. As a result, they hold various wrong views in their minds and carelessly regard Padmasambhava as merely a long-haired mantrika.

Therefore, it is essential for us to study this prayer to Guru Padmasambhava so that we may gain insight into Vajrayana Buddhism. Vajrayana Buddhism is truly profound, and its teachings bring immeasurable benefit to all of humanity and the entire world. Thanks to the efforts and teachings of Guru Rinpoche and subsequent masters, Tibetan Buddhism has spread far beyond the Land of Tibet, bringing benefits to countless countries and regions around the world. In this present age, without such powerful rays of blessing,

it would be impossible to dispel the darkness of the degenerate age. Therefore, we should be cognizant of the fact that there are various manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and ensure that we never slander them based on our own conceptual judgments.

EVERY LAND OF THE TIBETAN REGIONS IS BLESSED

Here in Tibet, Guru Rinpoche set his feet in every region, blessing all the land. He hid many profound dharma treasures and prophesied their subsequent discovery in different ages. He has placed the gods and spirits under vajra oaths and made promises for the future, saying that, as long as the Buddhadharma remains, his emanations will protect the land and people of Tibet. He has entrusted the country to the protection of the twelve Tenma goddesses, thereby guarding it against the incursions of those who are outside the dharma.

Guru Rinpoche's footsteps have touched almost every inch of the Land of Tibet, and he has blessed all of it through various miraculous powers and manifestations. For example, in the Lhasa area alone, there are twenty-five great sacred sites that have been blessed by Guru Rinpoche; similarly, there are twenty-five such sacred sites in Amdo and Kham. The places blessed by Guru Rinpoche have,

for many generations, never been occupied by non-Buddhists or those following wrong paths.

Guru Rinpoche concealed many profound dharma treasures and clearly prophesied the time they would be revealed, the masters who would discover them, and the specific methods for their application—that is, the essential instructions on how to practice them. During this process, he subdued demonic forces and holders of wrong views who created obstacles. He also pacified many spirits and goddesses, entrusting the Land of Tibet to the care of the twelve Tenma goddesses, twenty-one Upasakas, and thirteen Gandhabbas.

Receiving Guru Rinpoche's Blessings

Places visited by great accomplished masters are completely different from those visited by ordinary people. However, people nowadays do not seem to pay much attention to this. For example, if a celebrity visits a certain hospital, the hospital will display the celebrity's photo in the lobby for a long time afterward. In reality, a hospital is a place for saving lives and healing the sick. Even if someone who is good at singing visits, it does not necessarily bring any real benefit to the patients—it just brings some publicity to the hospital, but otherwise, it does not have much significance.

By contrast, it is entirely different when Guru Rinpoche visits a place.

I have visited some hospitals where people proudly showed me photos of celebrities, movie stars, and government officials who had been there. They display these pictures in prominent places, as if the fame of these visitors adds value to the hospital. In contrast, when Guru Padmasambhava visited and blessed many places, there was unfortunately no photography at that time to record it; therefore, we cannot display photographs of his visits to inspire faith or admiration in the same way. Nevertheless, it is wonderful that images and statues of Guru Rinpoche can be found throughout the Tibetan regions, providing a way to remind us of his kindness and blessings. For this reason, I hope that in dharma centers, personal shrine rooms, or even in your cars, you will display an image of Guru Rinpoche, as doing so will truly bring you great blessings.

Some people put photos of their gurus in their cars, thinking, "My guru is so adorable!" While their lamas may indeed be adorable, Guru Padmasambhava is the embodiment of all gurus, and I believe that images of buddhas such as Buddha Shakyamuni and Padmasambhava bring even greater blessings. Therefore, I strongly encourage displaying images of Guru Rinpoche. When I see dharma

friends hanging an image of Guru Rinpoche in their cars, I genuinely feel confident that they will receive his powerful blessings. However, when I see people displaying my photo, I cannot help but think, “Alas, this person must be confused—what benefit is there in hanging my photo? It is not going to be helpful.” In comparison, venerating images of buddhas and bodhisattvas definitely brings us true benefit.

Therefore, I hope you will reflect carefully on this. It is true that, in terms of studying the Buddhadharma, you owe a great deal to your dharma teachers and should be deeply grateful to them. Indeed, some Buddhist scriptures state that gurus are equivalent to buddhas, and this has been well established through extensive scriptural sources and logical reasoning. However, only through thorough and rigorous contemplation and debate can you truly be convinced that your guru is equivalent to a buddha. Furthermore, there may be times when your gurus act in ways that are beyond your understanding, leading you to question, “How could a buddha do such things?” None of these doubts, however, would arise with either Buddha Shakyamuni or Guru Padmasambhava.

Therefore, displaying the image of a true buddha, such as Padmasambhava, whether in your car, in your shrine room, or worn for protection, is especially beneficial.

How Spirits in the Land of Tibet Became Dharma Protectors?

Those who have read Guru Rinpoche's biography know that when he came to the Land of Tibet, it was full of malicious spirits who did not wish for the dharma to flourish. They created obstacles everywhere and hindered the construction of Samye Monastery. Neither King Trisong Detsen nor Bodhisattva Shantarakshita was able to overcome them. Only when Guru Rinpoche was invited to the Land of Tibet and employed the power of secret mantra was the foundation for Samye Monastery finally established.

Today, even historians acknowledge that Samye Monastery had twice failed to be established, and that Guru Rinpoche's intervention was the third attempt. However, the accounts of historians sometimes align with ours and sometimes differ, as their research is purely academic, often limited to investigating the Common Era date of Guru Rinpoche's initial arrival in Tibet and the reign of King Trisong Detsen. As practitioners, however, what we care about is how to integrate the blessings of Guru Rinpoche's body, speech, and mind into our own minds.

Guru Rinpoche entrusted the task of protecting the entire Land of Tibet to the twelve Tenma goddesses and other dharma protectors,

and to this day, they have been striving to fulfill their promise of safeguarding this land. They also protect practitioners who come to the Tibetan regions to study the dharma. There are sadhanas and prayers dedicated to the twelve Tenma goddesses, intended to remind them of their responsibility and to entreat them for protection.

During the Cultural Revolution, when Buddhism was undergoing great destruction, Chojé Yidzhin Norbu specially composed such a prayer of supplication, which states: “Twelve Tenma goddesses, do you remember how you once made your promises in front of Guru Rinpoche? Look at this land these days—how have you guarded it? Have you fallen asleep? Where have you gone?” At that time, a great master in India also composed a similar supplication with almost the same content. Not long after these prayers were made, Buddhism flourished once again.

This shows that sometimes dharma protectors need to be supplicated or encouraged. It is similar to someone who, although initially motivated to engage in service for dharma activities, may become tired or uncooperative over time. However, if given a stern reminder, they immediately recall their original motivation and are inspired to continue their work. There was a period when the Twelve Tenma Goddesses were not very effective in protecting the dharma, but

things improved later on—especially now, when they are providing excellent protection for the dharma. We can see that in the Land of Tibet, the activities of non-Buddhist traditions often do not go smoothly. For example, when someone tries to build temples for other religions, they are rarely successful and constantly encounter obstacles—a phenomenon that is well known and easily observed in the Tibetan regions.

In short, the blessings of Guru Padmasambhava are truly inconceivable. I do not say this simply because I am Tibetan or because I personally have faith in Guru Rinpoche—after all, Guru Rinpoche himself was not Tibetan; he was born in a region that is now part of Pakistan. Regardless of our background, we should all regularly pray to Guru Rinpoche. If you look at history, you will see that many great masters and accomplished practitioners succeeded in their practice because they had strong faith in Guru Rinpoche. That is why, whenever I see someone with deep faith in Guru Rinpoche, I naturally think, “This person’s practice will definitely be successful!” This is a spontaneous thought that arises in my mind. Of course, behind this thought, there are many profound scriptural teachings to support it, but due to time constraints, I cannot explain them all at once.

Lecture Three

October 7th, 2009

WHY AM I TEACHING THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER?

Let us continue exploration of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Rinpoche. Why do I feel it is so important to share this teaching with you? The reason is that many practitioners in the Chinese Buddhist communities who study the Sutrayana tradition—and even some who study the Tantrayana—are not very familiar with the life of Guru Rinpoche, nor are they well acquainted with the profound teachings of Vajrayana. Through this exploration of the Seven-Line Prayer, we all can gain a deeper understanding of the unique brilliance of Vajrayana Buddhism. If such teachings were not in accordance with the dharma or sound reason, there would be no reason to share them, for to falsely present something untrue as truth would be deception—something we would never wish to do.

In the past, for various reasons, many people lacked a correct understanding of tantric teachings, including the attainment of the rainbow body and other accomplishments within Tibetan Buddhism. Many believed these achievements were impossible or dismissed

them as mere myth. Yet this way of thinking overlooks something essential. Vajrayana offers numerous pith instructions—direct, powerful methods—and when practitioners of genuine faith engage with them wholeheartedly, they will undoubtedly gain experiences and realizations and attain enlightenment—of this there is no doubt. And so I sincerely hope you will learn more about the life stories of the lineage masters, so that you may deepen your faith in these tantric teachings.

Today, many practitioners possess deep faith and genuine devotion. Yet without guidance from qualified teachers, they may struggle to grasp the teachings correctly. This can lead them astray or, worse, cause them to inadvertently disparage the sacred dharma. For this reason, cultivating faith must go hand in hand with a clear understanding of Vajrayana.

Two Female Mahasiddhas

Jomo Menmo

Vajrayana contains many extraordinary pith instructions—a truth that becomes vividly clear when we read the life stories of great masters and realized beings. Consider Jomo Menmo, a renowned female practitioner in Tibetan Buddhism who attained realization

through the practice of revealed treasures. She studied under masters such as Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, who awakened her capacity to reveal hidden treasures. As a result, she uncovered many profound mind treasures. At the age of thirty-six, Jomo Menmo and two companions performed a feast offering on the summit of Drak Lhari in Ü. All three then ascended into the sky, departing in their bodies to Guru Padmasambhava's pure land—the Copper-Colored Mountain—without leaving their physical forms behind. This extraordinary event was witnessed by local nomads, who later discovered the feast offerings still remaining at the ritual site.

Bhikshuni Jingjian

There are similar cases in Han Chinese Buddhism as well. Consider Jingjian, the first bhikshuni in this tradition—whose story I shared in my *Brief Account of Rainbow Body Attainment in Vajrayana*.¹¹ Her life story is also recounted in Venerable Longlian's *Commentary on the Heart Sutra*, published in the sixth issue of *Luoyang Buddhism* in 1997, as well as in the *Biographies of Bhikshunis* from the Chinese Tripitaka.

At that time, there was no lineage of full ordination for nuns in the Han regions, so Jingjian and others received their ordination directly from fully ordained monks. At the moment she received

full bhikshuni ordination, the ordination hall was filled with a fragrant aroma, and many miraculous signs appeared. Throughout her entire life, she practiced diligently without any slackening. It is said that she engaged in profound Vajrayana practices.

On the day Bhikshuni Jingjian passed away at the age of seventy, the same fragrant aroma once again filled the air, accompanied by a red glow. A celestial being holding five-colored flowers descended from the sky to receive her. Jingjian was delighted and said to the assembly, “Practice diligently for your future lives. I shall now depart.” After speaking these words, without abandoning her physical body, she ascended into the sky and followed the celestial being to a pure land. The path they traveled resembled a rainbow, extending straight into the celestial realms.

This can be regarded as the great rainbow body attainment in Vajrayana Buddhism—a realization where not even fingernails or hair are left behind. Therefore, in our study of the dharma, we should recognize that within Buddhist teachings there are numerous pith instructions capable of enabling us to attain realization.

Yesterday, some nuns asked me about female practitioners who had attained accomplishment, so today I shared these two stories. I have mentioned on various occasions that whether male or female, as

long as one has unwavering faith in the guru, the Three Jewels, and the sublime teachings, one can depart for the pure lands without abandoning the physical body. There are many many such cases.

Developing Faith Through Study

Understanding Buddhism, especially Vajrayana, is extremely important. Nowadays, some people slander tantric teachings and cannot accept Guru Rinpoche, the tantras, or the Eight Great Sadhana Teachings of the Nyingma tradition. This is understandable, because they have never relied on qualified teachers and know nothing about the extraordinary pith instructions of Vajrayana or the life stories of the lineage masters. When influenced by a negative environment or having relied on unwholesome teachers, it becomes even easier for them to deepen their ignorance and engage in slander.

By studying the Seven-Line Prayer and gaining insight into Guru Rinpoche's noble qualities and practices, even if you are unable to accomplish the profound tantric practices within this lifetime, you must never slander or disparage the profound view, meditation, and conduct of Vajrayana. To do so brings terrible and unbearable karmic consequences in this very life, and in future lives, you will fall into the three lower realms, unable to attain liberation. This is

certain. Therefore, through this study, everyone should come to understand at least the vast merit of Guru Padmasambhava.

Personally, I have had an especially strong faith in Guru Rinpoche since childhood. Whether herding cattle, attending school, or after ordaining as a monk, my faith has never wavered in over forty years, nor have I ever harbored doubts or wrong views about Guru Rinpoche's profound view and meditation. However, I have noticed that some practitioners slander Vajrayana due to lack of understanding, while others seem at first to be full of faith but later, due to various circumstances, neglect Guru Rinpoche's teachings or even openly disparage them. This is extremely dangerous. I sincerely hope you will never walk such a path.

PADMASAMBHAVA AS RUDRA CHAKRIN

And in the future, when trouble threatens from barbarous forces, it will be as Taksham Samten Lingpa has foretold in secret prophecy, “I, Padmasambhava, will bear the name of Rudra Chakrin; and with my twenty-five disciple, Lord and subjects, I, the lineage king, will be escorted by my army.” Thus he prophesied that he would subdue the barbarians and propagate the teachings of the Secret Mantra.

This prophecy reveals that Guru Rinpoche foretold he would one day appear as Raudra Chakrin, the great king of Shambhala, where the Kalachakra teachings flourish. When the barbarians from the borderlands attempt to destroy the dharma, he will lead the great Shambhala army to Jambudvipa, including India, Land of Tibet, and other places to subdue all those with wrong views and to spread far and wide the Secret Mantra Vajrayana, especially the Kalachakra teachings. This is clearly explained in the Kalachakra history. If we

establish a connection with Kalachakra and the practices of Guru Rinpoche in this life, we will surely attain liberation in the future.

At that time, many great masters will take rebirth as prominent figures in this Kalachakra army in Shambhala, and both Mipham Rinpoche and Chojé Yidzhin Norbu will serve as generals. Their lineage disciples will form their army. But this is nothing like ordinary worldly warfare, which harms sentient beings without compassion. Rather, through miraculous powers and magical transformations, they will subdue the armies of demonic and negative forces, liberating them with great compassion and teaching them according to their capacities. To be reborn in Shambhala at that time will be extraordinarily fortunate. Many great masters and eminent teachers have made aspirations to take rebirth there.

The Red Garuda and the Kalachakra Army

In 1986, Lama Yidzhin Norbu conferred the Kalachakra empowerment. A symbol was needed for the empowerment, and Chojé chose the Red Garuda. You can see its image on the Garuda pendant we often wear around the necks. How did this come about? When Rinpoche was preparing to give the empowerment, Tulku Tishta happened to offer him a thangka of the Garuda—a most auspicious sign. Earlier, while in the Dzi Chen Valley,¹² Dakini Tare

Lhamo offered him a rare silver coin. On one side was an image of a Garuda subduing a poisonous dragon; on the other, a rising sun above a snowy mountain peak. Rinpoche was deeply pleased when he first saw it, recognizing that this signified the conditions for the revival of the Buddhadharma had matured. Given these auspicious circumstances, Rinpoche decided to adopt the Garuda as the emblem.

Each of us received a black-and-white photograph of the Garuda, taken by a Han Chinese photographer at the academy. Lama Yidzhin Norbu later shared, with some amusement, that he and Tulku Yiping had spent quite some time bargaining with the photographer early that morning. Originally each photo cost one yuan, but after much negotiation, they reduced the price to fifty fen each. Rinpoche instructed us to obtain a photo as a symbol of the empowerment, explaining that in the future, the Kalachakra army would also adopt the Garuda as its emblem. From that day onward, Chojé Yidzhin Norbu began to promote the image of the Red Garuda.

Because of the special auspicious circumstances surrounding the Red Garuda, I have placed its image on the covers of our dharma books and on items related to the Bodhi Society. Two auspicious circumstances inspire this choice. First, Chojé Yidzhin Norbu said that the Garuda would be the emblem of the future Kalachakra army,

and we too should aspire to follow our lineage master and become part of this magical army of Kalachakra to subdue demonic forces. Second, countless eons ago, there was a Chakravartin king who had 1,003 princes. All of them princes generated supreme bodhichitta, aspiring to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. Yet the youngest prince alone made this vow: “Whatever obstacles arise when my elder brothers attain buddhahood, I will remove them all.” Because of this extraordinary vow, he later manifested as the Garuda. Thus, when we pray to the Garuda, we invoke the power to dispel all obstacles.

The Red Garuda Practice

In Tibetan Buddhism, there are many practices related to the Garuda. For example, in the terma teachings of the great tertön Dorje Dechen Lingpa, there are practices for the Black Garuda, the Multicolored Garuda, and the Red Garuda. Chojé Yidzhin Norbu mainly taught the Red Garuda practice, which is relatively simple to visualize. The following is a brief practice from the terma teachings:

First, visualize an egg radiating five-colored light, marked by the Tibetan syllable *trom*.¹³ In an instant, *trom* transforms into a Red Garuda: holding a poisonous snake in its beak, its wings ablaze with fire, emitting the natural sound of the mantra. With the fire of

wisdom, it burns away all evil nagas without causing them harm. While visualizing this, recite the Garuda mantra *O Trom Garuda Tsale Tsale Hung Phat*.¹⁴

Recitation of this mantra is important, because in this degenerate age, evil nagas cause us considerable harm. If we regularly recite the Garuda mantra or wear an image of the Garuda, we can dispel all obstacles brought by demons, evil nagas, earth spirits, and all manner of harmful spirits.

GURU RINPOCHE'S MANIFESTATIONS AMONG THE SCHOOLS OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Guru Rinpoche predicted also that most of the nonsectarian holders of the Old and New traditions in the cool land of Tibet would be his emanations. He has revealed his face and bestowed unnumbered blessings and instructions on the majority of learned and accomplished holy beings. This is clearly evident in their respective biographies.

Furthermore, the prophecy of the great tertön Taksham Samten Lingpa states: “In the Snow Land of Tibet, most of the great lineage holders from both the Old School (Nyingma) and the New Schools (Kadampa, Gelug, Sakya, and others) are emanations of Guru Padmasambhava. In short, most of the learned and accomplished masters of the Land of Tibet are emanations of Guru Rinpoche. Even those who are not explicitly his emanations have met Guru Rinpoche in visions and received empowerments, blessings,

and teachings from him. Such accounts are abundant in the biographies of great masters from the Sakya, Jonang, and Kagyu schools.

People often ask, “I study the Nyingma tradition; can I also practice the Gelug tradition?” “I study the Gelug tradition; can I study the Sakya tradition?” “I study the Sakya tradition; can I also practice the Kagyu tradition?” In their minds, these different schools seem incompatible, mutually exclusive, even contradictory. But such thinking is unfounded. The great lineage holders of Tibetan Buddhism have consistently emphasized that the founding masters of each school were emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas. The teachings they established for their respective schools encompass the entire path—from generating bodhicitta and accumulating merit to attaining the two kayas—without any contradictions whatsoever. They are, at their source, one.

Scriptural Sources for Guru Rinpoche’s Various Manifestations

Regarding this point, there are many teachings from great masters of the Nyingma tradition. However, as practitioners of the Nyingma school, we may not be entirely convincing if we only rely on our own tradition’s words. For this reason, Lama Yidzhin Norbu often

cites the teachings of great masters from other schools as evidence. For example, the Fourth Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen, said:

*The great learned and accomplished one, Padmasambhava,
Manifested in the form of the Glorious Atisha,
Then again as Lobzang Drakpa.
I take no other refuge but in you all.*

Guru Padmasambhava, who established Buddhism in the Land of Tibet during the early propagation period and laid a solid foundation for Sutrayana and Vajrayana, later manifested as the glorious master Atisha Dipamkara, who revived the Buddhadharma during the later propagation, and then as the virtuous master Lobzang Drakpa. Beyond these three, the Panchen Lama declares he has no other objects of refuge. Lobzang Drakpa is Tsongkhapa's ordination name in Tibetan, often used in prayers to him within the Gelug tradition. From this, we can see that the founders of these three major schools are different manifestations of the same enlightened being.

The Second Gyalwa Rinpoche, Gendun Gyatso, also said:

*The accomplished vidyadhara Padmasambhava,
The crown jewel among the five hundred panditas, Atisha,
And the Vajradhara, Lord Tsongkhapa—
Though appearing in different forms, I bow to them as one.*

Padmasambhava, the accomplished vidyadhara; Atisha, the crown jewel among the five hundred Indian panditas; and Tsongkhapa, who in the Land of Tibet is inseparable from Vajradhara—though they appear in different bodies, in essence they are one.

I once studied history of the Gelug School by Setsang Lobzang Palden, which was used as a textbook at the High-Level Tibetan Buddhism College of China. In this work, the same principle is recorded and discussed in detail.

Moreover, Patrul Rinpoche said:

*Venerable Sakya Pandita, master and expounder of the five sciences;
Je Tsongkhapa, source of all perfect teachings of Sutra and Tantra;
Omniscient Longchenpa, holder of the Buddha's complete doctrine;
Three great manifestations of Manjushri in the Land of Snow—
to you I prostrate.*

Longchenpa, Tsongkhapa, and Sakya Pandita—these three masters are known as the Three Great Manjushris of Tibet, for all are

manifestations of Manjushri. If the various schools were truly in opposition to one another, Manjushri would not have manifested in this way.

Furthermore, Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima, a prominent figure of the Gelug tradition, said that Atisha, Gampopa (the lineage disciple of Milarepa), and Tsongkhapa—all three are emanations of Padmasambhava. Thus, the ultimate intent of the masters of the Kagyu and Gelug schools is the same.

But what of the Sakya school? Do its great masters share the same intent as those of the Nyingma school? Yes, they do. As stated in a brief biography of Guru Rinpoche:

*At that time, in a place called Sakya in the upper region,
The father was Manjushri, the mother Tara,
Their son, Kunga Gyaltzen, was my emanation,
He will restore my temples in the future.*

In a place called Sakya, the father was Manjushri (Jampal), and mother was Tara (Drolma). Their son, Kunga Gyaltzen—the author of the *Treasury of Good Advice*—was an emanation of Guru Rinpoche who would later restore Guru Rinpoche's temples and dharma halls built during the period of the Earlier Translation School. And so,

Sakya Pandita is also recognized as an emanation of Guru Rinpoche. I can see that some Sakya disciples here are very pleased, all smiling with joy!

Furthermore, the great master of the Jonang tradition, Taranatha, also revealed in his own secret biography that he was the reincarnation of Omniscient Longchenpa.

Different Schools Do Not Contradict One Another

In light of all this, the ultimate intent of the great masters of each school is not contradictory, and there is nothing unreasonable about studying any particular tradition. One should never criticize other schools through the lens of one's own. Things may be better now, but in the past, a small number of individuals within the Gelug school, who did not possess a thorough understanding of the Nyingma tradition, sometimes spoke disparagingly about it. It was only when genuine holders of the dharma from each tradition spoke out that people realized there is no real conflict between the different schools.

This principle extends beyond Tibetan Buddhism—the world's three major Buddhist traditions (Tibetan, Theravada, and Mahayana) are not in conflict but rather represent different paths leading to

the same destination. And this diversity is not a flaw—it serves a purpose. Since human beings naturally distinguish between self and others, a single unified Buddhist tradition would paradoxically weaken people’s connection to it—without alternatives to compare against, practitioners might not fully appreciate what they have. When people belong to a particular Buddhist tradition, however, they treasure it as their own, which deepens their practice and brings greater benefit. Consider, while we all revere our root teacher Buddha Shakyamuni, yet it is our personal guru who directly transmits the teachings to us. This creates a special bond and a unique sense of gratitude toward our own teacher, illustrating how the tendency to distinguish between “mine” and “others” can, at a certain stage of spiritual development, actually support one’s path. This, too, is a manifestation of dependent origination.

Two Stories of Blessings from Guru Rinpoche

Before I went to Mount Wutai with Chojé Yidzhin Norbu in 1987, I had read many biographies of great masters from the Sakya, Jonang, and Kagyu schools. What struck me was how many accomplished practitioners have met Guru Padmasambhava in person—to say nothing of practitioners of the Nyingma school.

Many great masters of the Nyingma tradition, as well as ordinary practitioners, often see Guru Rinpoche in their dreams and receive his blessings and empowerments. This is quite common in the Nyingma school. In fact, I recently had a remarkable dream myself, but I will keep it private. Let me share a story about another lama instead.

Paljo Gyatso

There once was an extraordinary tulku at our academy named Paljo Gyatso. Chojé Yidzhin Norbu often consulted him on various matters, though I'm not sure whether Rinpoche ever received teachings from him. When I first arrived at the academy, this lama lived in a small wooden hut in the Dharma Wheel section of the monks' quarters. He had attained a very high level of realization. A widely shared story about the tulku confirms this for me. I don't remember all the details clearly, as it was almost twenty years ago when I first heard it.

During the Cultural Revolution in the Tibetan regions, the dharma had all but disappeared from public life. You would hardly see anyone studying Buddhism or even reciting prayers. If someone was caught, they would be in real danger—the situation was incredibly tense. One night, Tulku Paljo Gyatso dreamt he was climbing a

sacred mountain. It strongly resembled the mountains at Larung Gar; he could see the small trees and even their branches in perfect detail. When he reached the summit, thunder suddenly roared, the earth shook, and he was struck by a profound moment of awakening. He then slowly made his way down. Standing at the foot of the mountain, he gazed back up at its face. As he watched, a miracle unfolded: the mountain transformed into the living image of Guru Rinpoche. Guru Rinpoche appeared immensely majestic, his body blazing with light illuminating the entire Snow Land of Tibet and the lands beyond.

When Tulku Paljo Gyatso woke next morning, reflecting on the dream, he felt great hope for the flourishing of the dharma. Remarkably, that very day he received the *Prayer for the Flourishing of the Dharma*, which Khenpo Tepas had just secretly composed. This was a profound act of courage, as Khenpo Tepas himself was living in fear at that time and would normally keep himself hidden. Yet, having written this prayer from the depths of his heart, he sent it to the tulku. Paljo Gyatso then told many people, “Perhaps this is a sign that the Buddhadharma will flourish again.”

When I first arrived at the academy and told Tulku Paljo Gyatso I was from Domang Monastery, he said to me, “Your Khenpo Tepas is truly remarkable! Don’t think of him as just an ordinary khenpo—he

is truly extraordinary!” Tulku Paljo Gyatso—a rotund and highly accomplished elderly practitioner—then personally shared with me the story of his own experience with Khenpo Tewa.

The content of Khenpo Tewa’s prayer was remarkably similar to Mipham Rinpoche’s renowned work, *Words to Delight the Sovereigns of the Dharma: A Prayer of Aspiration for the Flourishing and Spread of the Ancient Translation Tradition*.¹⁵ Later, we requested Khenpo Tewa to write a commentary on the prayer, and he graciously did so.

Jigme Ngotsar

When the blessings of Guru Padmasambhava enter our hearts, all the necessary conditions for the spiritual path will arise—whether we are famous or unknown. Many great masters have exemplified this truth. Jigme Ngotsar (Fearless Armor), one of the foremost disciples of Jigme Lingpa, demonstrated the transformative power of such blessings in his own life.

When Jigme Ngotsar was still a young boy, he heard that the great master Jigme Rigdzin Rinpoche of Kathok Monastery was bestowing the Guru Rinpoche empowerment, so he found a way to attend. The secret name he received upon initiation was Yeshe Rigdzin,

meaning “wisdom vidyadhara,” and from that moment he developed immense faith in Guru Rinpoche. After returning home, he continued to herd sheep.

One day, he came to a vast rocky mountain, on which there was a cave where Guru Rinpoche had once practiced. He fervently prayed to Guru Rinpoche in front of this sacred mountain. Not long after, the entire mountain transformed into the majestic form of Guru Rinpoche, who held a vajra in his hand in the mudra of subjugation. Overwhelmed, the young shepherd began reciting the Seven-Line Prayer and Guru Rinpoche’s mantra, praying with even greater devotion. After a while, the image of Guru Rinpoche suddenly disappeared, and in that very instant, he realized the true nature of his mind.

Although he was very young, he deeply understood that all the teachings of every school and tradition ultimately point to nothing other than recognizing the nature of mind. Decades later, in his forties, he would write of this experience in his songs of realization, recounting that he had personally seen Guru Rinpoche as a child. He attested that from that day forward, his activities to benefit beings and spread the dharma unfolded smoothly.

In the biographies of many learned and accomplished masters, there are clear accounts of receiving blessings and teachings from Guru Rinpoche. We ourselves may not be famous or show outward signs of accomplishment, but as long as we pray to Guru Rinpoche with single-minded devotion, we too shall receive his unique blessings.

GURU RINPOCHE'S COMPASSION IS SWIFTER THAN ALL OTHER BUDDHAS

Guru Rinpoche has also said that in the future, when Maitreya will be the buddha of this world, he will himself appear as a bodhisattva. He will be a teacher of beings and will greatly spread the doctrine of the Secret Mantra. Indeed, he promised to appear at the same time as each of the buddhas of this fortunate kalpa. He will remain in his immortal, indestructible wisdom body, the ground of his emanations, for as long as there are sentient beings. He will display his emanations as limitless as space and time, working for the welfare of the beings of the future.

When Maitreya attains enlightenment in this world, Guru Rinpoche will emanate as Bodhisattva Zhotön (“the bodhisattva who tames and guides beings”) to propagate the Vajrayana teachings. In every era of the thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon, there will be a manifestation of Guru Rinpoche appearing in the world. Until

samsara is emptied, Guru Rinpoche will abide as the immortal, indestructible wisdom body, manifesting countless magical displays to benefit sentient beings.

Some may ask, “Certain treatises state that Vajrayana teachings will only flourish during the eras of three specific buddhas. But here it is said otherwise—aren’t these two statements contradictory?”

They are not contradictory. What those treatises mean is that during the eras of those three buddhas, Vajrayana will be especially widespread and flourishing; whereas in the eras of the other buddhas of this eon, Guru Rinpoche will also manifest in various forms to propagate Vajrayana, though it will not be as widespread by comparison. This is the correct way to understand it.

It is essential to clearly understand the true identity of Guru Rinpoche. Some people mistakenly believe that Guru Rinpoche is merely a yogi with a topknot from the Tibetan regions. When I see certain renowned scholars introducing Tibetan Buddhism in this way, I simply smile and quietly set their books aside, feeling no need to engage. Guru Rinpoche’s activities are truly beyond the imagination of ordinary beings. In the teaching era of every buddha of this fortunate eon, his emanations are always present, guiding and liberating sentient beings.

As he himself has said in his vajra words,

**Renowned am I as Padma the self-manifest,
Emanated from the heart of Buddha Amitabha, boundless
light,
The sheen of high Avalokita's speech.
The brother of the dakinis and king of dakas,
I am the action of the buddhas of the triple time.
Great Samantabhadra, peerless Vajradhara
Both am I,
Mighty and compassionate, appearing in my emanated
forms.
Strong are my activities, assisting beings as their needs
require.
I am their wishing jewel, fulfillment of their hopes.**

The one commonly known as Padma is the mind emanation of Buddha Amitabha, the speech emanation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the elder brother of all dakinis, the king of all dakas, the lord of enlightened activities of all buddhas of the three times, and the emanation of Samantabhadra and Vajradhara. He possesses great loving-kindness, great compassion, and immense power, manifesting in various forms according to the capacities of sentient beings, fulfilling all their wishes.

Guru Rinpoche also said,

**For beings who are strong in their devoted faith
I am swifter in compassion than all other buddhas.
Until the three worlds of samsara are all void of beings,
Padmasambhava's compassion will not be exhausted.**

For beings with strong faith, Guru Rinpoche's compassion and blessings manifest even more swiftly than those of other buddhas. His compassion will endure until the three realms of samsara are completely empty of beings.

The Tibetan version of the *Nirvana Sutra* also states that when the Buddha was approaching parinirvana, over a thousand bhikshus surrounded him, all except Kashyapa and Nanda, who were absent. The Buddha told Ananda, Chunda, Maudgalyayana, and others: "I now enter perfect nirvana; you must not grieve. In the immaculate ocean of vibrant colors, a supreme being greater than I will be born. You must not weep." The phrase "a supreme being greater than I will be born" refers to Padmasambhava.

Of course, in terms of perfect compassion and wisdom, there is no difference between the Buddha and Guru Rinpoche. However, in

this degenerate age, when beings encounter demonic forces or negative influences and pray to Guru Rinpoche, his activities are even swifter than those of the Buddha. They receive his blessings immediately. Some followers of the Sutrayana tradition may not accept this statement, but if you have some understanding of Buddhism, you will find it is not difficult to comprehend. Consider: when it comes to guiding sentient beings to rebirth in Sukhavati, the compassionate activities of Buddha Amitabha are clearly among the most supreme of all buddhas. Those who pray to him with sincere faith are easily reborn in that pure land. In a similar way, when it comes to dispelling obstacles and negative forces, praying to Guru Rinpoche is especially swift and effective.

In this degenerate age, it is unrealistic to think we can achieve success in our practice without encountering any obstacles. However, if we can integrate Guru Rinpoche's powerful and fierce blessings into our mind streams, our practice will surely proceed smoothly from beginning to end. Guru Rinpoche's great compassion knows no bounds: for anyone who has faith in him, he will appear before them, bestowing blessings, empowerments, and granting siddhis. It is important for each one of us to pray to Guru Rinpoche at all times and in all places. Let us reflect deeply on this point.

THE OBJECT OF OUR SUPPLICATION

In the following section, we will explore the meaning of the Seven-Line Prayer. Since Mipham Rinpoche has already elucidated these verses with great clarity, I will simply highlight the essential points to guide your understanding.

Such are the inconceivable exploits of Guru Rinpoche. One of these, as the Seven-Line Prayer records, was the way in which he revealed his nirmanakaya in this world:

Hung

In Orgyen's land, upon its northwest rim,

On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,

Wondrous, supreme mastery you found

And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.

A ring of many dakinis encircles you,

And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.

To grant your blessings, come, we pray.

Guru Padma Siddhi Hung

The prayer begins with the utterance of the syllable *hung*, which is the self-arisen seed-syllable of the mind of all the buddhas. This invokes the enlightened mind of Guru Rinpoche himself.

“Such are the inconceivable exploits... revealed his nirmanakaya in this world”: This indicates that the manner in which Padmasambhava manifested in the land of Jambudvipa will be elucidated in the following verses.

“The prayer begins with the utterance... the enlightened mind of Guru Rinpoche himself”: The self-arisen seed-syllable of the mind, the Tibetan letter *hung*,¹⁶ marks the origin of the prayer.

Jambudvipa, this world of ours located to the south of the cosmic mountain Meru, numbers six main provinces. Of these, the westernmost region is the country of the vidyadharas. This is Oddiyana, or Orgyen, the dakinis’ land where, upon its northwest rim, or frontier, there lies a stretch of water replete with eightfold excellence and free from every imperfection. This is Lake Dhanakosha. It is a symbol of emptiness endowed with supreme qualities, the queen of the ultimate expanse. This lake is perfect in every way, as is obvious even to the perceptions of ordinary people. It is filled with lotus

flowers, the largest of which, growing in the center, is a lotus of exquisite beauty in both its petals and pistil-cup. From this flower's stem grow other lotuses, thus making five in all. Each is of a different color, corresponding to the five enlightened lineages and symbolizing the five wisdoms. The lotus in the middle is red to indicate the Lotus lineage.

“This is Lake Dhanakosha... the queen of the ultimate expanse”: From the perspective of the profound completion stage, the lake symbolizes emptiness, known as the queen of the ultimate expanse.

“The lotus in the middle is red to indicate the Lotus lineage”: This is because Padmasambhava is the mind emanation of Buddha Amitabha, who belongs to the Lotus lineage, symbolized by red.

The never-ending knot, the precious and immaculate treasury of the heart of Buddha Amitabha, is filled with the syllable *hrih*, shining with beams of five-colored light. It is the distillation of all the blessings and qualities of the three secrets of the unnumbered buddhas of the past, present, and future. When the moment arrives for Guru Rinpoche to work for the benefit of beings, countless buddhas and bodhisattvas of the

ten directions scatter flowers, while the dakas and dakinis, together with the protectors and guardians of the buddhafi elds, perform the vajra dance and chant the vajra song. Then, in order to bring joy and relief to beings of the three dimensions of existence, the syllable *hrih* descends onto the pistil-cup of the central red lotus and transforms into the king of vidyadharas, the great and fearless Guru, who is without a peer in the three worlds and who is noble, with many extraordinary qualities of greatness. Through his immense merit, his very body is a source of benefit for beings; by his teachings, he benefits them with his speech; and with his mind he benefits them through his awareness wisdom. With inconceivable, miraculous power, he guides beings to liberation.

“The never-ending knot... buddhas of the past, present, and future”: The wisdom of the body, speech, and mind of countless buddhas of the past, present, and future is condensed into the Tibetan letter *hrih*. This marks the origin of the syllable *hrih*. Shining with five-colored light, it dissolves into the heart center of Buddha Amitabha.

“When the moment arrives... with many extraordinary qualities of greatness”: The Tibetan letter *hrih* then descends from Buddha Amitabha’s heart center onto the pistil of the red lotus, transforming

into Padmasambhava, who is without equal in the three worlds. In what way is he without equal? He surpasses all others in his body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities.

“Through his immense merit, his very body is a source of benefit for beings; ... he guides beings to liberation”: The qualities of body, speech, and mind described here pertain to the enlightened state of the buddhas. At the beginning of one of my commentaries on *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, I have explained that buddhas employ three kinds of miraculous displays—those of body, speech, and mind—to teach the dharma.

He revealed himself in self-arisen, immaculate form, adorned with the major and minor marks of buddhahood. He was empowered as the son of King Indrabhuti but later renounced the kingdom and embraced the life of a yogi practicing in the eight charnel grounds, where he trained in the boundless teachings of the outer and inner vehicles. The story of his life and deeds is beyond imagining. He displayed an illusory array of eight manifestations. With invincible strength, he annihilated demons, rakshasas, and evil spirits, and brought beneath his power the proud and haughty spirits of the world. He placed many beings on the path of the Great Secret that

brings them to maturity and bestows liberation. He is the object of the most marvelous praises in the whole of the three worlds. And as we read of the wondrous, prodigious life of the Lord, the second Buddha, which is described in the trustworthy scriptures of the kama and terma transmissions, we are inspired with faith in him. Moreover, not only does this great being possess the common accomplishments, but he is also perfectly and primordially enlightened: Supreme mastery he has found, the state of union of the great Vajradhara. And as the Lotus-Born he is renowned in the endless array of infinite buddhahelds.

We recognize him, together with his retinue, as the personification of the Three Refuges, the ultimate, undeceiving protection, to whom we can pray with utter confidence.

This passage describes how Guru Rinpoche benefits sentient beings through his enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities, in a manner similar to the twelve deeds of Buddha Shakyamuni.

“He revealed himself in self-arisen, immaculate form, adorned with the major and minor marks of Buddhahood”: This describes how the letter *hrīh* transformed into Padmasambhava.

“He displayed an illusory array of eight manifestations”: In eight different places, Guru Rinpoche appeared in eight distinct manifestations.

“And as we read of the wondrous, prodigious life of the Lord, the second Buddha... we are inspired with faith in him”: There are many biographies of the second Buddha—Guru Rinpoche—some found in *termas* and others in the *kama* transmissions. The latter refers to works composed by great masters throughout the ages. It is important to cultivate faith in the second Buddha by relying on these scriptural sources. By reading these biographies, we can gain deeper understanding of the life and activities of Guru Padmasambhava.

“Moreover, not only does this great being... in the endless array of infinite buddhafi elds”: From the perspective of the ultimate truth, Padmasambhava is not merely an ordinary human being but possesses great accomplishments.

In short, the above offers a concise explanation of Padmasambhava’s place of birth, the way in which he came into this world, and his life and activities.

Faith: The Foundation of the Path

To truly enter the heart of the Vajrayana teachings, you must first cultivate faith in Guru Rinpoche. If you can develop a deep understanding of and faith in Guru Rinpoche, then you will naturally develop devotion to the great Dzogchen lineage masters such as Garab Dorje, Shri Singha, Vimalamitra, and Jnanasutra, as they all are different manifestations of Guru Rinpoche. In terms of the teachings, you will also gain greater confidence in, and deeper understanding of, Dzogchen, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, and the terma teachings. This will also make it easier for you to appreciate the biographies of many spiritual teachers from other traditions, as well as their various forms of manifestation.

Conversely, without a genuine appreciation for Guru Rinpoche, the Vajrayana path may remain difficult to penetrate. And if Vajrayana is difficult to accept, even practicing the Sutrayana may present some obstacles. Although Buddhism is often described in terms of Sutrayana and Vajrayana, in reality, these are parts of a complete and integrated whole. What we take refuge in is the entirety of the Buddhadharma. If we accept only part of it while abandoning the rest, it becomes difficult to say whether we can attain rebirth in Sukhavati or achieve liberation, as the key factor for these goals is not abandoning any aspect of the dharma.

Having briefly introduced the object of our supplication, we should now have a clearer understanding of exactly who Guru Rinpoche is. Due to time constraints, I haven't reviewed many biographies. But if you do, you will discover many wonderful stories of great masters and how they were blessed by Guru Rinpoche. Jigme Lingpa's biography, for instance, describes how Guru Rinpoche accepted him as a disciple. Longchenpa's biography also contains many such episodes. When composing treatises, Longchenpa often included in the colophon: "Composed by Longchen Rabjam, a yogi of the supreme vehicle, who is blessed and guided by the Glorious Great Master of Oddiyana, Padmasambhava." This demonstrates that many eminent Vajrayana masters were blessed and guided by Guru Padmasambhava.

I encourage practitioners of Sutrayana to remain open-minded toward Tantrayana, as harboring prejudice can become a significant obstacle on the path to liberation. If you already have faith in Buddha Amitabha, there is no reason to reject his emanation, Padmasambhava. It is important to cultivate sincere faith in all Buddhist traditions. In your devotional practice, you should wholeheartedly turn to whichever enlightened beings inspire your deepest devotion—whether Avalokiteshvara, Guru Rinpoche, or Manjushri.

There are no restrictions on whom you choose to focus your devotion; you are free to connect with any enlightened being who resonates with you. By reciting their mantras and engaging in their practices with confidence, you create the conditions for your mind to be gradually transformed.

For a practitioner, receiving blessings from the buddhas and bodhisattvas is important. When a person receives blessings, they can not only transform themselves but also help transform others. Conversely, without such blessings or personal merit, merely being well-versed in Buddhist philosophy or engaging in virtuous actions brings little benefit to oneself or others. Many intellectuals in the world today are eloquent and expressive, yet they often fail to integrate knowledge with action. Their mind streams remain no different from those of ordinary people, and they make no real spiritual progress. Similarly, a practitioner, who is only well-versed in Buddhist theory, no matter how eloquently they can speak, when leaving this world, the body will be left behind, and the mind stream will continue to wander in the bardo, still burdened by afflictions.

While you have this rare human life, you must make the most of your time by diligently practicing and fervently praying for the blessings of the enlightened beings, in order to transform your own mind stream. For example, when you first arrived at the academy,

you might not have known anything about Buddhism, the deities, or the guru. But after putting effort into your practice, even if you cannot achieve what some masters describe as “sitting down as an ordinary person and standing up as an accomplished one,” you should at the very least be able to say, “I came to Larung Gar or joined the Bodhi Society as an ordinary person full of afflictions, but after staying for some time and returning to the secular world, my state of mind has indeed changed.” If this can be achieved, then all the effort we have devoted to creating these opportunities for your dharma study will not have been in vain.

Therefore, do not deceive yourself or others. If you genuinely engage in your dharma practice, you will surely receive various blessings and meaningful spiritual experiences!

Lecture Four

October 16th, 2009

Let us continue our study of the Seven-Line Prayer. In our last lecture, we examined the first four lines, which focus on Guru Padmasambhava as the object of our supplication. Today, we will turn to the meaning of the fifth, sixth, and seventh lines, as well as the concluding mantra.

For now, we are focusing on the literal meaning of the prayer. A deeper exploration of its vast merit, as introduced in the latter part of Mipham Rinpoche's *White Lotus*, is a topic for another time.

GURU RINPOCHE AND HIS RETINUE ARE NOT DISTINCT IN NATURE

This supreme vidyadhara, greatest of the great, is attended by the extraordinary disciples of the Secret Mantra. For a ring of many dakas and dakinis, infinitely numerous like the seeds in an opened pod of sesame, encircles him. In truth, he is surrounded by an unbounded ocean of the deities of the Three Roots and protectors. But since this entourage is but the illusory display of Guru Rinpoche's own wisdom, which benefits beings according to their need, he and his retinue are not distinct in nature and are the common object of our supplication.

Surrounding the supreme vidyadhara Guru Rinpoche, an innumerable retinue of dakas, dakinis, and other wisdom beings gathers in layer upon layer—much like the field of refuge we visualize in our practice. Above are the lineage masters; behind, the jewel of the dharma, to the left and right, the bodhisattvas and arhats; all around are the great dharma protectors, dakas, dakinis, and other

members of the assembly. They abide as countless as the seeds of an opened sesame pod, with the Three Roots and dharma protectors all present and complete. This is the meaning of the fifth line, “A ring of many dakinis encircles you.”

If you wish to expand your visualization even more, imagine all the buddhas and bodhisattvas pervading the whole of space. Every one of these vast and boundless sublime beings is a magical emanation of Guru Rinpoche. According to the teachings of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the Great Perfection, the boundless dakinis, dakas, and dharma protectors surrounding Guru Rinpoche are, in essence, his own manifestations. Like the sun and its light, the retinue and the principal deity are inseparable and non-dual. All of these together form the single object of our supplication.

All Gurus Are One in Essence

People often ask: “If I visualize Guru Rinpoche, will the other buddhas be displeased? Will Avalokiteshvara, whom I often pray to, be unhappy?” In fact, this is not the case at all. As I have said before, the buddhas of the three times are of one essence in the dharmadhatu. When you visualize one buddha, recognize that all buddhas are inseparably present within him. When you practice with one guru, you should visualize that his essence is non-dual and inseparable

from that of all other gurus, buddhas, and bodhisattvas. This point is very important.

Otherwise, you may find yourself in the same predicament as some students from last year when I was teaching Guru Yoga. They felt very conflicted: “Alas, I have seven or eight gurus, and each has been immensely kind to me. If I only visualize one, the others might be displeased, and I would be letting them down. I have thought about this so long, so much that I can’t sleep at night, yet I still have no solution. What should I do? Do you have a method where, without establishing a hierarchy, I can imagine placing a wooden plank on my head, with all the gurus sitting on it while I support them, and then do the visualization?”

I replied: “That is not necessary. The buddhas and bodhisattvas have never taught a guru yoga in which all the gurus are imagined sitting together on a wooden plank. Although it is wonderful that you have such faith in all your gurus, when you practice, you only need to visualize one guru as the embodiment of all of them.”

Similarly, visualizing Guru Rinpoche is no exception. You should visualize him as non-dual and inseparable from all enlightened beings. The Fourth Dodrupchen Rinpoche composed a simple guru yoga practice,¹⁷ which I have personally engaged in. The essence of

this practice is to visualize one's root guru as Guru Padmasambhava, recognizing him as non-dual and inseparable from all buddhas and gurus. By doing so, one will receive authentic blessings.

Nowadays, some newcomers to Buddhism have many inner conflicts. They seem to want to practice all buddhas and all gurus, feeling that each one is extraordinary—this one possesses supreme qualities, that one is full of compassion—and they wish to maintain a good relationship with every one of them, unwilling to offend any. However, when it comes to actual practice, they continue to regard these sublime beings as separate and distinct entities—as though, to borrow an example from Buddhist logic, “this is the essence of fire, that is the essence of water, this is wind, and that is stone”—all fundamentally separate and impossible to unify. Such thinking is entirely based on an ordinary being's conceptual discrimination and grasping at true existence, and is therefore incorrect.

Therefore, in your practice, you must understand that all gurus and buddhas are ultimately one and the same, for they have all realized the same luminous nature of inseparable appearance and emptiness. It is only in conventional appearance that they manifest in different forms, such as Manjushri, Guru Rinpoche, and others.

If you truly wish to practice different deities, you can practice Avalokiteshvara during the day and Guru Rinpoche at night. When Guru Rinpoche was about to depart for the land of the rakshasas, he left these parting instructions to his fortunate disciples: “You should practice Avalokiteshvara during the day and recite his mantra; at night, practice the sadhana of me, Padmasambhava, and recite my mantra.” So, practicing one deity by day and another by night is not contradictory. By the same principle, it is also acceptable to engage in different practices during various sessions at night. But overall, during visualization, you must understand that all enlightened beings are of one essence, and there is no difference between the principal deity and the retinue.

The Retinue as the Manifestations of the Principal Deity

If we have the opportunity to study the *Essence of Clear Light* together in the future, you will come to understand why the retinue are self-manifestations of the principal deity, and why the two are non-dual and inseparable. This treatise contains specific practices and philosophical teachings that directly address this point.

If the principal deity and the retinue are truly inseparable—with the retinue being simply emanations of the principal deity—then when

visualizing the field of refuge, with Buddha Shakyamuni at the center and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas surrounding him, it may appear that the Buddha and the bodhisattvas represent different levels of realization. In reality, however, the mind of the principal deity and the minds of the retinue are one and the same.

Nowadays, many people lack a solid theoretical foundation in Vajrayana and mistakenly believe that enlightened beings exist as separate entities. This is a fundamental misunderstanding. For this reason, it is important to emphasize here that the principal deity and the retinue, being one in their ultimate essence, are the very object of our supplication.

PRAY TO GURU RINPOCHE WITH COMPLETE TRUST

It is with complete trust that we pray to Guru Rinpoche. With vivid yearning and confident faith in his sublime qualities, which are like wish-fulfilling jewels, we express our devotion in word and deed, by prayer and prostration. Knowing that such a refuge is undecieving, we abandon the things of this world like worthless chaff, and with a concentrated faith and trust, we follow in Guru Rinpoche's footsteps, practicing without ceasing.

In what manner should we pray to Guru Rinpoche? We should pray with sincere and devoted faith. It is important to understand that Guru Rinpoche and all his retinue are in no way different from a wish-fulfilling jewel. Those who pray to them with faith—whether vivid faith, eager faith, or confident faith—will receive accomplishment and blessings in accordance with their level of devotion. Therefore, while making supplication, it is important that we pray sincerely from the bottom of our hearts, expressing our devotion

through both body and speech—that is, by reciting prayers with a pleasant and melodious voice, and by respectfully joining our palms and making prostrations with our body.

We should recognize that the qualities of such a refuge are truly genuine and unfailing, and thus abandon all worldly concerns as if they were chaff, entrusting ourselves and all sentient beings wholeheartedly to Guru Rinpoche, and practicing without ever parting from him. This explains the sixth line: “And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.”

In this world, there are various religious traditions, such as Christianity or Hinduism. Some seek refuge in God, while others turn to Brahma, Maheshvara, or other deities. However, none of these can grant the ultimate happiness of liberation; therefore, they are not the ultimate objects of refuge. Relying on them may bring temporary health and wealth, but nothing more. To be freed completely from the great suffering of birth and death in cyclic existence, we must rely solely on Guru Padmasambhava. Therefore, we should entrust everything to him, follow his guidance in our practice forever, and contemplate in this way as we begin our prayers.

Therefore, we address him saying,

True unfailing Lord of unbounded compassion, in this very moment, do not turn away from us and those like us, who are drowning in the ocean of the three sufferings. To grant your blessings, come we pray. Like an alchemist, transmute iron into gold: Bless with the three inconceivable secrets of your enlightened body, speech, and mind the ordinary body, speech, and mind of all of us who hope in you and fly to you for refuge. And from the Copper-Colored Mountain—or from whichever natural nirmanakaya buddhafield where you are residing—come, in the great skillfulness of your compassion, and be with us.

It is essential to pray with a sincere and heartfelt intention. If you can visualize Guru Padmasambhava, please do. If not, you may place a thangka, photo, or statue of Guru Rinpoche before you as a support for your devotion, praying with reverence and sincerity.

While praying, you should contemplate in this way:

“Unfailing Lord of boundless compassion, I and all pitiable beings wander lost in the three realms of samsara. Please accept us as your disciples and never abandon us.

With sincere devotion, I pray that through the blessings of your inconceivable body, speech, and mind, you swiftly transmute our ordinary minds—afflicted by the five poisons of desire, anger, ignorance, pride, and jealousy—into luminous wisdom, just as an alchemist turns base metal into precious gold.”

Finally, pray for his presence: “Although you, Guru Rinpoche, appear to reside in the land of the rakshasas, we fortunate beings of Jambudvīpa earnestly call out to you like an only child calling for its mother. Please remember your past aspirations and, with your inconceivable power of great compassion, come to us directly, just as moonlight shines upon a clear pool, and let all the qualities of your realization merge completely into our minds!” This explains the seventh line: “To grant your blessings, come, we pray.”

Of course, after hearing these teachings, different dharma friends may have different experiences: some, perhaps due to heavy karmic obscurations from previous lifetimes, are unable to generate faith in Guru Padmasambhava and their own gurus no matter how hard they try, and this obscures the merit from arising in their mind streams; others, because of strong virtuous roots from past lives and favorable conditions for dharma practice in this life, find that any practice comes easily—just like some great masters, who, wherever they practice, whether in solitude or amidst the bustle of the world,

quickly experience signs of accomplishments and naturally give rise to faith in their mind streams. There are also some people who regard Guru Padmasambhava and Buddha Shakyamuni as ordinary beings, feeling little interest when hearing about their deeds, but who become immediately enthusiastic and full of faith when it comes to worldly spirits or naga kings. All of this is related to one's karmic connections from past lives and the merit accumulated in this life.

The Importance on Guru Yoga Practice and Mantra Recitation

Some dharma friends often tell me that when practicing guru yoga, they find it very difficult to view their guru as a faultless, sacred being. They simply cannot generate this pure perception, and this difficulty itself becomes an obstacle to their practice. According to the words of the lineage masters, if one lacks pure perception toward the guru, one should recite the Vajrasattva mantra more often to purify karmic obscurations—this is crucial! In truth, the guru may be flawless, but because one's own mind is impure and cannot generate faith, this creates tremendous obstacles to one's practice.

No matter how inexperienced you may be in other practices, everyone should be able to practice guru yoga. There is a saying in Tibetan regions: “Even if you cannot engage in any other practices, just sitting and practicing guru yoga every day already makes you a medium-level practitioner.” For example, some people may find it difficult to meditate on the preciousness of human life or the impermanence of life, but reciting Guru Rinpoche’s mantra or your guru’s supplication prayer every day should not be too difficult. Of course, when reciting, some people can visualize clearly, while others cannot, but even if your visualization is unclear, praying to a particularly blessed object of devotion is still meaningful and meritorious.

Nowadays, some people are able to develop faith in any practice, while others are just the opposite. This difference is likely related to one’s diligence in spiritual practice.

A few days ago, I met an elderly man who, several years ago, made a vow at my monastery with an old khenpo to recite one hundred million recitations of the Avalokiteshvara mantra. Recently, he completed his recitations and came to the monastery to request the khenpo to dedicate the merit. In Tibetan regions, many people have completed one hundred million recitations of the Avalokiteshvara mantra. However, among practitioners in Han urban areas, very

few have achieved this milestone so far. Even those who have accumulated ten million recitations remain rare, regardless of whether they are elderly or young.

In fact, even if you truly lack the ability for learning, contemplating, and meditating, reciting mantras is still extremely meaningful. If in this life you can accumulate ten million or even one hundred million recitations of the Guru Rinpoche mantra, you will never be disturbed by various obstacles in all your future lives; and if you can accumulate one hundred million recitations of the Avalokiteshvara mantra, the merit is equally inconceivable.

In the future, when the time is right, I plan to speak more about the benefits of reciting mantras. Currently, some people neither recite mantras nor engage in visualization practices; instead, they spend each day talking about trivial or meaningless matters. This is truly a great waste of this precious human life. If, with such a rare human body, you neither recite mantras nor engage in any practices—merely getting up in the morning to eat, sleeping excessively at night, and while others are already at work, still “meditating” in bed—how can you be considered a true practitioner?

As a practitioner, at the very least, you should regularly practice guru yoga. There was a great Tibetan master who taught a simple

guru yoga practice. He said that if you lack time or favorable conditions for dharma practice, you can recite the Seven-Line Prayer three times, followed by at least 1,000 recitations of Guru Rinpoche's mantra, and this counts as completing one session of guru yoga. This practice of Guru Rinpoche is relatively simple. In fact, many Guru Rinpoche sadhanas composed by various masters are quite concise. Of course, if you wish to practice more extensively, you may turn to *Drubpa Kagyad, the Eight Great Sadhana Teachings*—which feature various manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, sometimes appearing in peaceful forms and other times in wrathful forms.

Correctly Understand the Pratimoksha Precepts in Tibetan Buddhism

Some people today, not understanding Guru Rinpoche's enlightened qualities, regard Padmasambhava as merely an ordinary layperson. I once read a book that claimed, "Padmasambhava played a crucial role in establishing and spreading Tibetan Buddhism. He was a layman, and because of his influence, all the abbots in Tibetan regions have wives as well." Although the author has made significant contributions to Buddhism and possesses considerable knowledge on the subject, this assertion, from the standpoint of Buddhist logic, falls into the fallacies of uncertainty and non-pervasion.

Anyone who has visited the Tibetan regions knows that numerous monastic sanghas upholding pure pratimoksha precepts flourish there. In Garze Prefecture alone, across 18 counties, government statistics show over 50,000 ordained monastics. Given this, one can imagine how many monastics maintaining pure precepts exist throughout the entirety of the Tibetan regions. Therefore, it is unreasonable for those unfamiliar with the actual situation to make sweeping statements about Tibetan Buddhism, leading many to believe such misconceptions.

It is important to understand that Guru Rinpoche was not an ordinary person. It was only after he subdued the various local deities and non-human beings that Buddhism was able to flourish in the Tibetan regions and continue to thrive to this day. Such an accomplishment is far beyond the capability of an ordinary person. Furthermore, the termas of Guru Rinpoche that have been revealed alone far exceed the entire collections of the Taisho Tripitaka and the Qianlong Tripitaka.

If you don't believe this, you can check for yourself: How many volumes of terma has each great tertön revealed? And how many practices are contained in each volume? Once you understand this, you will surely realize, "Our previous assessment of Guru Rinpoche was truly limited and uninformed!" Therefore, if someone does not

know the facts and jumps to conclusions based on hearsay, they will only end up regretting it themselves.

In fact, Tibetan Buddhism places great importance on the pratimoksha precepts. You can investigate for yourselves: What precepts do all Tibetan monasteries initially study? How are these precepts practiced and upheld? Although there are a few rare Vajrayana practices that involve consorts, such practices generally do not occur in the strictly regulated environment of monasteries. Moreover, even those extraordinary practices have deeper explanations and should not be judged merely by their outward appearance.

Therefore, it is essential for everyone to truly understand the nature of Vajrayana. At the same time, we should regularly pray to Guru Rinpoche. As long as we pray with sincere devotion, relying on Guru Rinpoche's inconceivable power and blessings, the light of wisdom will surely illuminate the darkness in the minds of beings in this degenerate age.

MEANING OF GURU RINPOCHE'S MANTRA

Having thus invoked the Guru's blessings we recite his mantra.

The *Guru* is the one who is "heavy with perfect qualities," the teacher unsurpassed. *Padma* is the first part of the name of the great master of Orgyen, whereas *Siddhi* refers to the supreme and ordinary accomplishments that are our goal. Finally, with *Hung* we invoke the precious master, imploring him to grant accomplishment.

This then is how we pray to the great master of Orgyen, embodiment of all the buddhas.

Now, let's explore the last line of the Seven-Line Prayer:

After reciting the words of supplication for blessings, one should also chant Guru Rinpoche's mantra. Here, *Guru* means "heavy"—referring to the teacher who is heavy with all perfect qualities. He is the most serious object of reverence, supreme and unsurpassed. *Padma* means "lotus," and since Guru Rinpoche was born from

a lotus, he is named Padmasambhava (Lotus-Born), with *Padma* being the first part of his name. *Siddhi* refers to the supreme and ordinary accomplishments. The supreme accomplishment refers to buddhahood, and the ordinary accomplishments mean the eight common accomplishments. *Hung* is the syllable that requests the bestowal of such siddhis.

Simply put, *Guru* refers to the master, *Padma* to Padmasambhava, *Siddhi* to accomplishments, and *Hung* to bestowal. Together, it means: “With sincere devotion we pray to you, Guru Padmasambhava—please grant us the supreme and common siddhis.” This is the essential meaning of the Guru Rinpoche mantra. In short, we should rely on this prayer and sincerely supplicate Guru Padmasambhava, the embodiment of all buddhas.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE MEANING OF THE SEVEN-LINE PRAYER

The first line of the prayer reveals the place of his birth; the second, the manner in which he was born; the third shows the extraordinary nature of his greatness; and the fourth specifically reveals Guru Rinpoche’s actual name.

To review what we have discussed, in this prayer:

The first line, “In Orgyen’s land, upon its northwest rim,” indicates the birthplace of Guru Rinpoche.

The second line, “On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,” describes the manner of his birth. Guru Rinpoche was not born from a womb, an egg, or moisture. Like the bodhisattvas of Sukhavati, he was miraculously born in the heart of a lotus flower.

The third line, “Wondrous, supreme mastery you found” proclaims Guru Rinpoche’s extraordinary qualities and accomplishments—he

first appeared in the world, took the royal throne, renounced it to practice in charnel grounds, and benefited sentient beings in India and the Land of Tibet. According to a study I read, some archaeologists who researched Padmasambhava concluded that Guru Rinpoche lived on earth for over 1600 years. In different historical documents, Guru Rinpoche's birth is recorded differently. Some say he was born in the heart of a lotus eight years after the Buddha's parinirvana; some say it was more than a decade later. He manifested in different forms to benefit beings in India, then came to the Land of Tibet, and finally departed for the land of the rakshasas.

Guru Rinpoche's supreme accomplishments are completely beyond the reach of ordinary people. Nowadays, if someone lives for over a hundred years, people think it's extraordinary, but the kind of long life and realization attained by Guru Rinpoche is something they may have never even heard of. Precisely because they do not understand, there are very few positive thoughts and many negative, mistaken views. For such people, I believe that both learning and contemplating the Buddhadharma are essential. I once had an acquaintance who, at first, was quite critical of Vajrayana. However, after reading several terma texts and supreme sadhanas, he completely overcame his misconceptions. Therefore, for those who have

doubts at first, gradually learning more about the tantric teachings will naturally give rise to correct understanding.

The fourth line, “And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned,” reveals Guru Rinpoche’s true name.

The fifth line mentions the Guru’s retinue, the dakas and dakinis to whom we also pray but who are in truth none other than the display of his compassion, which helps beings according to their need. The sixth line shows us how we should pray. Having beheld the Guru’s qualities, we turn our hearts to him and pray with irreversible faith, expressing our devotion both physically and verbally—yearning to become finally inseparable from him. The seventh line, together with the mantra, shows that, by such an invocation, our mind is blessed and we will gain accomplishment.

The fifth line, “A ring of many dakinis encircles you,” indicates that Guru Rinpoche and all his retinue are the objects of our prayers.

The sixth line, “And in your footsteps practicing we follow you,” explains how we should practice—not by following non-Buddhist paths or atheistic views, but by following Guru Rinpoche. Of course,

“following” doesn’t mean physically chasing after the guru everywhere, saying, “Guru, please don’t leave me—I have to hold on to your ‘tail,’” as if he actually had one. Rather, it means to practice according to his teachings and to follow the instructions of the guru.

The seventh line, “To grant your blessings, come, we pray,” together with the mantra “Guru Padma Siddhi Hung,” expresses that, having recognized Guru Rinpoche’s qualities, we pray with unwavering faith to follow him, aspiring to attain the same realization as he has. With this attitude, we supplicate with body, speech, and mind, and through such prayer, we receive blessings and gather siddhis (accomplishments).

Receiving Guru Rinpoche’s Blessings Without Delay

If we have devotion and if we pray to Guru Rinpoche, who abides in an undying body of wisdom in the natural nirmanakaya buddhfields, the blessings of his compassion will immediately and certainly enter us.

If we pray to Guru Rinpoche with a respectful and devoted mind, he will definitely bless us immediately with his great compassion.

The key is whether we can generate such faith. Of course, this also depends on our merit. Although I have taught Guru Rinpoche's practice in class, each person's merit and faith are different, so the results they receive will also differ. It's not like distributing money, where everyone gets an equal share. When it comes to hearing the dharma and practicing, what you gain depends on your own faith and diligence; only then can you obtain your own share.

As I have mentioned before, Chojé Yidzhin Norbu only relied on Thubga Yidzhin Norbu at Changma Buddhist Academy for six years, yet he received all the qualities and blessings from his guru. In contrast, some people stayed for a much longer time, but their realization was worlds apart. The same was true for Jigme Gyalwe Nyugu. According to his biography, he did not spend a long time with his guru Jigme Lingpa, but every time he went to see his guru, he was filled with great joy and reverence. He truly regarded his guru as a buddha. His devotion was truly beyond words. As a result, all the qualities and blessings of his guru's wisdom mind poured into him like water filling a vessel. Therefore, when relying on a guru and listening to the dharma, the most important factor is oneself. This is just like learning in the ordinary world: in the same classroom, some students are very smart but end up failing, while others who do not usually stand out get admitted to prestigious

universities. Thus, the results of our dharma study and practice are closely related to our own faith and merit.

In short, when reciting Guru Rinpoche's mantra or prayer, I hope everyone can maintain sincere devotion as much as possible. If you can do this, you will not be like ordinary people whose afflictions of desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy, and pride burn so intensely. Once the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas gradually merge into your mind, your inner strength will transform, and no practice will seem too difficult. On the other hand, if you do not receive the blessings of the guru and the Three Jewels, and rely solely on ordinary conceptual thinking, you will inevitably encounter great difficulties. Therefore, it is important to practice with a respectful and devoted mind.

GURU RINPOCHE'S OWN GUIDANCE ON CONFIDENT PRAYER TO HIM

*In *The Seven-Line Heart Essence*, a treasure text revealed by Guru Chökyi Wangchuk, Guru Rinpoche himself describes the way in which we should confidently pray to him:*

**I bow in homage to the yidam deity!
If you, my noble child, the happy offspring of a future
age,
Would take me, lord of Orgyen, as your refuge,
Stay in solitude and let your heart be filled
With sadness at this passing world,
And—this is a crucial point—be weary with samsara.**

After Guru Rinpoche paid homage to his yidam deity, he said: “Fortunate sons of future generations, if you seek my protection and refuge, you must first dwell in a secluded sacred place or a quiet room, and give rise to a strong sense of disenchantment with the eight worldly concerns—such as fame, gain, and status. Driven

by such disenchantment, your practice will surely succeed. Begin your practice with an attitude of renouncing samsara.”

If you have not abandoned samsara, and you practice Guru Rinpoche hoping to succeed in business and make money, so that you can later enjoy a life of luxury—sleeping in comfort and indulging yourself every day—even if you recite the Seven-Line Prayer with intense longing while harboring such desires, your practice will not succeed. It’s like trying to grow crops: first you must clear and cultivate the barren land; otherwise, even if you sow seeds, there will be no harvest. Our minds are the same—if we don’t embrace our practice with disenchantment and renunciation, we will be completely out of tune with the dharma, and no amount of practice will be effective. Therefore, it’s crucial that practice begins with renunciation. Some people, though living in the mundane world, feel that such a life is meaningless and that they are merely being pulled along by karma. With this mindset, there is hope for their practice.

Of course, modern society emphasizes “development”—individuals must develop, collectives must develop. If we talk about generating renunciation and having little interest in worldly pursuits, some may consider this a negative mindset and are disinclined to praise it. However, genuine transcendent spiritual practice often conflicts

with worldly values. As stated in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, these are completely opposite directions: one aspires to future lives, while the other seeks only this life—so long as one is happy now, what happens in the next life is of no concern. Therefore, as practitioners, we must first examine our own mindset and practice on the basis of renunciation.

How to Invoke Guru Rinpoche with the Prayer

How, specifically, should we practice?

**Then give to me your mind, your heart, the very vitals
of your being,**

Regarding me, the Lord of Orgyen,

**As the one in whom to rest your hope, the perfect
refuge.**

Rely on me in all your hopes and griefs.

**Cut off the pursuit of wealth but constantly make
offerings and praises.**

Simply with devotion in your body, speech, and mind,

Invoke me with this prayer of seven lines:

**“Hung
In Orgyen’s land upon its northwest rim,
On lotus, pistil-cup, and stem,
Wondrous, supreme mastery you found
And as the Lotus-Born you are renowned.
A ring of many dakinis encircles you,
And in your footsteps practicing we follow you.
To grant your blessings, come, we pray.
Guru Padma Siddhi Hung”**

Single-mindedly rely on Guru Rinpoche, understanding that all objects of refuge—the Three Roots, the dharma protectors, and all the buddhas and bodhisattvas—are perfectly complete within Guru Rinpoche’s mandala. Entrust all the happiness and suffering of this very life entirely to Guru Rinpoche, to be decided and known by him. Continually make offerings and praises, abandon the desire to accumulate worldly wealth, maintain respect with body, speech, and mind, and repeatedly supplicate with the Seven-Line Prayer.

When we pray to the guru and Three Jewels, it’s not just to obtain happiness. In fact, happiness is the guru’s blessing, and suffering is also the guru’s blessing—this is a crucial point of mind training. However, many people fail to realize this. They think that only

happiness is a blessing, while suffering surely is not. So when they encounter pain, they complain: “I recite the Buddha’s name every day—Buddha, why don’t you take care of me? Why don’t bless me? Why do you let me suffer so much?” This kind of thinking is misguided, as becomes clear when you study Mahayana mind training teachings.

**Thus pray to me again and yet again,
With deep devotion, tears in your eyes.
And when, through faith’s intensity, your body trembles,
Settle instantly in a state of limpid clarity,
Watching undistractedly the free and stainless purity!
What need is there to say that I protect
The sons and daughters praying thus to me!**

When reciting with intense faith, at a certain point you will be so moved by Guru Rinpoche’s kindness that tears will flow uncontrollably and your body will tremble. These signs appear when a practitioner has exceptionally strong faith. At this point, rest naturally in that state of deep devotion, which is clear, lucid, and natural. In other words, when particularly intense faith arises through your supplication, abide naturally and observe the nature of your own mind. Here we are touching upon the advanced tantric teachings.

For disciples who pray with such devotion, Guru Rinpoche will definitely grant protection and blessings.

One Perfects All Qualities Through This Practice

**They become the offspring of the buddhas of the
triple time.**

Empowerment of awareness gained within their minds,

**Their concentration rests in steady strength and wisdom
blossoms.**

By force of great and self-arisen blessings,

They will come to ripeness;

**They will drive away the sufferings of beings and be
their protectors.**

They become children of the buddhas of the three times and receive the great empowerment. This is not an empowerment where Guru Rinpoche personally uses a vase to confer it upon them; rather, when they give rise to immense faith in Guru Rinpoche, they receive physical experiences—signs that he is blessing them with the empowerment of the path.

They gain empowerment of awareness within their minds. Their

meditative concentration grows ever stronger, and their wisdom continuously deepens. Through Guru Rinpoche's great and self-arisen blessings, their mind streams are ripened. At that point, protecting others and relieving their suffering becomes natural and effortless.

This shows how truly important faith is. If you have especially devout faith in the Buddha and the guru, it becomes easy to tame your own afflictive emotions and, at the same time, help those in need. If people who are sick or suffering ask you for a blessing, as long as you have faith in Guru Rinpoche or the buddhas and bodhisattvas, you can pray: "O buddhas and bodhisattvas, please bless their mind streams!" In this way, they will naturally gain benefit.

**Themselves transformed,
The experience of others they will also change,
And thus bring forth the works of buddhahood.
In them all qualities will be perfected.**

When their minds are transformed, they can then transform the minds of others. This is a natural principle. For example, because I have an extraordinary, uncommon faith in Guru Rinpoche, then as my own mind is transformed, the teachings I give will also benefit

those who listen. Conversely, if I tell a Buddhist story that I have simply memorized by rote, without my own heart being moved, then when I share it, listeners are unlikely to be deeply touched either. It will likely go in one ear and out the other, leaving no trace in their minds. But if I arouse great faith from the inspiring stories of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and share them with those gathered with a joyful heart, then just as I am benefited, those present will also have their minds enriched.

I often tell dharma teachers: when giving a teaching, you must first be moved yourself. The benefit for others will be completely different when you transmit it after having a genuine experience. In other words, whether you speak from the heart or merely from the mouth—the effects are entirely different. Some masters may not be very articulate, but they communicate directly with their disciples from their inner state of being. Because of this, what they teach will always benefit others' minds.

Therefore, everyone must firmly remember this principle: "As one's own mind is transformed, the minds of others are also transformed, and one's activities are accomplished." For example, if you want to pray to Guru Rinpoche to help those affected by tsunamis or earthquakes, praying to dispel their suffering, the prerequisite is that you yourself must undergo a transformation in body and mind

during the prayer. If you can do this, your prayer will benefit others. Of course, this is not easy to do, but this point is extremely important.

Some people claim, “Everything in this world is merely an illusion, and Buddhist prayers are nothing more than a formality.” In fact, this is not the case. Such blessings can indeed be felt, because once you yourself have gained something from a dharma teaching and then apply it to help others, it will certainly benefit them. Conversely, if you have gained nothing, then no matter how hard you try to share with others, it is likely to be meaningless. Therefore, when we discuss Buddhist teachings with others in daily life, it is best to choose the teachings or practices from which we ourselves have benefited most; in that case, they will surely help others.

Guru Rinpoche Prophesied That His Heart-Son Would Encounter the Prayer

**May my heart-son meet and bring to light
This mighty instrument of ripening and freedom
In the state of great enlightenment, the dharmakaya.**

The Seven-Line Prayer, a practice endowed with extraordinary blessings, is extremely profound. May this secret

instruction, the treasure of my heart, be found by Chökyi Wangchuk, compassionate and wise.

Concerning this method, Guru Rinpoche made an aspiration at that time: “May it in the future be encountered by my heart-son.”

In particular, because this Seven-Line Prayer is extremely profound, Guru Rinpoche concealed it and prophesied that Chökyi Wangchuk, a master endowed with great compassion and wisdom, would reveal it. And indeed, the great tertön Chökyi Wangchuk later revealed this terma and spread it widely in the human world.

Lecture Five

October 23rd, 2009

Let us continue our exploration of the Seven-Line Prayer. As mentioned previously, this prayer contains multiple profound meanings at the outer, inner, and secret levels. Our focus here is the outer meaning—an interpretation that harmonizes with the general Sutrāyana teachings. However, this section also introduces the tantric practice known as the four phases of approach and accomplishment. These phases are central to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and are essential for anyone engaged in the generation and completion stages of Vajrayāna. Although there are many ways to interpret these four phases, we will follow lucid commentary of Mipham Rinpoche.

Some of you may not have received tantric empowerment. I cannot know the depth of your faith in Vajrayāna. If you feel you lack faith, you may choose to set this session aside for now, as the practices discussed here are quite advanced. However, if you have sincere devotion to Vajrayāna, I will offer a simple explanation from a literal perspective, in a manner closer to the Sutrāyana tradition. Presenting it this way should not incur any significant fault. At the same time, to omit this section entirely would also seem inappropriate.

With this in mind, let us now explore the Seven-Line Prayer in light of the four phases of approach and accomplishment.

FOUR PHASES OF APPROACH AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Approach and Close Approach

In accordance with this instruction, we should visualize the supreme Lotus King clearly and steadily in the sky in front of ourselves, seated on a spotless lotus flower in the lake of Dhanakosha in the land of Orgyen, accompanied by his retinue of dakas and dakinis as numerous as the seeds in a pod of sesame. This constitutes the approach phase. To pray devotedly to Guru Rinpoche with the aspiration to accomplish the three vajras within our body, speech, and mind is the phase of close approach. These two practices (of approach and close approach) constitute the generation stage.

In the space before yourself, clearly visualize the supreme Lotus King, Padmasambhava, seated upon a lotus in the lake of Dhanakosha in the land of Oddiyana. He is surrounded by his retinue of dakas and dakinis, as numerous as seeds in a sesame pod. To hold this visualization clearly and steadily is the phase of approach. This

is precisely the image we find in refuge field paintings and Guru Rinpoche thangkas.

Next, supplicate Guru Rinpoche with deep devotion and respect. Yearn for your own body, speech, and mind to become inseparable from his enlightened body, speech, and mind—transforming your three ordinary gates into the three vajras. This is the phase of close approach. The main purpose of deity practice is to transform our impure body, speech, and mind, and to realize their unity with the pure essence of the deity or the guru.

Thus, *approach* corresponds to the actual entity we visualize. It is like needing to conduct business with someone: first, you must locate the other party. Once you have found them and begin to communicate, that is *close approach*. These two practices belong to the generation stage of Vajrayana, and their main function is to invoke and visualize the guru or the deity.

Accomplishment

In conclusion, like iron fragments drawn toward a lodestone, infinite buddhas and bodhisattvas dwelling in the ten directions come and dissolve into the Guru and his retinue. The

latter then melts into light, which then dissolves into us. This constitutes the phase of accomplishment.

After clearly visualizing Guru Rinpoche and his retinue, you make supplications while reciting Guru Rinpoche's mantra. At the conclusion of the session, visualize all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions dissolving into the central figure of Guru Padmasambhava and his retinue. Then, Guru Rinpoche and his entourage dissolve into light and merge into yourself. This is the phase of accomplishment.

A similar practice can be found in Mipham Rinpoche's *Illuminating the Path to Liberation*¹⁸ as well as in his guru yoga practice *A Shower of Blessings: A Guru Yoga Practice to Accompany the Seven-Line Prayer*.¹⁹

The Accomplishment Phase: A Distinctive Practice of the Vajrayana

This phase of accomplishment is a distinctive practice of the Vajrayana. In the visualization practices of the Sutrayana tradition, one mostly visualizes light emanating from the Buddha or from stupas. As *The Sutra on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life* states: "Amitayus Buddha possesses eighty-four thousand physical characteristics, each having eighty-four thousand secondary marks of excellence. Each secondary mark emits eighty-four thousand

rays of light; each ray of light shines universally upon the lands of the ten directions, embracing and not forsaking those who are mindful of the Buddha.”

While Sutrayana teachings include visualizations of the Buddha’s body emitting immeasurable light to embrace and guide sentient beings, they do not encompass the practice found in the Vajrayana where buddhas and bodhisattvas dissolve into light and merge with the practitioner.

To engage in Vajrayana practice, one must first receive empowerment and undertake the preliminary practices. This is because the Vajrayana involves a more profound and advanced sequence of training—especially pure perception, the generation and completion stages, and Dzogchen—which can be difficult to fully comprehend without proper preparation.

The Tang Esoteric practices (Tangmi) found in China are, in fact, similar to the practices of kriya and charya tantras in Tibetan Vajrayana. These involve visualizing the Buddha in front of oneself, emitting light that enters oneself to bestow blessings. However, from the yoga tantra level and above in Tibetan Vajrayana, the practice goes beyond simply visualizing the object of supplication emitting light. In these higher practices, the visualized deities dissolve into the

practitioner and become one with them. From the perspective of meditation, this represents a much more advanced level of practice.

As for the theoretical aspect—why is it necessary to practice in this way? What are the benefits of such a method? These questions are explained in great detail in the tantric theoretical teachings and pith instructions of Omniscient Longchenpa, Rongzom Pandita, and Mipham Rinpoche.

Importance of Understanding Vajrayana Teachings

You should gradually come to understand the Vajrayana teachings. More importantly, you must not only understand them intellectually, but also grasp their essential points. This is important. Through many years of study, one comes to understand the excellence of Buddhism. From the Four Noble Truths onward, all Buddhist teachings are without equal among other religious traditions. Building on this foundation, you must also gradually come to recognize that the Buddhadharma unfolds across many levels, among which the pith instructions of Vajrayana are especially sublime and profound.

In the past, when I spoke with scholars and monks from the Sūtrayāna tradition, I found that many of them did not really acknowledge or accept Vajrayāna. The reasons for this generally fall into a

few categories: some simply don't understand it; others lack faith; and some are firmly attached to their own school or tradition. Yet up to this point, I have not encountered anyone who can offer a truly sufficient and well-founded reason for not accepting Vajrayana.

In fact, certain Vajrayana views are also present in the Sutrayana teachings. For example, "all sentient beings are buddhas," "all beings possess the qualities of buddha-nature," and "afflictions are none other than bodhi." However, the deeper reasoning behind these views—such as: Why are afflictions bodhi? Why does a pure mind lead to a pure environment? Ordinary beings see the mountains, rivers, and the earth as impure and defiled, so how could this possibly be no different from Buddha Amitabha's pure land?—these questions are only briefly alluded to in the Sutrayana texts. They are not explained with the depth and precision found in Vajrayana.

In the Tantric teachings, Guru Padmasambhava, Buddha Amitabha, and Buddha Shakyamuni are, in essence, none other than your own mind. However, unless someone has reached a certain level of realization, this kind of pith instruction should not be taught openly. Otherwise, they may be unable to accept it and could end up rejecting the teaching altogether. This is precisely why secrecy is emphasized in Vajrayana: many practitioners, before their karmic

connections fully mature, are simply not prepared to receive the profound views, practices, and behaviors of the Tantric path.

To summarize, the accomplishment phase is the stage in which we visualize Guru Rinpoche and his retinue dissolving into ourselves.

Great Accomplishment

Here, the phase of great accomplishment is explained through *Guru Padma Siddhi Hung*, the last line of the Seven-Line Prayer. This explanation is particularly deep and profound.

Guru

The ultimate mode of being, the ground wherein both we and Guru Rinpoche are primordially inseparable—namely, the self-arisen primordial wisdom, which is subject to no movement of discursive thought—is referred to as Guru.

When Guru Rinpoche and the buddhas and bodhisattvas dissolve into us, our complete inseparability from these enlightened beings is not merely a conceptual statement. As stated in *The Beacon of Certainty*, this is not about forcefully visualizing something impure as pure; it is about recognizing what has always been pure. The

only problem is that sentient beings fail to realize this. Through such practice, we will ultimately recognize Guru Padmasambhava on the ultimate level. These teachings are truly profound. The latter part of *White Lotus* explains the Seven-Line Prayer through the path of liberation and the path of skillful means. The reason I am not teaching that section at this time, out of concern that many dharma friends may not yet be ready to accept it.

Why can enlightened beings and oneself merge into one? Because one's own primordial wisdom and that of Guru Rinpoche and the buddhas and bodhisattvas are originally no different—both remain undisturbed by discursive thoughts. This is what is meant by *Guru*. Put simply: the wisdom of every sentient being is primordially inseparable and non-dual from the guru's wisdom.

Padma

Because deluded perceptions are themselves primordially pure, the path is free from all striving and the fruit is present spontaneously like a lotus in full flower. Therefore [the path itself] is referred to as Padma, or lotus.

Because one's mind is inseparable from the guru, one is already liberated from effortful striving along the path. Deluded perceptions—the inner afflictions of greed, hatred, and ignorance, as well as the outer world of mountains, rivers, and lands—are all primordially pure. The fruit is present spontaneously, like a lotus—inherently unstained, perfectly endowed with all qualities. This is why it is called *Padma*.

Siddhi

For the fruit is not something that occurs at a later stage as a result of the practice. In the ultimate expanse, which is self-arisen and spontaneously present, the primordial wisdom of self-awareness is clearly [and already] manifest. This is referred to as Siddhi, or accomplishment.

Siddhi means accomplishment. This accomplishment appears to be a fruit obtained through practice, but in reality, all sentient beings have already actualized their self-realized fruition within the spontaneously present dharmadhatu. They are inherently endowed with perfect wisdom and qualities, not something gained through subsequent practice.

Why do we say that afflictions are bodhi? Why do we say that sentient beings are buddhas? Without the pith instructions of Vajrayana, this is indeed difficult to comprehend. Although the Sūtrayana teachings, especially when they explain the third turning of the dharma wheel, often state: “Sentient beings are merely obscured by the delusions of greed, hatred, and ignorance, but are actually buddhas,” this view of “originally not being buddha, then becoming buddha” differs greatly from the Vajrayana teaching of “already being buddha.” The latter is the most definitive view—the one that accords with reality itself. To truly understand the ultimate intent of Buddha Shakyamuni, one cannot do without the pith instructions, theory, and practices of Vajrayana.

This is *Siddhi*—or accomplishment. Here we encounter an uncommon way of attaining *siddhi*.

Hung

And, although in terms of conceptual distinctions the self-arisen primordial wisdom may be classified as ground, path, and fruit, these three are not different in nature. This is directly perceived by self-cognizing awareness and is indicated by the syllable Hung.

The self-arisen primordial wisdom can be viewed from different angles as having three aspects—ground, path, and fruit—corresponding to sentient beings at the ground stage, bodhisattvas on the path, and buddhas at fruition. It can also be understood through the two truths of the ground, the two accumulations of the path, and the two kayas of fruition. However, these distinctions are merely linguistic and conceptual designations, much like how a vase can be categorized from various perspectives as impermanent, compounded, and conditioned. In reality, these three aspects share the same essential nature and are all directly realized through self-cognizing awareness. Consider space: while people may conceptually divide it into three layers, from the perspective of space's essential nature, these divisions are indistinguishable. Understanding this principle is what is meant by *Hung*.

This refers to the great accomplishment phase of practice. The two steps of accomplishment and great accomplishment make up the completion-stage practice.

In summary, the reason one is non-dual and indistinguishable from Guru Rinpoche has already been explained above through the mantra *Guru Padma Siddhi Hung*—this is the great accomplishment

phase of practice. The phases of accomplishment and great accomplishment together form the practice of the completion stage.

I have only briefly touched upon these profound teachings here, giving little more than their literal meaning. However, perhaps I have spoken too much and thus incurred some fault in explaining what should not be taught too openly. Om Benza Satto Hung!

The meaning of this is that we should recite the Seven-Line Prayer while never parting from the practice wherein the generation and completion stages are united.

Praying in this way is important. Many dharma friends have great faith in the profound teachings of Vajrayana and have spiritual experiences and responses. If one can practice at a high level—that is, praying in a way that never parts from the generation stage and completion stage—the effects will be even greater, and blessings and accomplishments will come more swiftly.

The first five lines describe the visualization and thus constitute the phase of approach. The sixth line expresses trust and confidence in Guru Rinpoche and is thus the phase of close approach. Then, with the seventh line, we mingle inseparably with the Guru, and this is the accomplishment phase. As we

recite the mantra with our minds indivisible from the Guru, we behold the countenance of the great dharmakaya. This is the phase of great accomplishment. Therefore, all four phases of approach and accomplishment are complete within this very prayer.

The first five lines of the prayer describe the visualization—Padmasambhava, the place of his birth, and so on. The sixth line expresses trust and confidence in Guru Rinpoche; we resolve to follow in his footsteps. This is the phase of close approach. Then, with the seventh line, Padmasambhava comes to grant us blessings so that our mind becomes inseparable from him. Finally, through the mantra *Guru Padma Siddhi Hung*, our minds having become inseparable from the Guru, we behold the true face of the great dharmakaya.

Although this time I have not explored the deeper parts of the *White Lotus* and have given only a brief introduction to the outer practice of the Seven-Line Prayer, by studying the history and merit of the prayer you will see that it is truly unsurpassable and not easily encountered. Those who do not understand the value of vajra speech might think, “What’s so special about the Seven-Line

Prayer? I could even compose an eight-line prayer!" But a prayer like this cannot be produced by the conceptual, discursive mind.

EXPLAIN THE FOUR PHASES FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

If we strive in the recitation of the Seven-Line Prayer (as described)—having established beforehand the time that we will give to the practice—and if we persevere in our efforts with one-pointed devotion and without being carried away by distraction, this constitutes the approach phase. When we begin to feel the effect of Guru Rinpoche’s blessings, this is the close approach. When, on receiving signs of realization (whether in waking life, in meditation, or in dreams), we continue to strive in the recitation of the prayer to the Guru, this is the accomplishment phase. Finally, when our body, speech, and mind are blessed and we realize that the Guru and our minds are inseparable, this is the great accomplishment.

In terms the time we devote to the Seven-Line Prayer, there are also four phases of approach and accomplishment. To pray one-pointedly without distraction is called the phase of approach. As we continue, we genuinely begin to feel that buddhas and bodhisattvas

are present and blessing us. We may not be able to perceive them with the naked eye, yet we experience their blessings more and more tangibly. This is the phase of close approach.

Some dharma friends are highly motivated to practice. Whenever I give specific instructions—for example, on reciting the Vajra Guru Mantra—they generate and sustain sincere faith, without allowing wrong views regarding Padmasambhava to arise. Likewise, when engaging in Amitabha practice, they have great conviction in the Buddha. Such single-pointed prayer is the phase of approach.

Then, in our dreams, in meditation, or in a state that is neither awake nor dreaming, Guru Rinpoche may actually appear before us, or even communicate with us face to face. This is the accomplishment phase. Finally, the great accomplishment phase comes when we receive blessings that transform our three doors and we come to realize the true meaning: that our own mind is inseparable from the Guru.

In truth, no matter which deity's mantra we recite, regular practice is important. Through consistent effort, blessings will naturally permeate our minds. For example, while reciting Guru Rinpoche's mantra recently, many of us have genuinely feel his blessings. When the

mind receives these spiritual responses, favorable external conditions arise in turn, and obstacles in practice gradually disappear.

As *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions* says, “Auspicious circumstances within you will arise in your outer experience.” Therefore, when we regularly pray to Guru Rinpoche and other deities such as Manjushri, we will continually receive blessings. However, if we remain indifferent to them, blessings—like moonlight—cannot penetrate our minds even though their power is inconceivable, because our vessel is obscured by defilements. This is why our devoted prayers connect us to the blessings of the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and deities.

Mahasiddhas in Modern Times

Indeed, many practitioners, through the practice of the four phases of approach and accomplishment, attain realization in which the Guru and their own minds are experienced as inseparable.

Benza Guru Drubtop: A Contemporary Mahasiddha of Vajra Guru Mantra

In 2007, a Rinpoche from Taipei’s Padmasambhava Buddhist Society recounted the story of Drubtop, a modern mahasiddha of the Vajra Guru mantra from Bhutan. This accomplished master was originally

simply an ordinary farmer who couldn't read a single word. Because he initially followed the Bon religion and didn't understand the noble qualities of Guru Rinpoche, he once slandered the Guru with harsh words. In middle age, he was cursed by an enemy, and, as a result, lost his sight. To restore his vision, he sought treatment everywhere, but to no avail. Later, following the advice of a spiritual master, he began practicing the Vajra Guru mantra and took it as his sole practice.

As he gave himself wholeheartedly to the Vajra Guru mantra, his faith in Guru Rinpoche grew continually. Because he was blind, there was no difference between day and night for him, and he practiced diligently without interruption.

When his recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra reached one hundred million, the prayer wheel he used daily as he recited the mantra began to pour forth inconceivable nectar. As everyone knows, a prayer wheel is filled with rolls of dry paper; it cannot produce water out of thin air. Yet through his diligence and the blessings of Guru Rinpoche, such a miracle appeared in his prayer wheel. He did not cling to this, however, and continued his recitation of the Vajra Guru mantra with unwavering perseverance.

When his recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra reached three hundred million, he beheld Guru Rinpoche directly in a dreamlike visionary state. Guru Rinpoche bestowed a prophecy upon him: “If you remain in this world for seven more years, your eyesight will be restored.” He also said, “The reason you became blind in both eyes is that you formerly adhered to the Bon tradition and, in particular, once disparaged and slandered enlightened beings. Therefore, even though you now behold me, due to these obscurations you cannot immediately regain your sight.”

Guru Rinpoche further gave him a specific instruction to make a ritual crown. Without anyone’s assistance, he handcrafted the crown from copper plates exactly as Guru Rinpoche had directed, and it brought various benefits to all who saw, heard of, or touched it.

Moreover, Guru Rinpoche granted him a secret pith instruction for averting and reversing obstacles, by which grave illnesses and urgent crises could be swiftly dispelled. Only he knew this ritual liturgy, as has also been the case with certain tertons. It involved first making a special tormo and reciting his unique liturgy; then, completely unclothed, carrying the tormo to a nearby three-way crossroads. Through this inconceivable method, the gravely ill would recover immediately, and those in dire emergencies would avert

calamities and be freed from danger. As a result, many people developed great faith in the practice of Guru Rinpoche.

By conservative estimate, before he passed away he had recited the Vajra Guru mantra at least six hundred million times. Whether his eyesight was ultimately restored, remains unrecorded.

After attaining the secret siddhi, he did not improve his material circumstances; he lived as before, surviving by begging. Later, he was invited to stay at Sangngak Thegchog Osel Ling Monastery. Drubtop lived a simple life; he needed no dishes, using only a skull-cup for food; he ate whatever was placed in it and never washed it. When people offered him money or goods, apart from accepting a little clothing and food, he would blow on the rest to bless it and return it to the donor, instructing them not to spend or use it, but to carry it as a protective amulet. Later, when a monastery invited him to receive offerings, he chose to stay in the most modest corner, still sleeping on his old bedding and using a quilt and pillow that were yellowed and tattered.

Seven days before his passing, he told the abbot of the monastery, Ugyen Lama: "In seven days I will leave this world and go to the pure realm to meet Guru Rinpoche." Ugyen Lama thought he was joking and did not take it seriously. He then told another monk:

“Ugyen Lama does not have mastery over life and death, but I do. He cannot understand what I mean... The dharmakaya is a state that does not die; since I have realized the dharmakaya, in truth there is no death for me.” Hearing this, the monk became worried that he would indeed manifest parinirvana. Sure enough, seven days later, on a bright morning, he calmly entered parinirvana in the vajra full-lotus posture. At that moment, the earth trembled. The entire kingdom of Bhutan was astonished, and people came from afar to pay homage. This happened in May 2006.

A Brief Account of a Mahasiddha in Litang

In this day and age, there are still many who practice Guru Rinpoche wholeheartedly. The Bright Lamp Forum recounted the story of a practitioner who spent his entire life in retreat, practicing exclusively the Vajra Guru mantra in a cave near Mingyur Monastery in Litang. After reciting the mantra more than a billion times, he attained realization. Beside his retreat cave, a spring flowed down from the mountain; through the power of his blessings, the sound of the running water came to be heard as the Vajra Guru mantra being chanted—truly wondrous. Later, when he entered parinirvana, various auspicious signs also appeared, and of this there is no doubt.

Make Your Life Meaningful and Extraordinary

On the surface, we human beings all seem the same, but in reality some people can recite more than a billion times of mantra, while others struggle to reach even a few hundred thousand—the difference is vast. As the ancients said, people differ from one another: some are powerful, others pitiable; some are immensely strong, others weak and powerless; some are extremely capable, others almost good for nothing... And these differences, apart from being determined by karma from past lives, are also shaped by one's effort and diligence in this lifetime.

In the brief span of a human life, we may be able to do many things, but to miss out on truly sublime methods of practice is regrettable. With such supreme methods, even if we cannot undertake the more elaborate practices, reaching a certain level in mantra recitation should not be difficult.

In *The Benefits of the Vajra Guru Mantra*,²⁰ it says, “If you perform one hundred thousand, ten million or more recitations, the three worlds will come under your power, the three levels of existence will fall under your glorious sway, gods and spirits will be at your bidding, the four modes of enlightened activity will be accomplished without

hindrance, and you will be able to bring immeasurable benefit to all sentient beings in whatever ways are needed.”

Of course, for most people today it is not very realistic to recite hundreds of millions, or even more than a billion, mantras as the accomplished masters have done. Many would rather watch TV all day and sleep in, squandering their time on meaningless trivialities, unwilling to simply sit down and recite mantras. As a result, after a lifetime of busyness, when they suddenly collapse one day and look back on their lives, they may find they have accumulated no virtuous roots whatsoever—only a body and mind burdened with negative karma.

By contrast, in pure places for Buddhist study and practice like Larung Gar, most people are diligently practicing, which is truly cause for rejoicing. When I see how diligent and dedicated some of our dharma friends are in their practice, I feel truly humbled and inspired to deepen my own efforts.

This reminds me of the dream of a princess during Buddha Kashyapa’s time: A monkey sat on the dharma throne giving teachings, while many lions sat listening below. When the princess asked Buddha Kashyapa what this signified, he explained: “In the final period of Buddha Shakyamuni’s teachings, some teachers on the

dharma throne will have no inner or outer merit whatsoever, just like the monkey; while the listeners will possess all qualities, like snow mountain lions.” Indeed, the time prophesied by the Buddha has arrived. Around me there are many practitioners who practice excellently day and night, and this is truly admirable.

However, even in the ocean there are inevitably creatures both noble and base. Sometimes I also discover some who are worse than me. Seeing their behavior, I can’t help but sigh: “Alas, why did these people become ordained?” “Why do these lay practitioners stay at the academy? They cannot obtain worldly fame or profit here. What’s the point of listening to tape recorders and radios all day, singing songs, and chatting about the past?” So, speaking objectively and fairly, even in such a pure dharma center there are a very small number of people whose practice is poor.

Of course, this is also normal. Even in the presence of Buddha Shakyamuni himself, five hundred bhikshus disrobed. So no matter where in the world, it’s impossible not to have such cases—nothing can be completely pure. Some people always think there won’t be afflictions in monasteries, and once they hear something, they start exclaiming in shock: “Ah! How could such things happen in a monastery?” This is understandable, as they may not be familiar with the history of Buddhism and the specific context of individual

cases. However, for us as practitioners, we should prioritize practice and devote our energy to what is genuinely meaningful, rather than getting caught up in trivial, fruitless concerns.

Nowadays, most lay practitioners in cities are doing quite well. While facing many pressures from family, work, and other areas, they still make time to study and practice the dharma, which is truly not easy. But there are also some who don't value the dharma, always finding excuses and treating attending teachings as just another worldly activity. Life is very short—I hope you will do things of value, such as listening to, contemplation of, and meditation on the dharma—practices that benefit yourselves—or helping sentient beings as much as possible.

Meaningful things must be done; as for meaningless things, I won't say never do them at all, but do them as little as possible. Some people's habitual tendencies are too strong—right after listening to a teaching, they can suppress their afflictions for a day or two, but because there are many conditions around them that foster negative habits, while the supportive conditions for cultivating virtue and for listening, contemplation, and meditation are few, the results of their practice often fall short of expectations. This is something you should take to heart!

GURU RINPOCHE'S PLEDGES TO COME TO US

Establish a Close Connection with Guru Rinpoche

As it is said in the treasure text discovered by Ngari Rigdzin called *The Outer Sadhana of the Vidyadhara That Embodies the Eight Herukas*,

An all-sufficing sovereign is this prayer in seven lines.

**By the power of aspiration, you will see the Guru's
face directly.**

For seven days or twenty-one recite this prayer.

**Accomplishments and blessings will rain down on
you;**

From every obstacle, you will be freed.

Ngari Rigdzin said in his treasure text that the Seven-Line Prayer is like a king among humans—it is the sovereign of all ritual practices. Through the power of Guru Rinpoche's past aspirations, anyone

who prays with genuine devotion will certainly behold Guru Rinpoche directly. The ideal approach is to focus on reciting this prayer for seven or twenty-one days. If one does so, all accomplishments will naturally descend, and all obstacles will naturally be dispelled. In many Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, the Seven-Line Prayer is recited before any deity practice.

I once visited a monastery in Rongzhag where every autumn they dedicated seven days to Guru Rinpoche practice. All the laypeople would join the monastery's ordained sangha to continuously recite the Seven-Line Prayer from morning until night. Many monasteries and individuals throughout Tibetan regions do the same, often dedicating seven or twenty-one days specifically to this practice of Guru Rinpoche.

In any deity practice, it's best to begin by establishing a connection with the deity. This can also be seen in the practice of Chojé Yidzhin Norbu—whether he was practicing Manjushri or Avalokiteshvara, he would initially focus on the practice of that deity for a period of time, and then continuously recite a certain number of that deity's mantra. Similarly, if this is your first time engaging in the practice of Guru Rinpoche, it's best to first do a seven-day retreat, resolving to recite a certain number of the Seven-Line Prayer or the Vajra Guru mantra. After that, you can recite them as you wish in daily life.

Just as in everyday life, when you want to get to know someone you might first invite them for a meal to cultivate the relationship; once you have become friends, whenever something comes up you can simply give them a call. So when you encounter obstacles, don't forget to "call" Guru Rinpoche!

A few days ago, some dharma friends mentioned that when riots broke out in a certain city last year, their entire family fervently recited the Seven-Line Prayer. This is exactly the right response. Alternatively, one can also recite "Lama Khyen" or "Guru Rinpoche Khyen" to invoke Guru Rinpoche's protection. In Tibetan regions, elderly people and practitioners of the past would immediately pray to Guru Rinpoche even when facing the slightest danger—for instance, when encountering wolves while herding yaks, they would immediately call out: "Guru Rinpoche Khyen!" If you can maintain this practice habitually over a long period, when the moment of death arrives, Guru Rinpoche and Buddha Amitabha will certainly come to guide and assist you.

And Guru Rinpoche himself promised in his own words:

**If with yearning melody you sing these seven lines,
Invoking me intensely to the skull-drum's beat,**

**From Ngayab's glorious mountain, I will bless you, I
of Orgyen,
Like a mother helpless to resist
Her darling baby's tears.
This I pledge or else I'll go to hell!**

If you recite the Seven-Line Prayer in a melodious tune and fervently supplicate while shaking a hand drum, Guru Rinpoche will come to you from the land of the rakshasas. Just as a mother cannot bear to abandon a child who cries out to her, so too—because of the firm vows he made long ago—Guru Rinpoche will certainly appear. Even if you have no hand drum or ritual instrument, so long as you with palms joined in heartfelt devotion, Guru Rinpoche will likewise appear before you, bestow blessings upon your body, speech, and mind, and dispel all obstacles and adverse conditions, whether from humans or nonhumans. I believe many of you already have confidence in these vajra words of Guru Rinpoche.

Guru Rinpoche Comes on the Tenth Day of Each Tibetan Month

**In the uncataloged text *The Guru as the Gathering of Secrets*,
Guru Rinpoche says,**

**Upon that day of days,
The tenth day of the monkey month, the monkey year,
And all the tenth days of the moon—such times of
power as these,
Sending emanations, I will fill the world,
Supreme and common siddhis richly to bestow.
If you spend your life accomplishing the Teacher,
When the time of dissolution comes,
You'll melt into the heart of me the Orgyen Guru.**

These words carry profound significance. The tenth day of the monkey month in a monkey year is the day on which Guru Rinpoche departed Tibet for the land of the rakshasas. This year is the Year of the Earth Ox (2009), with seven years remaining until the next monkey year. Before Lama Yidzhin Norbu entered parinirvana, he had planned to hold a special dharma gathering the following year—a monkey year—as our Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy was established on the tenth day of the monkey month in 1980, also a monkey year. Throughout Tibetan regions, the tenth day of the monkey month in a monkey year holds exceptional importance. When Guru Rinpoche departed, he assured all the ministers and people: “Whenever this day arrives, I will surely return to the human realm and bestow blessings upon all.”

Moreover, the tenth day of every month is also considered the “day of days.” According to the biographies of Guru Rinpoche, on the tenth day of each month in the Tibetan calendar—regardless of which month—Guru Rinpoche manifested different deeds to benefit beings and subdue demons and spirits:

On the tenth day of the first month, Guru Rinpoche renounced his throne and went to the Cool Grove Charnel Ground, where he subdued countless dakinis, ghosts, and spirits, and turned the wheel of dharma. Thus, the tenth day of the first month is a special day.

On the tenth day of the second month, Guru Rinpoche was ordained in the presence of Prabhahasti. Some accounts also state he was ordained by Ananda.

On the tenth day of the third month, in the kingdom of Zahor, the king tried to burn Guru Rinpoche alive. But Guru Rinpoche magically transformed the pyre into a lake. Thus, the tenth day of the third month marks the demonstration of Guru Rinpoche’s supernatural powers.

On the tenth day of the fourth month, in the kingdom of Oddiyana, Guru Rinpoche and his consort Mandarava were cast onto a blazing pyre and burned for seven days and nights. Miraculously,

they emerge unharmed, manifested various miraculous powers, and subjugated demonic beings. Thereafter, the king of Oddiyana appointed Guru Rinpoche as royal preceptor.

On the tenth day of the fifth month, Guru Rinpoche subdued five hundred non-Buddhist panditas and proclaimed the lion's roar of the dharma.

On the tenth day of the sixth month, Guru Rinpoche was born at Lake Dhanakosha.

On the tenth day of the seventh month, in the land of Tamradvipa (Copper Island), the king, misled by the tirthikas' false doctrines, sealed Guru Rinpoche in a copper pot and cast him into the river. In a miraculous display, Guru Rinpoche instantly soared into the sky and reversed the river's flow, nearly destroying the malicious king's entire palace. Terrified, the king begged forgiveness and took refuge in him.

On the tenth day of the eighth month, the tirthikas offered Guru Rinpoche poisoned food, but he was not harmed in the slightest; instead, his whole being shone with ever-growing splendor.

On the tenth day of the ninth month, in the Yangleshö Cave in Nepal, he subdued many demons and spirits of Tibet and Nepal in the form of Vajrakumara and attained the mahamudra vidyadhara.

On the tenth day of the tenth month, Guru Rinpoche arrived in Tibet. After subduing the local spirits, he laid the foundation for the spread of Buddhism and, from that time onward, propagated the Buddhadharma throughout the land.

On the tenth day of the eleventh month, beginning from Samye, he concealed countless terma treasures across Tibet, subdued numerous spirits and bound them by oath to serve as terma guardians, and entrusted them with the “keys” to the treasures.

On the tenth day of the twelfth month, at Gungtang in Mangyul, he bade farewell to everyone and departed for the land of the rakshasas, leaving many teachings for the world—especially this promise: “On the tenth day of every month, I will come to the human world; as long as you call upon me, I will swiftly bestow blessings.”

For this reason, in many monasteries across Tibetan regions, there is a tsok offering on the tenth day of every month, dedicated to the practice of Guru Rinpoche. When I was young, I often heard the elders say, “Today is the tenth day—recite Guru Rinpoche’s mantra.” I don’t know whether the younger generation still maintains this tradition. In any case, the tenth day holds special significance. Please remember to remind yourselves that, wherever you are, you should make a tsok offering that day, and especially recite the Seven-Line

Prayer and the Vajra Guru mantra. For on every tenth day, Guru Rinpoche manifests tens of millions of emanations in Jambudvīpa to benefit beings—this is his promise.

Chojé Yidzhin Norbu often said: “The tenth day of the monkey month in a monkey year is especially crucial. On this day, we must perform a great tsok offering and hold large-scale Buddhist ceremonies. The tenth day of every month is also important; do your best to make tsok offering and supplicate Guru Padmasambhava. If you want to dispel obstacles, fulfill your wishes, and seek liberation, then by visualizing and praying to Guru Rinpoche, he will certainly bestow both common and uncommon siddhis.”

Whoever you may be, if you engage in Guru Rinpoche practice throughout your life, at death you will surely dissolve into his heart. Since Guru Rinpoche and Buddha Amitabha are indivisible—of one taste and one essence—there is no difference between engaging in Guru Rinpoche practice and engaging in Amitabha practice. Given such an excellent practice as the Seven-Line Prayer, we should certainly embrace it; to neglect it would be a great pity.

Guru Rinpoche Will Surely Come

The Secret Guide to Accomplishing the Guru, it is said,

When in the generation stage
Of whichever sadhana,
You clearly meditate,
There I am before you.
When you make the mandala
And set out tormas and the substances of offering,
Do not doubt it; I will come to you.

The same text also says,

Meditate on Padmasambhava,
Embodied in a form of light and not of the flesh,
And have great confidence.

And,

I shall come, unable to resist,
When with devotion and strong, fervent prayers
You pray to me, the Lotus-Born of Orgyen.
I will come to you.

When we visualize and supplicate Guru Rinpoche with sincere devotion, he will be present before us. If we prepare the mandala, set out offerings and tormas before his image, and pray wholeheartedly,

he will surely appear. Guru Rinpoche is not a body of flesh, but a body of light; therefore, by meditating on his form, we continually receive his blessings and should arouse divine pride. As Guru Rinpoche himself said, “Whoever prays to me with strong faith, I will certainly appear before them.”

Guru Rinpoche spoke in this way because he truly has that capacity. In ancient China, too, some great masters deliberately revealed signs of their realization in order to shatter beings’ pride. For example, there was Fu Dashi, who—together with Bodhidharma and Chan Master Zhigong—was known as one of the “Three Great Masters of the Liang Dynasty.” He styled himself “the Great Master of Good Wisdom Who Will Attain Liberation beneath the Twin Sala Trees,” and in some respects his practice and accomplishments were similar to Guru Rinpoche’s. Seeing that many people, whether illiterate or simply too busy, lacked the opportunity to read through the entire Chinese Tripitaka, he invented the “revolving scripture cabinet,” large prayer wheels containing the Tripitaka, which he introduced in many places, benefiting countless beings. This was a remarkable deed.

Who was this master, really? At first, he was a fisherman, but his fishing method was quite unusual: whenever he caught fish, he would lower the fish basket back into the water and say to them,

“May those who wish to go, go; may those who wish to stay, stay.” Thus, the fish with no karmic connection to him would swim away, while those with connections would remain.

Once, while he was fishing, an eminent Indian monk approached him and said, “You and I once made vows before Buddha Vipashyin to liberate beings together. Even now, your robe and bowl remain in Tusita Heaven—when will you return?” Hearing this, he stared blankly, not knowing how to respond. The Indian monk then had him look at his reflection in the water; as he looked, he saw above his head a jeweled canopy, a halo, and other auspicious signs, and suddenly awakened to his former connection. He cast aside his fishing gear, built a thatched hermitage beneath the twin trees, and from then on practiced diligently.

Seven years later, one day while in deep meditation he saw Buddha Shakyamuni, Buddha Dipankara, and Buddha Golden Grain radiate light that merged into him, and thus he received their blessings. Later, he even sold his wife and held a great, open “unobstructed” dharma assembly; many of his activities were very similar to those of tantric adepts in Tibetan regions. It is recorded that once he wore a Confucian scholar’s shoes, a Han Chinese monk’s robe, and a Daoist crown when entering the palace to pay respects to Emperor

Wu of Liang. Nan Huaijin commented that this represented the characteristics of Chinese Chan: Confucian conduct as the foundation, Daoist learning as the guiding principle, and the Buddhadharma as the center. Some people who have little understanding of Vajrayana may, when they hear Guru Rinpoche describe himself as “such-and-such an accomplished master,” find it astonishing and hard to accept. Yet great masters of the Han Chinese Buddhist tradition likewise displayed such extraordinary conduct.

Similarly, Master Shaokang, the Fifth Patriarch of the Pure Land tradition, did not speak after he was born. At age seven, he went with his mother to a temple to bow to the Buddha. When his mother asked, “Who is this?” he suddenly opened his mouth and said, “Buddha Shakyamuni.” His parents, overjoyed and moved, offered him to the sangha to be ordained. Later he widely propagated the Pure Land teachings. Whenever he mounted the dharma throne and loudly recited Buddha Amitabha’s name, with a single recitation an emanation buddha would emerge from his mouth; with ten recitations, ten emanation buddhas would appear, surging forth in an unbroken string like a strand of prayer beads.

There was also Chan Master Zhigong. When a painter tried to make his portrait, in that very moment he manifested the Twelve-faced

Avalokiteshvara—of exquisitely beautiful form, radiating loving-kindness and compassion—so that Zhang Sengyao, famed as the “foremost painter of Buddhist images,” was unable to set brush to silk. In Tibetan Buddhist history, great masters such as Zurcungpa and Zurpoche have also appeared in the form of Heruka. There are many such phenomena, and everyone should understand them in a broad and open way.

We’ll stop here for today. I had wanted to say more, but time’s up—there’s really no way around it!

Lecture Six

October 29th, 2009

Through our study of the Seven-Line Prayer this time, many of you have now come to understand its tremendous benefits on the outer, inner, and secret levels. From now on, whenever circumstances allow, I encourage you to recite it often—and especially, to recite it with faith.

Faith, wisdom, and compassion are essential on the spiritual path. For a genuine Buddhist, faith is fundamental. If one has faith in the guru, the Three Jewels, and the Four Noble Truths, then everything in this life and in future lives will naturally be fulfilled as wished, without the slightest difficulty. Conversely, if one lacks faith, then even if outwardly one appears to possess wisdom, eloquence, ability, and skill, the foundation beneath all these qualities is lost.

Fortunately, faith and devotion can be cultivated through our dharma practice. Some people, due to the merit of previous lives, are born with steadfast faith in the virtue and very few erroneous or discursive thoughts. Others, though endowed with keen intelligence, are trapped in endless discriminative, judgmental thoughts, constantly finding fault—this is wrong, that is unreasonable. Whatever the eyes see, the ears hear, or the body encounters, they perceive only distortion and ugliness. Such a mindset is a great obstacle to practice. Therefore, we should train in pure perception—especially when we hear of the qualities of the guru and the Three Jewels, we

should give rise to joy and reverence. This is something our lineage masters have emphasized again and again.

FAITH AND RELIANCE ON GURU RINPOCHE

Let us now continue our discussion of Guru Rinpoche's qualities. In the previous lecture, we studied the verses that Mipham Rinpoche quotes from *The Secret Guide to Accomplishing the Guru*. Since we did not complete our explanation last time, we will pick up where we left off today:

And,

Again and yet again pray thus to me:

"In joy and sorrow, fortune and adversity,

In death, in life, in this world and the next,

In every circumstance both now and ultimate,

In good or ill you are my hope, my knowing refuge.

No other hope is there for me.

O Orgyen Guru, you who know, I trust in you."

Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Therefore, in our daily lives—whether we encounter happiness

or suffering, auspicious or inauspicious circumstances, and even in the crucial matter of liberation from birth and death and the attainment of both temporary benefit and ultimate happiness—we should in every situation supplicate Guru Rinpoche and rely on him for guidance and realization. Each person should keep this conviction in the heart: “I entrust everything to you; I rely on you completely. Apart from you, I have no other refuge.” Some take refuge in forest groves, some in non-Buddhist paths, some in people of rank and power; but these are only temporary supports. The supreme and ultimate refuge is you alone—Guru Rinpoche, who embodies all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

We must cultivate an especially devout and single-pointed faith in Guru Rinpoche, reflecting: “Guru Rinpoche, you are omniscient; you know all things. Guru Rinpoche, you know me. Please bestow your blessings upon me.” By contemplating and praying in this way, again and again, we will surely accomplish the realization of the guru.

Khenpo Ngakchung’s Practicing of Guru Yoga

The reason many people’s practice does not progress these days is that the amount is too small, the quality is weak, and the diligence is lacking. After doing a hundred or two hundred thousand, or

even one or two million, recitations of the mantra, they feel it is already an enormous amount—but it is not enough. In fact, just for the practice of guru yoga alone, according to the tradition of Jigme Lingpa, one needs to complete ten million recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra. When many people hear this, they are stunned: “What, ten million! That’s impossible!”

But consider the life of Khenpo Ngakchung: His guru Nyoshul Lungtok told him, “By ordinary standards, for the outer supplication one needs only to complete ten million recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra, but this time you must complete thirty million.” Khenpo Ngakchung did not complain; he fulfilled the requirement, maintaining both quality and quantity. During the first ten million recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra, after every hundred recitations he would alternately recite each of the two prayers—the prayer of invoking accomplishments and the prayer of bestowing accomplishments—once. During the subsequent twenty million recitations, he would instead alternate the two prayers after every one thousand recitations, reciting each of them once. In this way, he completed the practice.

I remember that during this period of mantra recitation, Khenpo Ngakchung once went to visit his guru Nyoshul Lungtok and happened to find him, as usual, circumambulating his retreat hut

twenty-five times after lunch (Similarly, Master Benhuan also had the habit of circumambulating the Buddha hall after meals). So Khenpo Ngakchung joined his guru in circumambulating. Nyoshul Lungtok wore a wolf-skin waist wrap with ties that hung down like the laces of Tibetan boots. Whenever Nyoshul Lungtok went to relieve himself, he would always say, “Give my tail a pull,” but that day he did not say it. So Khenpo Ngakchung asked, “Shall I pull your tail?” Nyoshul Lungtok paused and said, “Oh, I forgot—well then, give it a pull.” Then, as if something had just come to him, he added, “That’s just a bad habitual phrase of mine; even if you imitate me in saying it, I can’t blame you. However, generally speaking, a disciple should regard the guru as the dharmakaya buddha, and not see him as merely an ordinary physical body. As the *Diamond Sutra* says:

*Who sees me by form,
Who seeks me in sound
Perverted are his footsteps upon the way;
For he cannot perceive the Tathagata.*

This verse from the sutra shows that a disciple must see the guru as dharmakaya, not as sambhogakaya or nirmanakaya; otherwise,

such impure perceptions will become an obstacle to supreme accomplishment.”

Nyoshul Lungtok required Khenpo Ngakchung to recite thirty million recitations of the Vajra Guru mantra, complete the five hundred thousand preliminary practices, and also memorize *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*. In fact, Khenpo Ngakchung was the living incarnation of Vimalamitra; the visions he experienced, day and night, were entirely the wondrous display of wisdom. Even so, he remained completely down-to-earth and practiced exactly as instructed, always training as an ordinary person. In this way, he guided numberless beings.

Follow the Sequence: Prioritize Guru Yoga

From time to time, we practitioners today meet people who proclaim, “I have supernormal powers and higher realization—I don’t need to do the preliminaries or recite mantras.” I find it hard to accept such claims. Consider the great masters of the past—whether from Chinese Chan or Vajrayana. The greater their realization, the more they emphasized virtuous conduct at the conventional level: living in accord with the law of cause and effect and diligently reciting mantras.

In light of this, it is wonderful to see that many dharma practitioners are now following a more systematic approach to their practice. This is something we should rejoice in. We should proceed one step at a time; in particular, guru yoga is especially important.

In *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, one is required to recite the Vajra Guru mantra ten million times—which is an extraordinarily large number for those of us living busy, modern lives. However, if you want your mind stream to truly connect with the guru, you can't just say out loud: "Guru, am I connected with you? I feel like we're very connected. When I saw you, I felt you were extraordinarily compassionate. But these past few days, my faith seems to have declined." Such "connection" is only a temporary conceptual impression; it may stem from virtuous affinities from past lives, or from past adversarial ties, leading to different feelings upon meeting. But this is not what matters most.

What's truly important is to pray continually in actual practice, entrusting everything to Guru Rinpoche and to the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Whether you are happy or suffering, whether your life is long or short—entrust everything to Guru Rinpoche and to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who know, guide, and arrange all. As some practitioners often say: "Guru, whatever you say, I'll do it!" This is the kind of faith we should cultivate. If

you can do this, your mind stream will definitely connect with the dharma and with the realization of the noble ones.

Speaking personally, although I don't have a high level of realization, years of study have taught me that in this degenerate age, profound practices such as the guru yoga of Guru Padmasambhava are worthy of long-term commitment for everyone. If you can do this, no matter what obstacles or hindrances you encounter, your virtuous intention won't be interrupted. Otherwise, having some experiences for a day or two and being especially diligent in practice—generating this kind of faith isn't difficult, but maintaining it long-term and persevering to the end isn't so easy. Therefore, let us all constantly pray to Guru Rinpoche with this profound practice of the Seven-Line Prayer!

THE PRACTICE THAT ACCOMPLISHES ALL

And,

**Attaining me, all other buddhas you attain;
All other buddhas do you see in seeing me,
For I am the embodiment of all the Sugatas.**

If we can accomplish Guru Rinpoche through guru yoga, then we do not need to pursue a separate practice for each buddha: by accomplishing him, we accomplish them all. If we behold Guru Rinpoche directly, we have beheld all the noble ones. Why? Because Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of all the sugatas.

When Dudjom Lingpa was twelve years old, he had a direct vision of Guru Rinpoche. From then on, many termas and visionary experiences naturally manifested. According to the biography of Omniscient Longchenpa, once he saw Guru Rinpoche and journeyed to a pure land of dakinis, where he received the oral transmission of the *Khandro Nyingtig*, *The Heart Essence of the Dakinis*, directly from

the dakinis. Later, at age twenty-eight, while giving teachings, he again saw Guru Rinpoche with his consort Yeshe Tsogyal and received from them the empowerment of the *Khandro Nyingtig*. Guru Rinpoche bestowed upon him the name Drimé Özer (Stainless Ray of Light), and Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal gave him the name Dorje Ziji Tsal (Vajra of Dynamic Brilliance).

Of course, it would be hard for ordinary people like us to compare ourselves with such masters. Still, we should understand this: those whose dharma activities—spreading the Buddhadharma and benefiting beings—have become truly vast have received blessings, to varying degrees, from the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and above all from Guru Rinpoche. When blessings are present, benefiting beings happens naturally.

Otherwise, even if we long to help others—and even if we speak until our voices grow hoarse—if our mind stream is like dry, dead wood, untouched by the nectar of blessings, it will be difficult to bring our aspirations to completion. Therefore, if we wish to share the dharma and benefit sentient beings, we must first establish understanding of the teachings and gain real experience through practice. Only then can we genuinely inspire, guide, and bless others.

And,

**With those who have devoted hearts I stay;
From them I'm never separate.**

For disciples whose faith and devotion are sincere and pure, Guru Rinpoche is never separate—he has not “gone away” to the land of the rakshasas. As long as we constantly pray to him, as surely as a person who cannot see relies on someone with clear sight, Guru Rinpoche will unfailingly grant comfort and blessings, dispelling our obstacles on the path from every side.

And,

**As far as space itself extends,
So living beings there are found;
As far as karma and defilements last,
Thus swift are my activities.**

Space is boundless. Therefore, the beings who live within space are countless, and the karma and afflictions that bind them are also without limit. In this immeasurable expanse of time and space, Guru Rinpoche’s blessings and enlightened activity—his caring for and benefiting beings—become ever more swift and powerful. As

mentioned earlier, the activity of buddhas and bodhisattvas appears differently in times when the true dharma flourishes and in times of decline. As the world grows more confused and moves deeper into degenerate times, Guru Rinpoche's activity and blessings shine even more brightly—like the sun—illuminating the hearts of beings. Therefore, in this age of the five degenerations, it is especially important that we pray to Guru Rinpoche, our sole protector.

These days, many practitioners do not have strong faith in Guru Rinpoche or in Vajrayana. I would not claim with absolute certainty that such practice cannot succeed, but it will be much more difficult. By contrast, some people—though not outstanding in intelligence, ability, or view—have had a rare faith in Guru Rinpoche since childhood. This kind of faith is not easy to find, and by relying on it their practice will surely be accomplished. Lama Yidzhin Norbu often said in his dharma teachings that in the degenerate age, praying to Guru Rinpoche is indeed especially important. Therefore, everyone should regularly recite the Seven-Line Prayer. As long as you have faith, you will certainly receive blessings.

Still, many of us may feel we have not yet accumulated enough recitations. Consider Ösel, Mipham Rinpoche's attendant: he recited the Seven-Line Prayer 1.3 million times. This is not even the Vajra Guru mantra, so 1.3 million is already an impressive number.

It shows how extraordinary the faith of practitioners in the past could be—so different from our own era, when distraction comes so easily.

The Importance of Internalizing the Dharma

In fact, we need the Buddhadharma even more nowadays. Otherwise, amid the unrelenting pressures of modern life, our minds can hardly find ease or freedom. In ancient times, even if people didn't live in monasteries or other quiet places, their living environment was relatively peaceful, and their minds weren't so restless. But now, facing constant stimulation from external sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, except for a very few practitioners with concentration, most people find it hard to settle their minds. At such times, without the blessings of buddhas and bodhisattvas and one's own stable faith, it's truly not easy for practice to have a good beginning and end!

Therefore, it is important that we truly internalize the Buddhist teachings in our minds. Getting a refuge certificate is not difficult, and shaving one's head and putting on monastic robes takes only a few minutes. Some people even ordain for the sake of appearances—"I'm a monastic now, guru—do I look good?" Whether it looks good is beside the point. What matters most is that the mind

come into accord with the dharma: genuinely giving rise to a sense of the impermanence of human life, renunciation, and bodhicitta, and even the higher Vajrayana realizations such as Dzogchen.

Of course, this can't be accomplished in a day or two. Except for very few people of exceptionally sharp faculties who can awaken immediately with just one pointing-out instruction—this has occurred in both Chan and tantric traditions—however, in today's degenerate age, such phenomena are quite rare. Still, the tantric tradition is relatively better off. Many people continue to practice the teachings of the tantra and sadhana sections, and there are quite a few practitioners doing retreat practice near monasteries. Of course, there are also keen practitioners within Chan Buddhism.

Buddhism and Secularization: How Should We Respond?

In Chan, however, some people have made “Chan” increasingly worldly, which seems somewhat contrary to the ancient ideal of seeing one's nature and becoming enlightened. The other day I watched a DVD titled “China's Profound Chan.” There was a monk on the cover, and I thought he would teach well, so I wanted to learn something genuine about Chan. But when I put it in my computer, it turned out to be about how to sell tea! I thought, “Never mind,

never mind, I already have plenty of Pu'er tea without buying any," and stopped watching.

Speaking of Chan, although it can be explained through different cultures, what is its essential core? It's recognizing the nature of mind. The teachings on recognizing the nature of mind are what we most seek and need. As for other things—like how to trade stocks, sell things, or blend tea—we really don't need Buddhist concepts for any of that; worldly people are clever enough in these areas. Americans have their own tea culture; Japanese have their own tea traditions.

So I feel that what's most fundamental is to help people understand the Buddhist teachings. The countless beings in this world don't understand the nature of mind, nor do they comprehend the inconceivable subtle teachings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Therefore, those who have awakened, or who haven't awakened but have deep conviction in the Buddhadharma, while enjoying the wonderful taste of the dharma, should pass it on to generation after generation. This is also continuing the wisdom-life of the dharma.

In short, if Buddhism becomes too secularized, it won't bring much benefit. Although the Buddha taught about "complying with sentient beings," it doesn't mean simply pandering to their preferences. When Chojé Yidzhin Norbu taught the *Song of Victory*, he said: "Compliance does not mean being without principles—when others generate attachment you also go along, when they generate anger you also go along—that is not the meaning." We should consider whether it is meaningful to act in accordance with people's wishes. If it's meaningful, we can temporarily accord with them. But even so, when the time is right, we should turn their minds toward the dharma—this is where the meaning of compliance lies.

MEDITATING ON THE GURU

It is written in the Notes on the Practice of the Guru as the Gathering of Secrets,

**If you wish for swift completion of the two accumulations,
Attainment of the quintessential goal,
Then—better than the tantras and their commentaries
Of the resultant Vajra Vehicle of Secret Mantra—
Meditate upon the Guru!**

Within Secret Mantra (the Resultant Vajra Vehicle), there is a vast corpus of teachings in the tantra section and the sadhana section. Practicing them can certainly bring accomplishment. Yet if we want to complete the two accumulations of merit and wisdom more swiftly, and to realize the ultimate essence of all phenomena, then one point is indispensable: guru yoga, the practice of the guru—especially the guru yoga of Guru Padmasambhava. In terms of speed, depth, and importance, it surpasses every other practice.

We must practice the guru yoga in which we regard Padmasambhava as our root guru. Many people hope to gain realization through

Vajrayana, yet if we set aside guru yoga and look for some other method, it will be very difficult to succeed. The great masters of the Sakya, Gelug, Nyingma, and other traditions taught this repeatedly: when the guru and the deity appear together, they would always request blessings from the guru, recognizing the guru as the true buddha. If we practice the guru yoga of Guru Rinpoche with that kind of faith, accomplishment will surely come.

Likewise the *Nectar-Spring Tantra* declares,

**Compared with meditation on a hundred thousand
deities,**

Meditation on the one and only Guru is supreme.

Meditating on a hundred thousand deities such as Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri brings immeasurable merit. But if we wish to accomplish realization in a short time, we should rely on guru yoga. It is superior to other practices—including the generation and completion stages—when it comes to swiftly bringing realization forth. Therefore, guru yoga is especially important, and in particular the guru yoga of Padmasambhava, which can lead us quickly to enlightenment. Even if we do not attain enlightenment in this very life, it brings tremendous benefit to our present life and to the moment of our death.

In the biography of Lala Sonam Chödrup, it is recorded that as he was neared parinirvana, he said to his attendant, Aso: “Don’t sit here—Guru Rinpoche has arrived.” The attendant did not dare remain close by and stepped aside to look from a distance. He saw the master radiant with a smile, resting in the state in which his own mind and Guru Rinpoche were indivisible. Then, in the lion’s sleeping posture, he passed away peacefully.

Throughout his life, the main deities he practiced were Guru Rinpoche and Manjushri, and most of the pith instructions he gave his disciples were Guru Rinpoche’s essential teachings. When we practice guru yoga, we too should train in settling into the state where Guru Rinpoche and our own mind are inseparable. This is crucial, and it is indeed something explained in the tantric teachings. So if you are wondering whether what we are discussing “counts” as Vajrayana—yes, it does.

Recently, influenza A (H1N1) has been going around, so I encourage everyone to recite the Vajra Armor Mantra (Dorje Gotrab).²¹ People’s temperaments differ: some become very afraid, while others seem indifferent. But as practitioners, we should not be overwhelmed by fear of death. If intense fear arises, it simply shows that our practice has not yet matured—and that is something we can work with. We should cultivate the spirit of not fearing death. If you do happen

to fall ill, observe carefully what it feels like, and watch how your mind responds. In that way, you will see clearly where your practice truly stands.

INVOKING GURU RINPOCHE ON THE TENTH DAY

And the *Invocation for the Tenth Day*, a treasure text of Ratna Lingpa, contains these words of Guru Rinpoche:

**Through me the Lotus-Born—
And through my virtuous thought for others' good—
Treasure-finders, emanations, will appear at different
times
And will bring forth deep treasures...**

The invocations for the tenth day appear in many terma texts revealed by various tertons. At our Domang Monastery, the great terton Dorje Dechen Lingpa left a very large volume of such invocations; its contents are especially excellent and profound. Every year on the tenth day of the fifth Tibetan month, we would take it out, have all the monastics perform the vajra dance, and spend three or four days reciting and practicing this supplication.

Khenpo's Family Safeguarded the Last Remaining Terma of Dorje Dechen Lingpa

I remember the 1970s, before religious freedom returned. The chant leader from Domang Monastery lived next door to my family. He had a long, thick, loose-leaf Tibetan scripture of Dorje Dechen Lingpa's *Tenth Day Invocation*. Since there were monks in his household, officials frequently came to search, so he was particularly frightened. He asked us to hide this text because at that time there were no monks in my family, and the government was less suspicious of us. The old monk said, "Now our monastery has only this one copy left. If this were destroyed, even if we later had the opportunity, we wouldn't have been able to hold the Tenth Day Ceremony."

As a nomadic family, we often had to move—in summer and winter alike, constantly relocating our tents. My younger brother and I were still small then, and whenever we arrived at a new place, the first thing we had to do was find a mountain cave or rock cave to carefully wrap and hide the text. In this way, we hid the text for six or seven years, until religious freedom was restored and we could return it to the old monk. It turned out this was indeed the only remaining copy of Dorje Dechen Lingpa's *Tenth Day Invocation*—all other copies had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

The monastery and local people all thought the old monk was remarkable, not knowing that we had helped to protect it. Sometimes when we heard others praising him, my parents would privately say a few words: “For all these years, we were the ones who worked so hard to keep it safe. Ah well, never mind, never mind!”

Unlocking Terma: An Introduction to Guru Rinpoche’s Hidden Teachings

Regarding terma teachings, in addition to their extremely profound meaning—which sets them apart from writings produced by the conceptual minds of scholars—they are also characterized by concise language, beautiful prose, and clear structure. These unique qualities are so apparent that, when reading such texts, one can immediately sense how different they are from ordinary compositions. Because of these qualities, people often describe an especially well-written ritual text as “like a terma.”

In Tibetan regions, there are indeed many tertons, because the essence of Guru Rinpoche’s teachings consists primarily of terma teachings. Terma is an especially important method of preserving scriptures—even if wars break out in the world or disasters of earth, water, fire, and wind occur, even if the entire planet is destroyed,

terma teachings cannot be destroyed. This is because Guru Rinpoche, through the power of his aspirations, entrusted these terma teachings to various local earth spirits, or concealed them within the Buddha-nature wisdom of his enlightened disciples, sealing them with his inconceivable and indestructible blessings.

For ordinary beings, as they pass through the cycles of birth and death, their discursive thoughts are constantly changing, and their memories undergo alteration. However, termas are hidden within the wisdom of the dharmadhatu, where appearance and emptiness are non-dual. This wisdom can manifest at any time through the tertön's awakened state, and when it does, it always appears in the form of dakini script or symbolic script.

In the past, Lama Yidzhin Norbu often kept many dakini scripts from termas. We have seen these scripts ourselves; at times, they resembled ancient oracle-bone characters, as if inscribed on the rough surface of tree bark—very small, with just one or two characters. These one or two characters are in fact merely informational markers—like a cipher—that can unlock the tertön's hidden treasury of memory. Some people wonder: "How could a small treasure casket hold such a large set of volumes? How could one or two pieces of dakini script manifest so many terma teachings?" In reality, these

terma items are only prompts; through them, the full contents of the terma will appear in the tertön's wisdom mind.

Lama Yidzhin Norbu also told us that if the circumstances for a terma's emergence have ripened, the tertön must write it down; otherwise they will be continually disturbed—today it appears, tomorrow it appears, and the next day it appears again—with the terma recurring in the mind. Once it is committed to writing, however, all such disturbances immediately cease.

Not long ago, an old lama told me that his own teacher had been Dorje Dechen Lingpa's attendant and knew something of the work of revealing terma. Sometimes, in the dead of night, Dechen Lingpa would receive a sign, immediately rouse the attendants, tell them where they needed to go, and then they would cross mountain after mountain, traveling through the night. This happened often, so the attendants were always on standby; even when they slept, they kept their belts on, ready at any moment to follow the master to reveal a terma.

On one occasion, Dechen Lingpa said to an attendant, whose name I can't remember, "We're about to reveal a terma—come with me at once!" They hurried on without stopping through the night and only reached their destination the next morning—a grove on a

mountaintop. On the way, the tertön told the attendant, “Today it is not I who will reveal the terma—it is you!” The attendant was puzzled: “I’m just an ordinary person—how could I possibly reveal a terma?” But when they arrived at the site, the location of the terma naturally came to his mind, and he was able to reveal it. Thus, among Dechen Lingpa’s terma revelations, there were also some teachings revealed by his disciples. In history, there are countless such marvelous stories.

Additionally, terma teachings have several distinctive qualities: their lineage remains unbroken and cannot be harmed by non-Buddhist influences; their source is pure, unaffected by worldly discriminating thoughts; they possess extremely profound wisdom; and after being revealed, their blessings work particularly swiftly for countless beings. Just as many beings attained realization when the Buddha first turned the wheel of dharma, when termas are revealed, they can also enable fortunate beings to swiftly achieve accomplishment.

Of course, there are also many fake termas. Guru Rinpoche prophesied: “When my genuine terma treasures appear in the world and the terma teachings begin to spread, many false tertöns will also emerge, just like mushrooms sprouting in a meadow.” On the subject of distinguishing authentic from false termas, Mipham

Rinpoche provided explanations in *The Clarifying Jewel*, while Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima also discussed methods for their examination.

Therefore, those who call themselves tertons are not necessarily genuine treasure revealers. Some people compose a ritual text with their conceptual mind and then go around promoting their “terma,” but the blessings of these fake termas are completely different from authentic ones. Such people have never received Guru Rinpoche’s seal or prophecy; they merely know how to write and then begin to claim they are “tertons.” It’s like some dharma friends here who clearly haven’t attained realization, yet due to pride think, “I’m already enlightened, I don’t need to practice anymore”—they truly believe this.

In summary, in this degenerate age, terma teachings are the essence of the Secret Mantrayana.

Returning to the *Invocation for the Tenth Day* mentioned earlier: it says that, relying on his altruistic intention to benefit others, Guru Rinpoche manifests tertons at different times, and each terton will carry out certain terma activities. For example, when revealing termas, some bring forth texts, some reveal statues or treasure

caskets, and some bring forth worldly ritual implements, and so on.

Chojé Yidzhin Norbu's Many Terma Revelations

Although the Gelug, Sakya, and other schools also have termas, these are relatively few—the vast majority of termas were concealed by Guru Rinpoche. When Chojé Yidzhin Norbu traveled to America, the people there said: “How wonderful it would be if Guru Padmasambhava had come to America! We’d love a terma to be revealed here as well.” Indeed, throughout Tibetan regions, many rocks and lakes hold hidden termas. I once watched a video of Lama Yidzhin Norbu revealing a Vajrasattva sadhana from Nyenbo Yurtse Lake in Qinghai Province. The water was so deep it rose well above his head. Yet, although Rinpoche’s body was quite heavy, he remained buoyant, floated out into the lake, and brought out the terma.

Additionally, Rinpoche revealed a statue at Gowow Lha Tsé²² in Dawu, as well as the *Daily Dorje Drolo Practice* at Paro Taktsang in Bhutan, and the sadhana of *Vajrakilaya Gurkhukma* from Asura cave at Yanglesho in Nepal—I was present on all these occasions. At Paro Taktsang, Rinpoche explained that the cave where Guru Padmasambhava attained realization contains a profound earth treasure—a

nine-volume terma cycle of Dorje Drolö. He noted that revealing the entire cycle now would bring loss to Bhutan, so he decided not to reveal the complete terma cycle at that time. And so, Rinpoche aspired to return in his next life to reveal the complete teachings, entrusting the terma once more to the dharma protectors and taking only the *Daily Dorje Drolö Practice*.

I remember that while in Bhutan, Lama Yidzhin Norbu once visited the home of the descendants of the tertön Nyang Nima Özer. That tertön had revealed a phurba; upon seeing the phurba, a liturgy of the Eight Great Sadhana Teachings spontaneously poured forth from Rinpoche's wisdom mind. He immediately had it written down and said it could not be made public for three years, after which it could be shared more widely. Three years later, when I asked whether the text could now be released, Rinpoche said the auspicious conditions had not yet ripened. If this liturgy were to be made public, people would see how extensive the content is.

These remarkable stories are not legends, but actual events. If we were to stack together all the terma texts revealed by every tertön, the pile would be as high as a mountain. As it is said later in this teaching, each region has a local tertön, a living memorial of Padmasambhava, reminding us of him in a direct and immediate way. In fact, many tertöns are completely unknown. In a small county

like Serta alone, there have been several tertons whose terma teachings fill twenty to thirty volumes. It's the same in my hometown of Drango—tertons have left behind many volumes of texts. Sometimes one or two monasteries might have a termon, but because some remain unknown, their terma teachings only circulate within a small area, practiced by just a handful of practitioners. I once saw a terma revealed by a little-known termon—the content was extraordinarily sublime—but when I later inquired about him, he wasn't famous at all. Even during his lifetime, many people didn't know he was a termon.

WHEREVER THERE IS FAITH, GURU RINPOCHE IS PRESENT

More Verses from Ratna Lingpa's *Invocation for the Tenth Day*

The following are additional verses quoted by Mipham Rinpoche from Ratna Lingpa's treasure text, *Invocation for the Tenth Day*. These verses reveal that praying to Guru Rinpoche will unfailingly bring blessings.

**In brief, past all conception are my means of benefit,
The kindness of the teacher come from Orgyen is not
small but great.**

**Every region has a high and hallowed place,
A monument where Orgyen is remembered.
At every frontier there shall be a treasure trove.
This too shall be the mark of Orgyen's memory.**

And likewise it is said that the different rituals and practices for the subjugation of evil forces, which in every village

are performed by monks or lay practitioners of the Secret Mantra—these too are memorials of the master of Orgyen.

In accordance with the countless beings to be tamed, Guru Rinpoche left sacred sites in every region—places blessed by his body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities—all serving as living monuments to Guru Rinpoche.

As I mentioned earlier, many termas have been revealed throughout Tibetan regions. However, some terma rituals and practices—including those related to skillful means and subjugation—are practiced only by a very small number of people within limited circles. We might wonder whether so many terma treasures are genuine. Upon reflection, however, it becomes clear that Guru Padmasambhava concealed such vast quantities of termas for the benefit of sentient beings across different times and circumstances.

And the text says more:

**If briefly told, my ways to benefit are past imagining,
And all shall be memorials of me the Orgyen Guru.
In times to come when people yearn for me
And think of me with longing love,
Behold, I shall be standing at their side.**

**And all who on the tenth day of the waxing moon
Recall and make remembrance of me—
They and I shall never separate...**

For all who place their faith in Guru Rinpoche, he will appear before them, bestowing empowerments and blessings. Especially on the auspicious tenth day of each month, whoever thinks of Guru Rinpoche, he will never leave them.

If, in the future, the conditions ripen for you, you should supplicate Guru Rinpoche day and night. Even if your circumstances do not allow for this, then wherever you are, at least on the tenth day of each month, think: “Today, Guru Rinpoche has made a special promise to all beings—to especially bless them on this day.” On this auspicious occasion, earnestly supplicate Guru Rinpoche and perform tsok offerings and other dharma practices; by doing so, blessings will certainly arise in your mind stream.

**I am Padmasambhava; I speak no lies.
And so, devoted ones, be happy...**

In *Footprints on the Journey*,²³ I quoted a teaching from tertön Pema Lingpa: “In this degenerate age, those who have faith in the terma teachings must have previously encountered Guru Rinpoche and

made aspirations. All such people have fortunate connections and virtuous roots, so they should feel joy within themselves.” Looking at your faces, you indeed have great faith and interest in the terma teachings. By Pema Lingpa’s words, you must have formed auspicious connections with Guru Rinpoche in past lives. Otherwise, when terma is mentioned, you might feel aversion or discomfort—how do you all feel? Do you feel joy? (The audience responds: “Yes!”) It seems you are all true disciples of Guru Rinpoche. According to the tertön’s words, it appears I too must have been Guru Rinpoche’s disciple...

**To king and court, my followers in Tibet,
I say that on the tenth day of the swelling moon
I pledge myself to come,
And Padmasambhava does not deceive...**

When Guru Rinpoche left Tibet for the land of the rakshasas, he promised the king and ministers of Tibet: “If you pray to me on the tenth of each month, I will certainly come. I, Guru Rinpoche, make this vow here and will never deceive anyone!”

**And when you pray with seven-line invocation,
My blessings flow in an unending stream;**

**And when my blessings fall and when your meditation
blazes,
Know this as the sign that I am present...**

By praying with the Seven-Line Prayer, you will receive Guru Rinpoche's blessings, unceasing and continuous like a flowing river. When resonance stirs within you and deep faith arises, know that Guru Rinpoche has arrived. As ordinary beings burdened by heavy karmic obscurations, we may not directly perceive Guru Rinpoche during meditation as realized beings can. However, through dreams or inner experiences, those with fewer karmic obscurations may sense that Guru Rinpoche is bestowing blessings and empowerments upon them. When such signs arise—even without directly seeing Guru Rinpoche—know that he has come.

**And yet for me, in truth, there is no going and no
coming.
You meet me when your karma and your obscurations
Both are cleansed.
According to the prayers and relative perceptions
Of the ones whom I might train,
I am indeed residing in the land of rakshasas.**

**And yet because the stream of my compassion is unbroken,
I am present constantly to those with faith in me...**

From a conventional perspective, Guru Rinpoche has departed for the continent of the rakshasas, where he turns the wheel of dharma for rakshasa beings at the Copper-Colored Mountain. But in terms of ultimate reality, there is no going and no coming for Guru Rinpoche—before those whose karma is purified, he can manifest at any time. His compassion for suffering beings has never ceased, and for all who pray to him, Guru Rinpoche remains ever-present, bestowing his blessings. Through studying the Seven-Line Prayer together, I believe many of you have developed great faith and conviction in the terma tradition and in the teachings of Guru Rinpoche. If so, this will create especially auspicious conditions for your accomplishment in this very life.

**And so, upon the tenth day of the month,
Invoke me fervently,
Knowing you have fallen in samsara.
Give to me your mind, your heart, the very vitals of
your being.**

These are only some of the unfailing, vajra promises of Guru Rinpoche. There are many more.

Guru Rinpoche said: “You should diligently pray to me on the tenth day; with awareness of having fallen into samsara, rely on me with single-pointed devotion.” There are countless such vajra words that Guru Rinpoche promised, and everyone should have firm faith in them. Especially for practitioners living in bustling cities, I hope you will not only refrain from rejecting Vajrayana, but also practice Vajrayana while studying Sutrayana—this brings immeasurable blessings.

Zur Sakya-ö’s Revelation of the Water of Life: A Terma for Kublai Khan

One of the many types of great treasures hidden by Padmasambhava is the longevity water. What follows is a remarkable historical account from the era of the Mongol Empire. In the history of the Great Perfection, there was a great master named Zur Sakya-ö, who was extraordinarily accomplished in both subjugation rituals and the revelation of termas. When the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan was competing with his younger brother Ariq Boke for the throne, he heard that within Tibetan Buddhism there existed powerful tantric practices. He received such practices from a master and, relying on the power of mantras, defeated his brother and obtained the throne.

Later, Kublai Khan heard that Sakya-ö could reveal Guru Rinpoche's terma of longevity water, so he dispatched special envoys carrying golden imperial edicts, requesting the master to extract the longevity water and send it to him. In return, the Khan promised he would provide various protections and privileges to the tantric practitioners of U Tsang and Kham. This historical account is quite extensive and is recorded in both the *Blue Annals* and Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*.

After receiving the imperial edict, Sakya-ö led the special envoys and thousands of witnesses to retrieve the terma. At the entrance of the cave, they encountered a fierce whirlwind blocking their way and could not enter. The master recited mantras, and the whirlwind subsided. Upon entering the cave, they found much charcoal inside, and at its center a strange frog. When it moved its limb, a whirlwind blew up. The master subdued it by reciting mantras over his prayer beads and making a declaration of truth, and the whirlwind vanished.

Afterward, the master successfully retrieved the terma, which included statues of Hayagriva, Vajravarahi, and Vajrasattva, along with thirteen paper scrolls containing the means for attainment. Among these treasures, there was a lapis flask, about the size of a large inkpot, which contained the water of life—all concealed by

Guru Rinpoche. Upon seeing these treasures, everyone was astonished.

If Sakya-ö had consumed the first portion of the water of life he could have lived for a hundred years. However, he only touched a single drop to his tongue as a symbolic gesture before handing it over. The envoys traveled day and night back to the imperial court and delivered it to Kublai Khan. The Khan was immensely pleased and thereby obtained longevity. The text says he lived to on hundred, though historical records suggest he reached his early eighties, still a remarkably long life for that era.

Later, Kublai Khan indeed fulfilled his promise, issuing an edict exempting all the mantrins (tantric practitioners) of Central Tibet and Tsang from taxation and military service. In order to make Sakya-ö equal in rank to the imperial preceptors, the title Pakshi was conferred on him. In return for having offered the water of life he was granted lands supporting forty-five households in Mongolia and was permitted to build a great monastery on Mount Medril. These events are all recorded in historical sources, demonstrating that terma teachings were widely accepted even at the highest levels of political power.

Regarding Guru Rinpoche's terma teachings, while a very few important historical figures have experienced their inconceivable blessings, those who have truly felt their power have been dedicated practitioners. Those who engage in the generation and completion stages in monasteries especially can truly experience their extraordinary and profound nature.

Let us conclude here for today.

Lecture Seven

December 2nd, 2009

EMBRACE THE TEACHINGS OF GURU RINPOCHE WITH AN OPEN MIND

Making the Dharma Accessible Together

Overall, it seems that practitioners in various Han regions are learning the Vajrayana teachings quite well. Some people are not merely staying at the level of words, but are actually bringing the dharma into their daily lives—and experiencing real change. Seeing their transformation, I am truly happy. Whether you are monastics or lay practitioners, I hope you will study and practice diligently. Once you understand the distinctive qualities of Tibetan Buddhism, then when the time and conditions are right, please share these teachings with those with whom you have a karmic connection, so that they too can receive and learn such precious instructions.

This is truly important. Just like Chan Buddhism, which was not initially accepted in China, but as more and more great accomplished masters realized its profound and unfathomable supreme states, people gradually began to view it with new respect. A similar situation occurred with Japanese Zen. When it was first introduced

to the UK and the US, it faced considerable resistance. Over time, however, as it gradually became part of daily life and demonstrated its transformative effects, it gained acceptance.

I think that people's faith nowadays is quite good, but the most crucial issue is the lack of dharma teachers. Therefore, all Buddhists should work together in making the teachings more accessible. In particular, some lay practitioners in Han regions who have a relatively high level of understanding in dharma can share and discuss Buddhist teachings with others. For now, we refer to them as provisional tutors. I am already considering what their formal title will be when the appropriate conditions arise for granting them one.

Faith in Guru Rinpoche and Vajrayana Comes from Understanding

In truth, the Buddhadharma is like any genuinely beneficial knowledge: it can be understood and practiced by monastics and laypeople alike. In particular, the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava are particularly suitable for the modern era. Those who understand Tibetan Buddhism know that the greatness of Guru Rinpoche is beyond description; his power of aspiration and ability to guide beings are inexpressible. That is why he is respectfully known as

the Lotus Buddha or the second Buddha. This is worthy of our deepest faith. Of course, those unfamiliar with Tibetan Buddhism may think that Guru Rinpoche was just an ordinary practitioner from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but this is a very limited understanding. In time, they can read more of Guru Rinpoche's life stories and biographies to learn about his qualities.

There are many biographies of Guru Rinpoche in Tibetan, but in Chinese, whether online or in books, there are relatively few introductions. However, this is much better than before. When Chojé first went to Mount Wutai in 1987, many people there basically did not know about Guru Padmasambhava—even those who had studied Buddhism for many years had never heard of him. Now, things are completely different. Therefore, the acceptance of Vajrayana requires a process of adaptation, and the conditions are now steadily maturing.

There was a time when many people rejected Vajrayana, including some eminent monks and worldly scholars. Although our abilities were limited at that time, we still responded in various ways: refuting what needed to be refuted, criticizing what needed to be criticized, and engaging in positive, non-violent communication where dialogue was needed. We worked hard in this way for a long time. Nowadays, many people's perspectives have changed.

Except for some dissatisfaction arising from the behavior of a very small number of individual practitioners—which has indeed led to certain misunderstandings—instances of people expressing strong dissatisfaction with, slandering, abandoning, or attacking the doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism have become exceedingly rare.

As for me, I would never ask you to accept teachings that are unreasonable. I will only do my utmost to help you understand and embrace teachings that genuinely benefit sentient beings. I heard that a dharma teacher from our academy, upon returning to the monastery where she was ordained, discovered that her Shifu (ordination master) was somewhat opposed to Tibetan Buddhism. She was so distressed by this that she cried countless times, asking, “Why doesn’t my Shifu accept such wonderful Buddhist teachings?” Perhaps it was because of her tears, but I’ve heard that her Shifu has since become more accepting—at least, that’s what others have told me, though I can’t say for certain if it’s true. Actually, the Buddhist dharma we share is not about stubbornly clinging to our own tradition in a narrow-minded way, but about embracing the whole world with an extremely broad mind. Therefore, I hope everyone will come to discern authentic dharma from what is not.

Pray Often to Guru Rinpoche on the Path

As you study Tibetan Buddhism, especially Vajrayana, I encourage you to pray often to Guru Rinpoche, for he is the root guru of all the lineage masters. When Lama Yidzhin Norbu went to India years ago, we met a great master who is universally recognized for his great compassion. He mentioned that although he himself came from the Gelug tradition, and all his lineage masters and teachers were also Gelug, he personally had an extraordinary faith in Guru Rinpoche of the Nyingma tradition and had never stopped praying to him. He explained that if Guru Rinpoche had not subdued harmful spirits and obstructing forces in the Tibetan regions in the past, there would not be such flourishing Buddhist teachings today. Now that the Tibetan regions have become a treasure house of Buddhism for the whole world, all of this, he said, should be attributed to Guru Rinpoche's vast aspirations. Therefore, to repay Guru Rinpoche's kindness, he emphasized that we should always pray to him with wholehearted devotion. After saying these words, he gave us the transmission of a prayer to Guru Rinpoche that he had composed himself.

As you can see, people who are truly far-seeing and open-minded can accept teachings from any Buddhist tradition, as long as they are authentic dharma. They readily embrace teachings given by

buddhas, bodhisattvas, and their emanations. In contrast, if you only focus on your own monastery or lineage, and even refuse to acknowledge anyone except your own teacher, then no matter how great the Buddhist teachings are, they are unlikely to benefit you.

Whenever possible, I encourage you to enshrine statues of Guru Rinpoche in your monasteries or dharma centers. This is especially important, and it has a special significance in these degenerate times. Every time I visit a lay practitioner's home or a monastery in Han regions, the first thing I look for is whether there's a statue of Guru Rinpoche. If there is, I feel that practitioners in those places are likely to make strong progress on the path. Even if this is only my personal feeling, I have my reasons for saying so.

My faith in Guru Rinpoche didn't just start when I began teaching the Seven-Line Prayer. When teaching a particular practice, it's easy to develop a temporary sense of faith in the deity associated with that practice, but my faith in Guru Rinpoche is different. I've actually had this deep confidence since I was a child. As we work to spread the dharma in the future, we must remember that obstacles are especially numerous in this degenerate age. To overcome these challenges and ensure the success of our efforts to benefit others, we should earnestly pray to Guru Padmasambhava, set up his statues, and carry his images with us. These practices create exceptionally

auspicious conditions, and I hope everyone will keep this firmly in mind.

EPIC OF PADMA

Now let's continue by exploring the benefits of the Seven-Line Prayer, as Mipham Rinpoche explains in his commentary.

In the *Epic of Padma*, Guru Rinpoche addressed the princess as follows:

**In this noble field that Buddha tamed,
An emanation of the Teacher is in front of every being.
In former ages I was Amitabha, Lord of Boundless
Light,
And, on the hill of Potala, the Lord Who Sees,
And Padmasambhava on Dhanakosha Lake.
Only do I seem to have these three identities,
For they in truth are never separate from each other.**

I quoted a similar verse in an earlier lecture, though the wording here is a little different. In essence, it is saying this: in the sublime pure realms where the buddhas teach and awaken beings, Guru Rinpoche appears before every sentient being in whatever form is needed to guide and liberate them.

How does he manifest? In former times, in Sukhavati, he appeared as Amitabha, the Lord of Boundless Light. On Potala Hill, he manifested as Avalokiteshvara, the Lord Who Sees. And at Dhanakosha Lake in Oddiyana, he appeared as Padmasambhava. Though these three seem to be different—appearing in different forms, in different pure lands, for different beings—in truth they are inseparable and are one.

This is something we all need to understand clearly. So please don't fall into thoughts like, "I practice Avalokiteshvara, so I don't need faith in Padmasambhava," or "I only follow Pure Land teachings and believe in Amitabha, not Padmasambhava." To accept one manifestation of Amitabha while rejecting another simply doesn't hold together.

These days, some people feel drawn exclusively to the Pure Land tradition and keep their distance from Vajrayana. Because of this, at the Bodhi Society I've needed to offer two separate courses: one on the preliminary practices, based on *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, and another on Pure Land teachings. Honestly, that can be challenging.

If I taught only the preliminaries and the practices related to Guru Rinpoche, some students wouldn't come—because they don't yet

understand that Guru Rinpoche and Amitabha are inseparable in essence. That is exactly why I also teach Pure Land. When students see this, they relax and think, “It’s fine—my teacher isn’t opposed to Pure Land Buddhism, so I don’t need to be either.”

But what, exactly, is being feared here—Padmasambhava? In truth, if anything deserves our fear, it is the three lower realms: hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals. Yet we often seem far less concerned about these.

Instead, some people become uneasy about the very protector who subdues harmful spirits and demonic forces. That kind of attitude only plants the seeds of negative karma.

**Samantabhadra in the dharmadhatu,
Great Vajradhara in the field of Dense Adornment,
The Mighty One upon the Vajra Throne:
All inseparable, all by nature Padmasambhava, myself.
My blessings, which achieve the benefit of beings, are
great and wonderful...**

Samantabhadra, the dharmakaya abiding in the dharmadhatu; Vajradhara, the sambhogakaya in the realm of Dense Adornment; and

Buddha Shakyamuni, the nirmanakaya who manifested awakening at the Vajra Seat in India, here in Jambudvīpa—these three are not different from me, Padmasambhava; they are inseparable. If you pray with this kind of conviction, the blessings you receive will be beyond imagining, because Guru Rinpoche’s blessings are inconceivable and his activity for the benefit of beings is vast and without limit. This points to the inseparability of dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya—all of which are, by nature, Padmasambhava. This is also why Guru Rinpoche is called the Lotus Buddha.

In Tibetan regions, it’s rare to find anyone who holds wrong views about Guru Rinpoche or denies him. Today, many people in the West also have tremendous faith in him. When we visited the United States in the past, we found that this confidence was especially strong.

At that time, people recalled a prophecy the Sixteenth Karmapa shared with his students: “When the iron bird flies, the Buddhadharma will flourish.” Today we understand the “iron bird” as airplanes, and “the Buddhadharma will flourish” as the spread of Guru Padmasambhava’s teachings throughout the world. Because

of this prophecy, many people have developed deep faith in Vajrayana Buddhism, and among Buddhist practitioners it is uncommon to hear it spoken of with wrong views or slander.

According to statistics, in 1990 there were about 400,000 Buddhists in America, and a considerable number were studying Tibetan Buddhism. Many of them have strong faith in Guru Rinpoche, and in dharma centers everywhere people pray to Padmasambhava.

At the time, I joked, “When Americans chant the Vajra Guru mantra, their voices are so powerful it sounds like they’re practicing wrathful Padmasambhava. When the French chant it, their voices are so gentle it sounds like they’re practicing peaceful Padmasambhava.” The French style, in particular, is very similar to how we chant after class here at Larung Gar.

This style traces back to the Tibetan master Chagdud Rinpoche, who lived in the United States. He had a beautiful voice, and Sogyal Rinpoche invited him to lead the chanting of the Vajra Guru mantra. Later, many dharma centers in France adopted his way of chanting: first singing the supplication in a melodious, flowing style, and then reciting the Vajra Guru mantra. In Europe and America, people often have especially strong faith in Guru Rinpoche.

Not long ago, I visited several Shanghai Bodhi Society centers, and their chanting of the Vajra Guru mantra was also very beautiful. My hope is that, in the future, many dharma centers and monasteries will chant the Vajra Guru mantra regularly.

Chojé Yidzhin Norbu once said, “If you chant the Vajra Guru mantra three to seven times after each dharma class, all non-humans, evil spirits, demons, and negative forces will stay far away.” If dharma centers everywhere adopt this simple habit, it can become a powerful support for everyone’s practice.

**My two accumulations are complete, all qualities perfected.
I am the greatest of the Buddhas’ heirs, my emanations
inconceivable,
Which at all times, in present, past, and future,
Hoist and plant the banner of the Doctrine in the ten
directions.**

Guru Rinpoche, who is the greatest among the Buddhas’ heirs, has completed the two accumulations of merit and wisdom and brought every enlightened quality to perfection. With his inconceivable miraculous emanations, he has benefited countless beings in the past, will benefit countless beings in the future, and is benefiting countless beings right now. For this reason, in every age, Guru

Rinpoche's emanations uphold the victorious banner of the dharma in every direction throughout the universe.

Guru Rinpoche himself has manifested countless emanations, and the number of great masters and accomplished beings who have received his blessings is beyond measure. For example, when the Omniscient Longchenpa wrote his most profound pith instructions, he would often end with a colophon such as, "Composed at the sacred place of Gangri Thökar by the yogi Longchen Rabjam, who has been accepted into the care of the great master Padmasambhava." Similarly, in the colophons of many of Mipham Rinpoche's compositions, you will find phrases like, "Mipham Namgyal Gyatso, who has supreme and unwavering faith in Guru Padmasambhava in all his lives." When you see this, you realize that many great masters in Tibetan Buddhism—especially those whose activities to benefit beings are vast—are all under Guru Rinpoche's care and blessings.

In fact, there are also many eminent masters within Han Chinese Buddhism who have profound faith in Guru Rinpoche and recite his mantra, *Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung*, daily, although they may not do so openly. I once met a dharma master who wore a Guru Rinpoche pendant around his neck but wouldn't even let his disciples see it. One day, he quietly took it out and whispered

to me: “Look, I practice this too!” Then he quickly tucked it back away.

Guru Rinpoche’s Noble Qualities Are Worthy of Faith and Acceptance

You must understand that Guru Rinpoche’s blessings, his wisdom in benefiting others, and his power are truly inconceivable—worthy of everyone’s faith and acceptance. Some people have been dissatisfied with, or even particularly resistant to, Tibetan Buddhism, which I personally find hard to understand. Some of them may be well-educated individuals who tend to be critical, but even so, Tibetan Buddhism is still worthy of their acceptance.

As I mentioned in my book *Buddhism and Science*, Carl Jung, one of the West’s most influential psychologists, spent many years studying what is commonly known as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*—the *Bardo Thodol* (*The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*), a teaching attributed to Padmasambhava. Jung wrote: “This work has been my constant companion, and to it I owe not only many stimulating ideas and discoveries, but also many fundamental insights.” He valued it so highly that he recommended it to leading thinkers of his era, including Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein.

If figures like Jung could approach these teachings with such seriousness, why do some of today's university students and doctoral candidates dismiss them so quickly? Sometimes education can make us sharp, but it can also make us proud. Jung also stated plainly that the book speaks to something real—that the law of karma and the cycle of birth and death are not mere imagination.

In time, I came to respect Jung deeply, and I even included his photo in *Buddhism and Science*.²⁴ Some readers wondered, “Why does this book include photos of Einstein, Lu Xun, and Jung, instead of great Buddhist masters?” For me, there were two reasons. First, given the cultural environments in which they were raised, their willingness to appreciate Buddhism—and even Vajrayana—was genuinely remarkable. Second, it was meant to soften the pride that worldly learning can sometimes create.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Han Chinese Buddhist practitioners, it is entirely reasonable to be open to Tibetan Buddhism. Master Taixu, for example, explained in his essay “A Brief Discussion on the Kalachakra Initiation Amidst Controversy”²⁵ why Vajrayana teachings are worthy of faith and acceptance. According to *The Chronicle of Master Taixu's Life*,²⁶ he even received the Kalachakra empowerment from the Tenth Panchen Lama.

Historical records also tell us that Master Xuyun initially had misunderstandings about Tibetan Buddhism, yet later in life he clearly came to accept it and even praise tantric teachings. Master Yuanying, too, said, “It’s good to practice Pure Land and Vajrayana together—everyone who practices will attain rebirth in the pure land of Sukhavati.”

In fact, across many Han Chinese Buddhist schools—Chan, Tiantai, and others—there is a strong emphasis on reciting Amitabha Buddha’s name and aspiring for rebirth in his pure land, Sukhavati. Similarly, many great Vajrayana masters encourage their disciples to aspire for rebirth in Amitabha’s pure land through recitation and aspiration prayers. This shows that, although Vajrayana and Pure Land may look different at first, they ultimately converge on the same aim. For many people, practicing them together can be deeply supportive.

The spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Han regions was not limited to monasteries; it also reached the imperial court. Beginning in the Yuan dynasty, when Kublai Khan appointed Drogön Chögyal Phagpa as National Preceptor, and continuing through the support of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, Tibetan Buddhism maintained a strong presence in the palace. During the Qing dynasty in particular, emperors and members of the court regularly received

empowerments and sponsored Buddhist rituals. Even today, the palace preserves precious statues and rare Tibetan artifacts.

The biographies of Emperors Kangxi and Qianlong make it clear that Vajrayana had a significant influence during their reigns. When I made pilgrimages to certain monasteries, I saw stone steles they had erected. Standing before them, I felt that although they were worldly rulers, their devotion and support—building monasteries, supporting monastics, and sustaining Buddhist practice—was in some ways comparable to the activity of great dharma patrons. They made substantial contributions to Han Chinese Buddhism as well.

Especially noteworthy is the historic relationship between the Changkya National Preceptors and the Qing emperors. The Second Changkya, Ngawang Lobzang Chöden, served as Emperor Kangxi's National Preceptor. The Third Changkya, Rölpai Dorje, served Emperors Yongzheng and Qianlong (and Ju Mipham Rinpoche wrote a commentary on one of his vajra songs). The Fourth Changkya, Yeshe Tenpai Gyeltsen, served Emperor Daoguang. The Fifth Changkya, Yeshe Tenpai Nyima, served Emperor Tongzhi. Regarding the Sixth Changkya, Lobzang Tenzin Gyeltsen, the sources I have seen do not clearly record this role. And the Seventh Changkya, Lobzang Pelden Tenpai Drönme, served Emperor Guangxu.

When we see that so many great masters and influential figures have been able to accept Tibetan Buddhism, then those who practice Pure Land Buddhism have no reason to feel afraid. Tibetan Vajrayana is not demonic or heretical, and Padmasambhava is not someone to fear. He is someone we can meet with joy and confidence.

Once I asked a lay practitioner, “Do you have faith in Guru Rinpoche?” She answered, “I have tremendous faith—I really like him!” I asked, “Why do you like him?” She said, “Because he’s very handsome, and his clothes are so beautiful!”

That is exactly what she said. So perhaps, for her, “liking” and “having faith” were the same. Later I looked more closely at Guru Rinpoche’s image and had to agree—he truly is quite handsome. Today I’ve given each of you an image of Guru Rinpoche, a photograph of a statue. The thangka paintings may look even more striking. (Laughter).



Guru Rinpoche statue at Pusading (Bodhisattova Summit), Mount Wutai. Constructed in 1987 under the guidance of H.H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche for the flourishing of the Buddhadharma and the benefit of all sentient beings. This image was offered by Khenpo Sodargye to participants in the Seven-Line Prayer lecture series.

GURU RINPOCHE'S ADVICE TO LADY TSOGYAL

Guru Rinpoche's Blessings Come Most Swiftly

In the colophon to the advice imparted to Tsogyal, taken from the *Prayer in Seven Chapters*, Guru Rinpoche declares,

I am blessed by all the buddhas of the dharmakaya,
empowered by all the buddhas of the sambhogakaya,
and enjoined by all the buddhas of the nirmanakaya that
I might propagate the Buddha's Doctrine in the southern
cosmic continent and that I might guide beings with the
resultant teachings of the Secret Mantra. To that end,

Upon a lotus stem within a precious lake,

I was bodied forth in self-arisen, emanated form.

Wherefore, all those who, graced with karma and
endowed with faith,

Invoke me with a deep and fervent longing,

**Through their prayers, which bind the link between
both cause and its effect —
My love for them is swifter than the love of other
buddhas.
And so with faith, O Tsogyal, pray to me unceasingly.**

In this passage, Guru Rinpoche is saying that he received the blessings of all dharmakaya buddhas, the empowerments of all sambhogakaya buddhas, and the command of all nirmanakaya buddhas to appear in this world. In order to spread the Buddhadharma in the southern continent of Jambudvipa—and in particular to benefit beings through the resultant teachings of Secret Mantra (Vajrayana)—the syllable *hrih* was projected onto a lotus stem in the jeweled lake of Dhanakosha in Oddiyana. In this way, Guru Rinpoche was born miraculously: not from parents, and not from womb, egg, or moisture, but as a self-arisen emanation.

When practitioners have faith in Guru Rinpoche and pray with devotion, the power of interdependence—together with the aspiration prayers he made on the path—ensures that his blessings can reach them with exceptional swiftness. Through those blessings, obstacles can be cleared and accomplishments can arise quickly—especially in this degenerate age, when harmful forces and mistaken teachings

are widespread. That is why Guru Rinpoche's essential instruction to Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal is to pray to him constantly, day and night.

As dharma practitioners, if we want to bring our own practice to completion while also benefiting beings and helping the teachings flourish, we need to pray to Guru Rinpoche regularly. In Chojé Yidzhin Norbu's *The Sun of Samantabhadra's Realm: The Quintessence of Oceanic Prayers of Aspiration*,²⁷ he writes that those who truly have bodhicitta reflect day and night on just two things: how to benefit sentient beings and how to spread the dharma. Praying to Guru Rinpoche is a crucial support for both. (This particular prayer was composed at the Vajra Seat in 1990, during Chojé's pilgrimage in India.)

Mipham Rinpoche says in "How to Integrate Worldly and Transcendent Dharma": "In this degenerate age, non-Buddhists, non-humans, and malevolent spirits are especially rampant. At such times, it is essential to pray to the guru, the Three Jewels, as well as to deities, dharma protectors, and dakinis. Most importantly, however, one must pray to Guru Padmasambhava."

So if you wish to bring your practice to fruition and carry out the activity of spreading the dharma, you should pray to Guru Rinpoche often. Whether you are a layperson or monastic, at home or

traveling, it is good to keep an image of Guru Rinpoche with you as a support for making offerings and strengthening your connection. This karmic link matters. When you maintain it, it expresses your faith—and you will surely receive his blessings.

People often ask me what to recite when obstacles arise. My answer is always the same: pray to Guru Rinpoche and recite the Vajra Guru mantra. We may not have another opportunity to study the Seven-Line Prayer together, but I sincerely hope your practice will be free of hindrances. The most reliable way to avert obstacles is to pray to Guru Rinpoche. If you do this steadily, you create auspicious interdependent conditions for your path.

Some people wonder, “How could Guru Rinpoche’s blessings be swifter than those of other buddhas? More powerful than a buddha—how could that be?” This comes from a misunderstanding. Each enlightened being makes unique aspirations, and those aspirations shape how beings connect with them. For example, when it comes to rebirth in pure lands, Buddha Amitabha is renowned for especially powerful aspirations. And although Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri are equal in essence, Manjushri is particularly associated with wisdom, while Avalokiteshvara is particularly associated with great compassion. From my own experience, when I want to

strengthen compassion, reciting Avalokiteshvara’s mantra is very effective. When my mind feels clouded or my memory weak, praying to Manjushri brings clarity right away.

Some people dismiss the idea of praying to different deities for specific needs as naive. Yet this is something that can be known through direct experience, and it is also supported by scripture and reasoning. Therefore, if we want to clear obstacles and bring our practice to completion—especially if we wish for tantric realization to arise in our mind streams—it is extremely important to pray to Guru Rinpoche.

Once, a practitioner said to me, “Praying to Guru Rinpoche is fine, but praying to my own guru is best—he is such-and-such an incarnation.” Just yesterday I watched a video claiming that a certain tulku was the sixty-fifth reincarnation; I don’t know whether that was said for show.

Of course, praying to one’s own guru is very good. But when it comes to emanations, Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of all gurus. Through his unique power, he appears as the masters of all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Scriptural sources explain this principle—for example, Atisha, Je Tsongkhapa, and Sakya Pandita are taught to be manifestations of Guru Rinpoche.

So when you pray to Guru Rinpoche, you are praying to all gurus, dharma protectors, dakinis, and deities. To pray in the understanding that he embodies all enlightened beings is the most complete approach: when you hold the essence, all the branches are naturally included.

Right now is an excellent time and a rare opportunity to spread Guru Rinpoche's teachings, and we should make good use of it. I've mentioned before that I know an American practitioner with deep faith in Guru Rinpoche. One day, after a medical checkup in Shanghai, I was walking alone through the airport. Just after security, someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around—and it was him. When we looked at our tickets, we discovered we were both flying to Chengdu on the same flight.

Because his faith was so strong—he had even shared with me a teaching of Padmasambhava on an earlier occasion—I gave him an image of Guru Rinpoche. That day at the airport, he said, "This is so auspicious! There are so many flights from Shanghai to Chengdu. I arrived from Los Angeles yesterday and was too tired to travel right away. I just happened to choose this flight—and you're on it too. We must have a special connection. This is a very good sign!"

At the time, I didn't think much of it. But human connections can be mysterious. Later I thought, "For the two of us to meet like that in such a vast place—perhaps there were subtle causes and conditions at work."

When someone has faith in Guru Rinpoche, unexpected connections can arise even in a sea of people. And the power of that devotion can show itself in many ways. For example, I feel that the flourishing—sometimes seemingly miraculous—growth of some lamas' dharma activities is inseparable from Guru Rinpoche's blessings.

Guru Rinpoche Is the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel

When, in the *Epic of Padma*, Guru Rinpoche is entreated by the princess, he replies, "Results are gained according to the nature of one's prayers. Pray to me. Your needs and wishes thus will be fulfilled."

Whatever aspirations you make, so long as you pray to Guru Rinpoche, they can be fulfilled. When you meet difficulties you truly cannot resolve on your own, pray to him. Don't doubt this, and don't feel you must run around asking others to do divinations for you. Pray with your whole heart, and Guru Rinpoche will surely fulfill your needs and wishes.

Some people say divination “isn’t scientific.” When I ask why, they answer, “Because it isn’t always accurate—so it can’t be scientific.” Then I ask, “So should we abolish divination entirely?” They say, “Yes.” But are predictions from an earthquake bureau always accurate? They often cannot say exactly when an earthquake will strike, and even the number of aftershocks can be hard to predict. Should we abolish the earthquake bureau, too? At that point, people usually have nothing more to say.

The point is that divination offers guidance; it is not a guaranteed promise. In that sense it is like many forms of forecasting in the world. And of course, if faith is lacking or the supporting conditions are not in place, a divination may not be very accurate.

In the same way, practice manuals and colophons sometimes say that reciting a mantra seven times will bring a particular result. But if you recite it seven times and immediately ask why the result hasn’t appeared, that way of thinking misses the point. These statements are more like forecasts: they show a general direction, not an exact timetable.

In any case, when we pray to Padmasambhava with genuine devotion, our wishes can certainly be fulfilled.

HOW TO PRAY TO GURU RINPOCHE?

Guide to Accomplishing the Guru

In the *Guide to Accomplishing the Guru*, it is written,

On the tenth day of the monkey month, the monkey
year,

In every region of Tibet,

I of Orgyen will appear,

And this is sure, my pledge and promise.

On every tenth day of the moon I'll come,

And with my emanations will Tibet be filled.

This is my sacred pledge. The Lotus-Born is powerless
to deceive.

Fix your minds on me, all you who have devotion.

Make a tormo like a blazing jewel, adorn it with an
incense stick,

And call to me with music and the skull-drum's sound.

**Recite the prayer of seven lines, invoking me with
fervent melody.**

And from the hill of Ngayab, I of Orgyen,

Like a mother helpless to resist

The weeping of her darling child,

Will come, my blessings to bestow.

This is my pledge, and hell awaits me should I fail.

Guru Rinpoche made many of these undeceiving vajra promises.

This passage says that on the tenth day of the monkey month in the monkey year, Guru Rinpoche pledged that he would appear throughout the Land of Tibet. And on every tenth lunar day, his emanations will manifest across Tibetan regions. This promise, the text tells us, will never deceive anyone.

For disciples who have faith and devotion, take Guru Rinpoche as their refuge, prepare a tormo “like a blazing jewel,” and call to him through the Seven-Line Prayer—accompanied by music and the sound of the hand drum—his presence is said to be certain. He will come from the Copper-Colored Mountain without fail. Just as a mother cannot bear the crying of her beloved child, he responds at

once and bestows his blessings. This is his unwavering vow, and there are many such undecieving promises.

Even people of integrity in this world try not to break their promises—so how could Guru Rinpoche? As long as you call upon him with sincere devotion, he will certainly come. I remember that when Chojé Yidzhin Norbu was teaching this commentary on the Seven-Line Prayer (*White Lotus*) at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute of Namdroling Monastery in India, he said: “There are many Tibetans in India now. You might wonder: ‘Guru Rinpoche often goes to Tibetan regions, but will he come to India?’ Don’t have such doubts. Wherever a child cries, whether the child is in India, Han regions, or Tibetan regions, the mother will immediately go there. She won’t discriminate based on location. Similarly, although you now live in India, as long as you pray with devotion, Guru Rinpoche will definitely come immediately.”

Today, many people practice Guru Rinpoche’s teachings—throughout Han regions, and also in places like the United States and Japan. But wherever you are, and whoever you are, if you pray with faith, Guru Rinpoche will manifest. Like the moon reflected in any vessel of clear water, his compassion responds equally, without preference. So don’t let the mind get tangled in doubts and distinctions; pray to Guru Rinpoche with single-pointed devotion.

After you pray, you will naturally feel your mind nourished and supported. In time, this won't remain something you only understand in theory. You will begin to notice that your practice flows more easily, your faith deepens, your wisdom unfolds, and right view and genuine certainty arise. These are signs that the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas have merged with your mind. Conversely, if blessings have not been received, then no matter how eloquently you speak about the dharma, there will still be a wide gap between the teachings and your own mind.

Therefore, what we practitioners need most is to let our minds merge with the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. If we can do this, then even without realizing the level of the noble ones, qualities such as disenchantment and renunciation will naturally dawn in us as ordinary people. The eight worldly concerns—and the afflictions of desire and anger—will gradually lose their power. That is why prayer is truly indispensable.

The Jeweled Treasury of the Oral Transmission

So, how should we pray?

In the fourth chapter of a text discovered by Ratna Lingpa, *The Jeweled Treasury of the Oral Transmission*, it is said in the advice given to Yeshe Tsogyal,

From time to time, go to some pleasant place, a mountaintop or some lonely valley, and pray to me at the top of your voice—loudly as if your very head would burst. Filled with devotion, allow a weariness of samsara and a longing to be freed from it to flood into you until great tears come welling up. This is a crucial instruction since it will wash away a great many of your karmic obscurations. Meditative experiences will naturally occur; do you best to sustain them.

This advice to Yeshe Tsogyal is truly extraordinary. It is telling us to seek out places like mountaintops, empty valleys, caves, forests, and other remote and open places. In such surroundings, the atmosphere itself can naturally awaken faith in Guru Rinpoche and in the buddhas and bodhisattvas. There, if we call out to Guru Rinpoche with the Seven-Line Prayer—or use any prayer to invoke the deity in whom we have faith—then when devotion becomes intense, it may feel as though the top of the head is splitting open. When we pray like this, our attachment to samsara begins to loosen, and the longing to be free from this ocean of suffering becomes real. Because we begin to personally sense the blessings of the buddhas' and bodhisattvas' teachings, gratitude arises on its own, and tears—sometimes even pea-sized—start to flow. These tears can

purify even very heavy negative karma. At such times, meditative experiences will naturally arise, and you should remain in that state as long as you can.

I have seen lay practitioners with truly genuine faith weep as they pray “Lama khyen” (“Lama, please know me”). They are not pretending. This kind of prayer can transform body and mind. Tears like these are truly precious. By contrast, the tears we shed over worldly emotions and disappointments often do little to free us; they can even bring about further karmic consequences. People may cry a great deal, but if we look closely, who are those tears really for? Are they for Guru Rinpoche, for our teacher, for the deity, or for suffering sentient beings?

When Lama Yidzhin Norbu taught, whenever he thought of his own guru or of Guru Rinpoche, he would be moved to tears. Especially when he taught the bardo teachings at Gowo Lha Tsé, he would recall Guru Rinpoche giving Vajrayana teachings at Samye and become overwhelmed, crying uncontrollably. Even though more than twenty years have passed, I still remember that scene vividly.

We may not have such visions, but whenever I visit places where Lama Yidzhin Norbu lived or stayed, I often find myself moved to tears. Not long ago, when I went to Mount Wutai for retreat,

someone later asked me, “During your retreat, did you see any deities?” I replied, “No—I just cried quite a lot.”

Sometimes, in quiet moments when nothing in particular is happening and the mind is at ease, I naturally remember the kindness of the guru, as well as the buddhas and bodhisattvas. I also reflect on how, in the end, samsara cannot provide any lasting meaning. At such times, faith arises from deep within—not forced, not performed—and tears come. Sometimes these are tears of faith; other times, they are tears of compassion. Still, this is an experience, not necessarily stable realization. Many dharma friends have felt something like this.

For lay practitioners who are new to Buddhism, the emotion can be especially strong. At our academy, we sometimes see people prostrating by the roadside, sobbing—so overwhelmed with devotion that, without meaning to, they block the path, even when I’m trying to pass. This has become more common recently. If any lay practitioners here feel embarrassed, please don’t—I’m not speaking about anyone in particular.

After you have cried for a long time and your tears have dried, the mind may feel completely blank. In Chan Buddhism, this can be regarded as a kind of waking-up experience, and you should

do your best to remain in it. There is no need to wipe away the tears—just sit as you are.

“Meditative experiences will naturally arise; do your best to sustain them.” For practitioners of Chan and Dzogchen, this is a very precious instruction.

Lecture Eight

December 10th, 2009

EXCERPT FROM THE WRATHFUL GURU

Let's continue exploring the qualities of the Seven-Line Prayer of Padmasambhava. This is the last lecture on the outer meaning.

In the historical section of *The Wrathful Guru*, a treasure text of the vidyadhara Terdag Lingpa, Guru Rinpoche is reported as saying,

**If you wish for swift accomplishments and special
blessings,
Make offerings and meditate on me the Lotus-Born.
And just as all the needs and wishes are spontaneously
fulfilled
For those who pray before the wishing jewel,**

In this degenerate age, if we wish to receive the blessings of buddhas and bodhisattvas for swift accomplishment and to successfully carry out all the four enlightened activities—pacifying, increasing, magnetizing, and subjugating—we must pray to, make

offerings to, and meditate on Guru Rinpoche with fierce devotion and single-pointed focus. By doing so, one's wishes will certainly be fulfilled, just as when one prays sincerely before a wish-fulfilling jewel—though it has no discriminating thoughts, it can satisfy all one's needs.

Traditionally, when people needed wealth, they would pray before a wish-fulfilling jewel and wealth would rain down; when they sought fame or position, they would pray before a wish-fulfilling jewel and their wishes would be granted one by one. The reason we call Guru Rinpoche a wish-fulfilling jewel is precisely this: he bestows all accomplishments. Whatever aspirations practitioners may hold, praying to Guru Rinpoche can fulfill them all, just as Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva can satisfy all wishes. Particularly in this degenerate age, sentient beings attain realization more slowly and often experience no signs or responses in their practice. The efficiency of accomplishing anything is remarkably low, and when attempting important endeavors, one constantly encounters obstacles. In such circumstances, if one prays to Guru Padmasambhava, he will surely fulfill all one's wishes.

Yesterday, a Khenpo from the Sakya tradition came to my home, requesting the transmission of the *Peaceful Manjushri*. Due to time constraints, I didn't give him the oral transmission, but we had a

meaningful conversation about the state of Dzogchen and its view, meditation, conduct, and result. During our discussion, he mentioned that he often encounters various obstacles in his practice or when benefiting beings through dharma activities. Many endeavors start out quite gloriously but gradually lose momentum, and in the end, nothing succeeds.

He asked if I had any solutions. I said, "I don't have a definitive answer. Offering advice based merely on an ordinary person's conceptual thoughts may not be reliable. However, I personally believe that praying to Guru Rinpoche will never fail you. Since I was young, I have single-pointedly devoted myself to praying to Guru Rinpoche, and to this day I have never wavered from this practice. This was true even before I started school, and it remains true now. Over all these years, my mind has been quite steady; it's not that I favor one deity today and then lose interest tomorrow..."

He agreed and felt that praying to Guru Rinpoche was absolutely necessary; otherwise, many obstacles would be impossible to avoid. When he established a Buddhist college in his hometown, the first seven years went smoothly, but later his health deteriorated, making it increasingly difficult to manage the college and continue his work as before. When he began teaching the Five Great Treatises, things

also went well at first, but later his eyesight worsened and he could no longer read the scriptures clearly...

I had known him from before. In the early years when Chojé went to India, the abbot of a Sakya monastery in South India invited Rinpoche to give teachings, and the Khenpo was present at that time. In my memory, he was very young then. More than twenty years have passed, and now, like me, his face bears the marks of time, and many other things have changed.

Some of you here may be like him: hoping to quickly accomplish a practice and wishing for a path free of obstacles in this very life, yet finding it difficult to bring your aspirations to completion. This is related to various karmic conditions from both past and present lives. Therefore, in addition to carefully and diligently maintaining your practice, you should rely on Guru Padmasambhava, the embodiment of all buddhas. This is particularly necessary in our current age when the five degenerations are flourishing—praying to such a wish-fulfilling jewel is indispensable!

**Just so will countless buddhas bless you and protect
you as their only child.**

**The oath-bound and the dakinis will rain on you
accomplishments;**

**The proud demonic spirits of the appearance and
existence will do your bidding;**

**Your own spontaneous works will be a source of freedom
for all living beings.**

Relying thus on me brings forth these benefits.

Throw away your doubts; make effort in the practice!

O king and subjects, if you are deceived,

Then Padmasambhava is weak indeed!

Why does praying to Guru Rinpoche bring such great benefits? It is due to the power of Guru Rinpoche's vast aspirations. When we pray with sincere devotion, the blessings and protection of buddhas and bodhisattvas—vast as the ocean—become present and accessible. They extend a unique compassion, like a mother caring for her only child. Countless dakinis from various realms swiftly remove obstacles from one's path, bestowing both ordinary and supreme accomplishments as naturally as rain falls from the sky. For the attainment of siddhis and spiritual realization, the support of the dakinis is indispensable.

Furthermore, the spirits and forces throughout all appearance and existence will assist in activities that benefit sentient beings and in the flourishing of the dharma, just as they once vowed before

Guru Rinpoche and other great vidyadharas. By relying on Guru Rinpoche, we receive the blessings of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, along with the support of the dakinis and dharma protectors. To the king, the ministers, and all people, Guru Rinpoche assures them that his vajra words will never deceive. Here, “appearance and existence” refers to all phenomena: “appearance” encompasses all manifestations within both nirvana and samsara, while “existence” specifically denotes the three realms—the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm.

As Mahayana practitioners, our greatest responsibility is to benefit sentient beings. If we pray to Guru Rinpoche, these activities can unfold with far fewer obstacles, and we can fulfill our aspirations to help those with whom we have a karmic connection. Many people sincerely wish to help others and serve the dharma, but if our mind stream is not sustained by the blessings of Guru Rinpoche and the buddhas and bodhisattvas, our compassion may exceed our capacity. Then, when we try to put it into practice, obstacles and adverse conditions inevitably arise, and our aims are difficult to accomplish as we intend. For this reason, especially in these degenerate times, it is vitally important for everyone to pray to Guru Rinpoche.

In our dharma practice, we should not let our minds wander or overthink. We should dispel all doubts and wholeheartedly pray to Guru Rinpoche, for he never deceives anyone. As the sutra states: “The words of the Buddha are utterly sincere and never deceive.” This means that the Buddha’s words are unfailingly true; even if the sky were to collapse, their truth would remain unshaken. The same is true for Guru Rinpoche. Therefore, if we accomplish the practice of Guru Rinpoche, the accomplishments of all other deities and dharma protectors naturally follow.

Actually, this principle is not difficult to understand. It’s like this: when you want to get something done in the world, once you have the support of the person in charge, those under them usually fall into line. Similarly, if you can integrate Guru Rinpoche’s wisdom and blessings into your mind, you will naturally receive the blessings of great masters from all schools and traditions, as well as those of dharma protectors and deities, because Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of them all. Therefore, it is essential that we pray to him with single-pointed devotion.

Even if you cannot generate faith in Guru Rinpoche, you must never slander him carelessly. Most Buddhists today are generally on a good path. Yet in the 1970s and 1980s, quite a few people

openly disparaged Guru Rinpoche. At that time, we were particularly shocked—we felt these people were both pitiful and frightening! Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of the buddhas of the three times. They couldn't even approach one ten-thousandth of his wisdom, compassion, and power, yet they dared to slander him? Of course, if they have special needs or there are hidden intentions, that is another matter. But if not, ordinary people, including renowned scholars and highly esteemed masters, must never do such things. If you want to criticize, you must have sufficient reasons. However, if you were to visit the Tibetan regions, study Guru Rinpoche's terma teachings in depth, and read his biographies, I believe you would never even think of slandering him.

Unfortunately, there are still some people today who slander the Vajrayana as their minds are clouded by wrong views. Such cases also happen in other schools such as the Pure Land, Chan, and Huayan schools. There are also those who lack understanding of the teachings of these schools but speak recklessly about them. Their baseless criticisms will never have a reliable foundation. Even if you cannot yet develop faith in Guru Rinpoche's teachings, you should still refrain from slandering them, as this is an important principle to keep in mind.

All these infallible vajra promises we should lay up in our hearts. We should consider Guru Rinpoche as our wish-fulfilling jewel, the all-sufficing embodiment of all refuges. And we should consider this sovereign invocation of the seven lines as our main practice, reciting it with a steady, balanced devotion, and a sense of urgency.

In this commentary, Mipham Rinpoche quotes these terma texts to show us that Guru Rinpoche's vajra words are completely free from deception. For Buddhists, the words of Mipham Rinpoche are trustworthy and reliable. Therefore, we should recognize the value of Guru Rinpoche's vajra words and engrave them deeply in our minds.

Whether it's Buddha Amitabha, Buddha Shakyamuni, Medicine Buddha, or Avalokiteshvara, Mahasthamaprapta, or Shariputra and Maudgalyayana—all these objects of refuge to whom we regularly pray can be embodied in Guru Rinpoche alone. Guru Rinpoche embodies all enlightened beings. By practicing him alone, you accomplish all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Understanding this point, we should maintain the king of prayers, the Seven-Line Prayer, with unmatched faith and joy, and with a real sense of urgency.

Once we have received this teaching on the Seven-Line Prayer, it would be a great loss if, in two or three years, we were to lose faith in the practices of Guru Rinpoche—or worse, slander them. Those with true wisdom vividly remember, even in old age when their hair has turned white, the teachings they received in their youth. Just as certain great masters uphold a single essential instruction throughout their lives, doing so brings immeasurable benefit at the time of death and throughout all future rebirths.

Remember that in these degenerate times, sentient beings carry heavy karma, are burdened with afflictions, and face obstacles upon obstacles. To practice in such an environment, we must rely on Guru Rinpoche, who is like a bright lamp in the dark night. Reciting his Seven-Line Prayer brings the most supreme and swift blessings. Therefore, no one should take this lightly; we must recite it regularly.

The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmakara

In addition to the Seven-Line Prayer, Guru Rinpoche has another renowned prayer called *Le'u Dünma*, *The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara, the Second Buddha*. It is a long supplication found in his biographies. Many monasteries also include it in their daily recitations, but here at Larung Gar, we have not asked you to recite

it every day. There is also a fascinating story about it in *The Secret Biography of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje*.²⁸

At that time, Khyentse Yeshe Dorje was preparing to set out on wandering and requested his disciples not to follow him. The disciples kept pleading, “No matter where you go, Master, we must follow you!” The master finally said, “If that’s the case, you must not reveal to anyone that I am Khyentse. From now on, Jigme will act as the teacher among us and take the first position in the assembly. I will henceforth be called Penta, and when introducing me to others, say that I am an illiterate simpleton.” Everyone had no choice but to agree.

Their group crossed mountains and valleys, wandering to many places. Once, they arrived at Labrang Monastery and wanted to request teachings from Gungthang Tsang Rinpoche. Outside the monastery, a tall, imposing geshe was circumambulating the temple. Seeing them, he asked, “Where are you going?” They replied, “We’re hoping to meet Gungthang Tsang Rinpoche. Do you know if we can see him?” The geshe said, “You should be able to.” So they slowly made their way, asking for directions, until they found Gungthang Tsang’s quarters. Upon entering, they discovered to their surprise that the geshe from earlier was Gungthang Tsang Rinpoche himself.

The rinpoche sat on his throne with a yellow seat beside it. He invited their senior member to take that seat while the others could arrange themselves in order. He offered them rice, tea, and other provisions. Traditionally, when one first arrives at a Gelug monastery, the first thing offered is droma—the Tibetan silverweed root. When they requested teachings, Gunghang Tsang Rinpoche asked, “Isn’t your seating order reversed?” Jigme replied firmly, “No.” The rinpoche said, “It’s best not to reverse it. The essential teaching of our Gelug tradition is *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, which I can explain to you in detail. The foundation of all your practices and the root of blessings and accomplishments is guru yoga. I hope Penta, who sits at the end of your group, will transmit *The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara* to me.” Jigme quickly tried to smooth things over, saying, “Penta is illiterate, so I’m afraid he cannot fulfill your wish.” The rinpoche said with some disappointment, “Oh!?” That is as much of the story as I remember. If you’re interested, you can read the full account in the biography.

In our Nyingma tradition, both the Seven-Line Prayer and *The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara* are particularly important. These two prayers serve a role similar to the morning chanting in Han Chinese monasteries. In many Tibetan monasteries, monks begin chanting them before dawn each day. In particular, some old lamas and

seasoned practitioners start reciting as soon as they get up in the morning. This was the practice in the past, though I wonder whether young monastics today still maintain this custom. I've heard the situation is similar in Han regions—many new monks cannot even memorize the morning and evening chanting. When they enter the hall, they suffer, constantly nodding off or even secretly sending text messages, only to be caught and scolded by the disciplinarian. But overall, the recitations of monastics are truly sublime.

Of course, laypeople can also recite these prayers. I hope that in the future, wherever the dharma spreads, people will recite Guru Rinpoche's prayers. Even if *The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara* is rather long and difficult to recite, you must at least recite the Seven-Line Prayer. When Chojé visited many dharma centers in the West and Southeast Asia in 1993 and 1995, practitioners there were already very familiar with reciting the Seven-Line Prayer and the Vajra Guru mantra. Yet in many centers in Han Regions today, apart from chanting Buddha Amitabha's name, one rarely hears the recitation of prayers to Guru Rinpoche.

While reciting the Buddha's name is certainly a supreme practice, it is also important to understand how to engage in a more comprehensive approach to practice, which will be of greater benefit

to us. Because sentient beings have different capacities, some attain liberation through the recitation of Buddha Amitabha's name, while others do so through Guru Rinpoche's mantra. To insist that only one practice is valid and to exclude all others is far too narrow a view. Therefore, it is essential to promote a variety of profound practices among different groups of people. The reason Buddha Shakyamuni taught 84,000 different dharma doors was precisely because sentient beings have diverse dispositions and require different methods for liberation. Otherwise, the Buddha could have taught just one teaching, and all beings in the entire three-thousandfold world system would gain liberation through that. But this is clearly not the case.

THE WAY TO MEDITATE ON GURU RINPOCHE

How should we specifically meditate on Guru Rinpoche? First, we should visualize the manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, from his miraculous birth to his enlightened activities.

As it is said in the *Crystal Mountain* (the tantra of the enlightened body from the *Distillation of the Guru's Wisdom*),

**Upon a spotless lake and on a swelling pistil-cup
Sits Padma Vajra Tsel, unstained by human birth,
And with him Mandarava, bliss-bestowing queen.
As means and wisdom, emptiness and bliss, they dance
supreme.**

**He is the essence and embodiment of all the Conquerors,
Displaying and appearing in many emanations.**

This means visualizing Guru Rinpoche seated upon a lotus pistil in an immaculate ocean, where he takes birth through miraculous manifestation and appears in the form of a nirmanakaya, unstained

by the impurities of the womb. In this form, he is called Padma Vajra Tsel, or “Lotus Vajra Power.” He is in union with the wisdom dakini Mandarava, who bestows the supreme taste of great bliss and wisdom. This union of emptiness and bliss—the great play of freedom—symbolizes skillful means and wisdom, and forms the central image of the deity in our meditation. Guru Rinpoche is the essence of the wisdom of all the buddhas of the ten directions and three times, and, through his miraculous power, appears in the world in inconceivable emanations to liberate countless sentient beings. This briefly describes Guru Rinpoche’s enlightened deeds, from his birth to his dharma activities.

As has been said, we should, in our meditation sessions, visualize Guru Rinpoche and his retinue of dakas and dakinis. We should invoke him with one-pointed concentration and again and again receive blessings and empowerments. We should make this our main practice as much as we can; and, in the post-meditation period, considering that all phenomena are the display of the Guru, we should train ourselves in pure perception, compassion, and bodhichitta.

When we practice the guru yoga of Padmasambhava or recite his mantra, we should single-pointedly visualize, pray to, and supplicate Guru Rinpoche along with his retinue of dakas and dakinis, continually requesting to receive his empowerment. What empowerment are we asking for here? It is not necessarily the empowerment bestowed by a lama through a vase ritual. Rather, through fervent supplication, we imagine streams of light radiating from Guru Rinpoche's three places—body, speech, and mind—and merging with our own three places. Finally, Guru Rinpoche, together with his entire retinue, dissolves into our heart. This is known as the path empowerment. It is extremely important, and we should visualize and receive it again and again in each session. The blessings received through this practice are especially powerful and swift; therefore, it is essential to maintain and safeguard this practice with diligence.

The period between the end of one meditation session (after dedicating merit) and the beginning of the next is the post-meditation period. During this time, we should view all appearances as the play of Guru Rinpoche. Whatever we see, we should regard as Guru Rinpoche's manifestation. For example, if someone criticizes or scolds you, you should think, "This is Guru Rinpoche manifesting as an unpleasant person to tame me and correct my faults; this must

be Padmasambhava!” Likewise, all sounds should be regarded as Guru Rinpoche’s vajra speech, and all thoughts as the display of his wisdom. We should cultivate pure perception toward all phenomena, recognizing even our own strong compassion and bodhicitta as manifestations of Guru Rinpoche’s presence and miraculous power.

These practices are truly profound and extraordinary, and generally are not taught openly. However, due to special circumstances this year, although I am concerned about speaking too openly about teachings that are not usually given in public, I also feel that many of you may not accomplish your practice without receiving such powerful blessings. Therefore, it is essential for everyone to understand these principles. Whether or not you put them into practice ultimately depends on your own faith and karmic connections.

FIVE ASPECTS OF BLESSING

How should we actually put these teachings into practice in our daily lives? The following describes the five aspects of blessing:

It is said later in the previously mentioned text,

If you meditate on compassion and bodhichitta, your mind will be blessed. If you consider the place where you live as Oddiyana, your neighborhood will be blessed, and your house will be blessed if you visualize it as an immeasurable palace. If you perceive other people as deities, they will be blessed as wisdom deities. Finally, by considering all your food and drink as amrita, you will bless them as substances of offering. Such are the five aspects of blessing, though there are other inconceivable blessings besides these.

If we practice as described above, we will attain mastery of the supreme and ordinary accomplishments.

Cultivating Compassion and Bodhicitta

In daily life, we should practice compassion and bodhicitta to bless our own mind stream.

Pure Perception of Our Environment

Wherever we live—whether in a city or elsewhere—we should visualize it as the pure land of Oddiyana, thereby blessing all places and directions.

Pure Perception of Our Home

We should not regard the houses we live in as nothing more than ordinary material structures, but visualize them as immeasurable palaces. *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* also teaches two kinds of motivation: one is generating bodhicitta, and the other is cultivating pure perception. In fact, maintaining pure perception is crucial in all our activities—walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. We should view our living environment as Guru Rinpoche’s pure land, the pure land of Sukhavati, or the pure lands of other buddhas. Since our body, speech, and mind are, in essence, the display of wisdom, the place where we dwell is correspondingly a pure land, although we may not yet recognize it as such. Thus, this method of visualization is extremely profound.

Pure Perception of Dharma Friends

We should regard all our dharma friends as manifestations of bodhisattvas such as Vajrapani, Manjushri, and Samantabhadra. We should not, like some people, think, “This person is bad, that one is jealous, another is full of anger, and yet another is greedy—everyone is terrible except me, who alone is Manjushri.” Such an attitude is certainly incorrect. We must see all dharma friends as deities. This method of visualization is called blessing other people as wisdom deities.

Pure Perception of Food and Offerings

We should visualize all the food and drink we consume as amrita and feast offerings blessed by the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Some people become picky about food—always feeling that this doesn’t taste good or that it is hard to swallow. They cannot eat what they cook themselves, and they do not like what others prepare either. This is not a helpful attitude for practice. We should view all food and drink as amrita. Especially before each meal, we should recite offering prayers or visualize the food as feast offerings and recite a brief feast offering liturgy to make offerings to all buddhas and bodhisattvas. In this way, we transform ordinary food into a means of spiritual practice, which is a powerful approach.

How should we recite these prayers? First, begin with the following prayer:

ཨོཾ་ཧཱུྃ་ ཧཱུྃ།

om ah hung

om āḥ hūṃ

སྟོན་པ་ལྷ་མེད་སངས་རྒྱལ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། །

tönpa lamey sangye rinpoche

To the Precious Buddha, teacher most supreme,

སྐྱབ་པ་ལྷ་མེད་དམ་ཚེས་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། །

kyobpa lamey damchö rinpoche

To the Precious Dharma, refuge most supreme,

འདྲེན་པ་ལྷ་མེད་དགེ་འདུན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ། །

drenpa lamey gedun rinpoche

To the Precious Sangha, guidance most supreme,

སྐྱབས་གནས་དཀོན་མཆོག་གསུམ་ལ་མཆོད་པ་འབུལ། །

kyabney könchog sumla chöpar pul

To the triple refuge gems, we offer this.

After this comes *The Concise Feast Offering*:

རི་ཡི་ཁྲི་།

ram yam kham

raṃ yaṃ khaṃ

རྩ་གསུམ་ལྷ་ཚོགས་ཚོགས་ལ་སྤྱན་འདྲེན་གཤེགས། །

tsa sum lha tsok tsok la chen dren shek

Gurus, devas, dakinis all: come now to this gaṇacakra feast.

ཕྱི་ནང་གསང་བའི་བདེ་ཆེན་ཚོགས་མཚོན་འབྲུལ། །

chi nang sangwé dechen tsok chö bul

Outer, inner, and secret great bliss are the gaṇacakra offerings
I make.

དམ་ཚིག་ཉམས་ཆག་ཐམས་ཅད་མཐོལ་ལོ་བཤགས། །

damtsik nyam chak tamché tol lo shak

All impairments and breakages of samaya, I confess.

གཉིས་འཛིན་དག་བགེགས་ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས་སུ་སློལ། །

nyi dzin dra gek chö kyi ying su drol

Duality, enemies and obstructors: liberate them into the
dharmadhātu.

མཉམ་ཉིད་བདེ་བ་ཆེན་པོའི་ཐུགས་དམ་བསྐྱངས། །

nyam nyi dewachenpö tuk dam kang

May your wisdom mind, the great bliss of equality,
be delighted;

མཚོག་དང་ཐུན་མོང་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྐྱེལ་དུ་གསོལ། །

chok dang tünmong ngödrup tsal du sol

Please grant me attainments, ordinary and supreme.

In this way, ordinary food is transformed into a feast offering. If circumstances allow, I hope you can apply this practice in the future.

These five aspects of blessing include many facets of the path. If you can apply them in your daily life, you will surely accomplish both the supreme and ordinary accomplishments and gain full mastery.

This concludes the outer practice of the Seven-Line Prayer.

GURU YOGA PRACTICE OF PADMASAMBHAVA

Now I will turn to the final section, “A brief explanation of how the foregoing exposition may be implemented as a practice.” Here I will give a short explanation of the root text, *White Lotus*. Much of its meaning is evident in the words themselves, so there is no need to be overly elaborate. As for the teachings on the path of liberation, the path of skillful means, and the practices of the Great Perfection, I will not cover them here. Those will be transmitted once you have completed the preliminary practices and the right conditions have gathered.

The practice below gathers several essential points from the Vajrayana teachings mentioned earlier. Ideally, only those who have received empowerment, or who have a deep and special devotion to Guru Rinpoche, should listen to this section.

In the beginning, we can use the Seven-Line Prayer as a part of the guru-yoga practice. It establishes the favorable conditions for the actualization of primordial wisdom. Then, with

the help of a fully qualified teacher, we should gain a clear understanding of the essential points of the common paths of skillful means and liberation, and of the ultimate and swift path of the Great Perfection. Next, we should make these the heart of our practice and meditate with diligence. This is how to gain certainty in the view, as explained in the conclusive pith instructions; and it is how one accomplishes the level of vidyadhara.

First, through guru yoga, pray to receive powerful blessings—the supportive conditions for your primordial wisdom to manifest. Guru yoga is essential. Even if you cannot take up other practices, keep a daily guru-yoga session without interruption. You may practice the Guru Rinpoche guru yoga presented here, or the guru yoga of other masters, but whenever possible the prayers you recite should be vajra words—authentic words of realization.

Next, rely on a qualified spiritual teacher—someone who genuinely possesses the qualities of a dharma guide. In that teacher’s presence, establish a solid understanding of the essential instructions for the path of skillful means, the path of liberation, and the pith instructions of Dzogchen. Then practice with diligence. Within this brief human life, you can realize Dzogchen’s unique and profound

meaning, ultimately joining the ranks of realized vidyadharas and attaining their level of realization.

With an irreversible faith in Guru Rinpoche, considering him the embodiment of all refuges, we should meditate upon him, visualizing him above the crown of our heads, praying to him intensely with the seven vajra verses [of the Seven-Line Prayer]. From the body of the Guru, there flows a stream of amrita, which cleanses away all our illnesses, and all the evil forces to which we have fallen victim, as well as all the sins, defilements, and sufferings of body, speech, and mind. All these negativities leave us in the form of pus, blood, insects, smoky-colored liquids, and various other impurities. Finally, like salt dissolving into water, our body melts into a pure liquid, which falls into the gaping mouths of Yama—the lord of death—and all the other evil forces and spirits beneath the earth to whom we owe karmic debts, so that these creditors are wholly satisfied. All evil and karmic debts are thus cleansed and dissolve into emptiness.

To practice in this way, begin by recognizing Guru Rinpoche as the embodiment of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. With sincere, unwavering faith, visualize him above the crown of your head. If

you have a basis in Vajrayana practice, you may visualize Guru Rinpoche in union with the wisdom dakini Yeshe Tsogyal. If you are not yet confident in that aspect, simply visualize Guru Rinpoche alone.

Then visualize yourself in your ordinary form and perform the seven-branch offering. Pray with heartfelt intensity using the Seven-Line Prayer, while imagining nectar (amrita) streaming down from Guru Rinpoche's body. As though you are being bathed in it, all illness, harmful influences, karmic obscurations, and the suffering accumulated through your three doors since beginningless time are washed out and expelled as pus, blood, insects, smoky-colored liquid, and other impurities. Finally, your body dissolves like salt in water. This purified liquid then flows down into the earth and into the mouths of all karmic creditors, led by Yama, the lord of death. They are satisfied; karmic debts are repaid; harm is pacified; and everything dissolves into emptiness—just as in the Vajrasattva practice.

This is especially beneficial for those with chronic illness, or for practitioners facing serious obstacles—such as spirit possession or various hallucinations. If you can practice guru yoga in this way, offering your body to satisfy harmful forces and karmic creditors, you will certainly clear obstacles.

It is crucial to understand this practice and then actually do it. Some people call themselves practitioners, yet have never completed even a single session of a profound practice—it is hard to take such a claim seriously. Others hear a teaching, practice for a day or two, and then stop; this is not a reliable way to train. In general, choose one or two profound methods and keep them for life. It does not matter which monastery you live in, or which tradition you follow. What matters is that you continue your chosen practices without interruption.

Then we should meditate on our bodies as being the luminous body of the yidam deity to whom we feel an affinity, and we should consider that Guru Rinpoche, visualized above the crown of our heads, descends into the center of the eight-petaled lotus of our hearts and mingles in a single taste with the indestructible essence-drop. We should then remain in a state of meditative equipoise in the primordial wisdom of great bliss.

Continuing from what we just described: your ordinary body has dissolved like salt in water and has been completely offered to those to whom you owe karmic debts. Now visualize your body transforming into the luminous form of a deity for whom you feel

རང་གི་སྤྱི་བོ་ནས་བྱུགས་སྦྱིང་དབྱས་ཐིམ།

rang gi chiwo né shyuk nying ü tim

Which enters the crown of my head and dissolves into the
center of my heart.

རྒྱལ་ཀུན་ཡེ་ཤེས་གཅིག་འདུས་སྐྱ་མ་དང་།

gyal kun yeshe chik du lama dang

I obtain the blessing of becoming equal to

སྐལ་བ་མཉམ་པའི་བྱིན་རྒྱལས་ཐོབ་པར་བསམ།

kalwa nyampé jin lab tob par sam

The guru in whom all the buddhas' wisdom is combined.

As you recite, visualize accordingly. Then remain in that state—at least for thirty seconds, a minute, or longer. Everyone should include this resting phase in their guru-yoga practice.

In the future, I encourage you to engage more deeply in the guru yoga of Guru Padmasambhava or Chojé Yidzhin Norbu. When practicing, you should ultimately visualize the guru dissolving into light, which merges into your own mind, or you may visualize light radiating from the guru's three places merging into your own. Although each liturgy may have its own specific instructions, you should simply visualize according to the text. This is not complicated: if you can understand the words of the liturgy, you can do the

visualization. If you only recite the words without truly focusing your mind on the visualization, it is unlikely to bring you any real benefit.

After resting in this way for a while, according to the guru yoga instructions in Mipham Rinpoche's preliminary sadhana *Illuminating the Path of Liberation*, when you arise from meditation, you should recite some Vajra Guru mantras, followed by the following verse and then conclude with the final supplication:

སྐྱེ་བ་ཀུན་ཏུ་ཡང་དག་ལྷ་མ་དང་།།

kyewa küntu yangdak lama dang

In all my lives, may I never be separated from the perfect guru,

འབྲེལ་མེད་ཚེས་གྱི་དཔལ་ལ་ལོངས་སྤྱོད་ཅིང་།།

dralmé chö kyi pal la longchö ching

And having benefited fully from the splendour of the Dharma,

ས་དང་ལམ་གྱི་ཡོན་ཏན་རབ་རྗེས་ནས།།

sa dang lam gyi yönten rabdzok né

May I perfect the qualities of the five paths and ten bhūmis,

དོ་རྗེ་འཆང་གི་གོ་འཕང་ལྷུར་ཐོབ་ཤོག།

dorjé chang gi gopang nyur tob shok

And swiftly attain the sublime level of Vajradhara!

If the guru-yoga sadhana you practice does not include the Vajra Guru mantra—as is the case in Chojé Yidzhin Norbu’s guru yoga—then you can simply extend the time of resting: three minutes, five minutes, fifteen, or even thirty. While resting, let your ordinary mind merge with the guru’s wisdom. This way of practicing is extremely powerful and rich in blessings. Much more could be said—but perhaps I have already said enough, especially since many people have not yet received empowerment.

In the post-meditation period, we should consider that everything that appears is a pure buddhafield peopled by deities. We should use the activities of eating, walking, and sitting as part of the practice, considering them as offerings, circumambulation, and so on, respectively. When we go to bed, we should visualize the teacher in the center of our hearts and practice accordingly. Thus in all our daily conduct, we should endeavor in the practice in a constant, uninterrupted stream, making a virtue of everything we do.

In the post-meditation period—throughout the ordinary flow of your day, whether you are eating, walking, sitting, or speaking—regard whatever you perceive as the guru’s display: appearances as the manifestation of the guru’s body, sounds as the wondrous

expression of the guru's speech, and thoughts as the play of the guru's wisdom mind. At night, before you fall asleep, visualize the guru as a sphere of light—or as the guru's form—at the center of your heart, and let yourself drift into sleep while maintaining that awareness.

As practice ripens, the entire post-meditation period becomes nothing other than the guru's activity—like a river flowing without pause. Of course, it is wonderful if your training in guru yoga becomes continuous in this way. But for most of us the “river” is frequently interrupted, and the time when it truly flows is quite short. (Laughter)

We should visualize Guru Rinpoche in the sky in front of us and pray to him, making offerings and praises. This is the way to receive the blessings of his body, speech, and mind. Such prayers are of the highest importance.

Visualize the guru in the space before you. If you have some experience with the generation and completion stages, you may visualize the guru in union with the consort. If that is difficult, simply visualize the guru alone. Or, as Omniscient Longchenpa explains in *Finding Rest in Illusion*, keep the guru's form just as it is, while recognizing that the guru's very essence is the essence of all buddhas

and bodhisattvas—just as in the guru yoga of Chojé Yidzhin Norbu. In the presence of this visualized guru, recite supplications and praises, aspiration prayers, and especially the verses for calling the guru from afar.

The habit of praying to the guru is extremely important. If you supplicate the guru regularly, then over time profound experiences will naturally arise, and you will find it easy to practice any yidam deity. But if this connection is not established, it becomes very difficult to succeed in other practices. This is a pith instruction handed down by the vidyadhara masters, and Chojé has also taught on this many times.

Through the preliminary practices we have undertaken together this year, my conviction in the vital importance of guru yoga has deepened even further. Whether your guru yoga is focused on Guru Rinpoche, on Chojé Yidzhin Norbu, or on your own root guru—truly an emanation of the buddhas and bodhisattvas—guru yoga is indispensable. If we give guru yoga special emphasis, our practice will succeed. If we do not give it its due importance, then as we practice, obstacles and adverse circumstances will inevitably arise.

For, generally speaking, all the perfect qualities of the upper realms and the ultimate excellence of buddhahood manifest when we follow a teacher. This is particularly true of the realization of the profound path, which depends entirely on the reception of the teacher's blessings. As it is said,

**The ultimate and coemergent wisdom
Comes only through the gathering of merit and the
cleansing of all faults,
And from the blessings of accomplished gurus.
To seek it elsewhere—you should understand—is folly.**

Why is guru yoga so important? Because the guru is the source of all the qualities of higher rebirth and ultimate liberation. Above all, realization of the profound path depends entirely on receiving the guru's blessings. This is not unique to Tibetan Buddhism; we also see it among realized masters in Han Chinese Buddhism. In many Chan stories, disciples awaken suddenly through the teacher's blessing, a subtle indication, or a direct encounter. Of course, the crucial factor is the disciple's faith and pure perception. When those conditions are present, realization naturally arises.

As the verse states, ultimate, innate wisdom can be realized only through gathering merit, purifying obscurations, and receiving

the blessings of an accomplished guru. To look for it elsewhere is simply mistaken. Therefore, if you wish to attain realization, rely on the guru's instructions—especially the practice of guru yoga. This will help you accomplish your aims swiftly and without obstacles. Conversely, if you neglect these practices and focus instead on other methods—such as working with winds, channels, and bindus—obstacles can easily arise.

The other day someone said, “Every day I hold the winds in my abdomen, and now it feels as if my internal organs have disappeared—I’ve become a big glass bottle. But sometimes it seems there is still a poisonous snake inside.” Experiences like this can be quite unsettling. Without the guru's pith instructions, if you rely only on your own imagination, the results are unlikely to be helpful. Therefore, practice guru yoga and supplicate Guru Rinpoche through methods that carry blessings and authentic instruction; then your efforts will be far more effective.

It is also worth noting that when you pray to the guru, it is best to recite the vajra words of great accomplished masters. Some people prefer to write their own verses—“The guru is like a buddha, I am like a bodhisattva...”—and then recite their own “vajra words.” This is not necessary. It is far better to recite the words of Guru Rinpoche or other realized masters, because these carry genuine blessings.

And,

Moreover it is coemergent and ineffable.

You find it nowhere else

Except through timely teachings of the guru

And by virtue of your merit. Know this well.

Innate wisdom cannot be realized through external methods, no matter the time or place. It depends entirely on the guru's pith instructions and on the strength of your own merit. Only when these two conditions come together can that inexpressible state be recognized. For this reason, those with merit naturally incline toward guru yoga and encounter authentic teachers whose presence carries blessings. When the guru's blessing and our heartfelt supplication truly meet, the stream of blessings flows uninterrupted, and recognizing coemergent wisdom is not so difficult.

In order to actualize the highest primordial wisdom, we should study the texts of the sutras and the tantras, together with their commentaries. In particular, we should familiarize ourselves with the pith instructions that introduce directly and nakedly the ultimate primordial wisdom, the union of emptiness and appearance. It is by such means that we will be able to dispel all doubts regarding the view. Then, by exerting ourselves

according to our understanding and experience, either on the path of skillful means or on the path of liberation, we will reap the fruit both now and ultimately.

In short, to realize the mind's true nature, we must listen, contemplate, and meditate—again and again becoming familiar with the sutras and tantras and their commentaries, and especially with the guru's pith instructions that point out the nature of mind directly. When doubts about the meaning of the teachings have been cleared away, we should apply ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever method best suits our experience and understanding—whether the path of skillful means or the path of liberation. In this way, we will ultimately achieve both temporary and ultimate accomplishment.

This concludes a brief introduction to Guru Rinpoche and the extraordinary benefits of supplicating him in prayer.

BE TAKEN INTO GURU PADMASAMBHAVA'S CARE

The reason I have shared Mipham Rinpoche's commentary, *White Lotus*, with you on this occasion is that I was deeply moved by a verse in its colophon, where Mipham Rinpoche writes:

**May all who have connections with me and with this
prayer
Be taken into Padma's care for all their lives.
May they receive, reflect, and meditate
Upon the teachings without let or obstacle,
And gain with ease their own and others' good.**

In other words, for anyone who forms a connection with Mipham Rinpoche or with this Seven-Line Prayer, may Guru Rinpoche protect and bless them life after life—so that their listening, contemplation, and meditation on the Buddhadharma proceed without obstacles, and their activities to benefit sentient beings unfold with ease, naturally accomplishing the twofold benefit of self and others.

I consider this verse especially important, because it expresses the real purpose of Buddhist practice. For the sake of your complete spiritual development, I have therefore shared Mipham Rinpoche's pith instructions on the Seven-Line Prayer, so that you may come to know the extraordinary qualities of Guru Padmasambhava.

I have also translated *The Benefits of the Vajra Guru Mantra*²⁹ from Tibetan into Chinese, in the hope that this auspicious connection will inspire faith in Guru Rinpoche throughout China. Once faith in Guru Rinpoche is established, there is abundant scriptural and logical support for the flourishing of the dharma, and for each person's practice to succeed.

For that reason, when you go out, it is helpful to carry an image of Guru Rinpoche with you. You can keep the photo I handed out a few days ago; it is easy to bring along. It is also best to enshrine an image or statue of Guru Rinpoche on your home altar. Once I saw someone who had set up two separate shrines at home—one for Sutrayana and one for Vajrayana—as though the buddhas and bodhisattvas might object to seeing one another. This is completely unnecessary.

The buddhas and bodhisattvas of Sutrayana and Vajrayana are, in essence, one. If people from East and West can live together in the

same room, this is even more true for buddhas and bodhisattvas. They will not quarrel or come into conflict, so there is no need for separate shrines. Placing Guru Rinpoche on a Sutrayana shrine will not create any obstacles. Some people who are new to Buddhism have especially strong conceptual habits: they think at great length about what does not need to be thought about, while failing to contemplate what truly should be contemplated. Therefore, whenever circumstances allow, it is important to gently help those around you who see Sutrayana and Vajrayana as contradictory, so they can gradually shift their perspective and gain a genuine understanding of the authentic dharma. This is extremely important.

Some people may wonder, “I’m such an ordinary person—if I pray to Guru Rinpoche, will he really bless me?” In fact, Guru Rinpoche makes no such distinctions. Not to mention Guru Rinpoche—even someone like me, an ordinary person, rejoices when you practice sincerely and benefit sentient beings, regardless of whether you are Sakya or Gelug, Tibetan or Han Chinese. I have never thought, “They are not from my tradition; their practice is their own business and has nothing to do with me.” If ordinary people like us can be open-minded in this way, then a wisdom deity like Guru Rinpoche

will certainly treat all beings equally, caring for and blessing everyone without exception. Therefore, pray to Guru Rinpoche at all times.

This teaching series has given us a rare opportunity. In the past, I have seen many forms of practice that were not quite in accord with the dharma, and for a long time I have wished to share the qualities of Guru Padmasambhava and the benefits of the Seven-Line Prayer, but I had not found the right occasion. Now that I have given these teachings, some of you may take them to heart, and some may not. If you do not value them, it is fine to set them aside. But if you do, they may bring benefit to both yourself and others.

NOTES

1. *Hrīḥ* (Skt.); Tib. ཧྲིཿ (Wylie: hrIH).
2. You may refer to the story of Darcarupa as recounted in Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*.
3. This refers to the sadhana based upon the Seven-Line Prayer, taken from a dharma treasure of Pema Garwang Chimé Yudrung Lingpa.
4. Throughout this book, the terms Chojé, Khenpo Rinpoche, Rinpoche, His Holiness, and Yidzhin Norbu refer to His Holiness Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche.
5. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, "Daily Dorje Drolo Practice," Khenpo Sodargye's Official Website, accessed June 15, 2025, <http://www.khenposodargye.org/teachings/khenpos-short-teachings/short-teachings-of-h-h-jigme-phuntsok-rinpoche/>.
6. See *The Golden Garuda: The Extraordinary Life of Modern-Day Mahasiddha Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2025).
7. Orgyen Lingpa, *A Concise History of Orgyen Padma's Enlightened Deeds*, translated by Samye Translations, 2016, version 1.4-20250303, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/orgyen-lingpa/concise-history-of-orgyen-padmas-enlightened-deeds#fnref:34>.
8. Orgyen Lingpa, *A Concise History*, version 1.4-20250303.
9. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, "Spontaneous Lament Recalling the Great Guru of Oddiyana," translated by Adam Pearcey, 2019, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/khenpo-jigme-phuntsok/spontaneous-lament-recalling-great-guru>.

10. *Le'u Dünma, The Prayer in Seven Chapters to Padmākara, the Second Buddha*, terma revealed by Tulku Zangpo Drakpa and deciphered by Rigdzin Chenpo Gödem Truchen, translated by Rigpa Translations, version 1.5-20250206, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/tulku-zangpo-drakpa/leu-d-unma-chapter-5>.
11. Khenpo Sodargye 索达吉堪布, 《密宗虹身成就略记》 (“Brief Account of Rainbow Body Attainment in Vajrayana”).
12. Tib. འཛི་ཆེན་ཁོག་ (Wylie: 'dzi chen khog); rendered in the text as “Dzi Chen Valley.”
13. Tib. ཁྲོམ་ (Wylie: khroM).
14. Garuda mantra in Tibetan: ཨོཾ་ཁྲོམ་ག་རུ་དམ་ལེ་ཨུཾ་ཤཱཿ (Wylie: oM khroM ga ru Da tsa le tsa le hUM phaT).
15. Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, *An Aspiration for the Nyingma Teachings: Words to Delight the Sovereigns of the Dharma*, trans. Rigpa Translations, Lotsawa House, version 1.1-20250228, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/ngagyur-nyingma-aspiration-words-to-delight-sovereigns-of-dharma>.
16. *Hung* (Skt.); Tib. ཨུཾ་ (Wylie: hUM).
17. The Fourth Dodrupchen, Tupten Trinlé Pal Zangpo, *Guru Yoga*, trans. Han Kop, Lotsawa House, version: 1.0-20220202, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/fourth-dodrupchen-rinpoch-e/guru-yoga>.
18. Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, *Illuminating the Path to Liberation*, trans. Adam Pearcey, Lotsawa House, version: 2.3-20250218, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/illuminating-path-to-liberation>.
19. This sadhana can be found at the end of *White Lotus*. For reference, another English

translation is available: Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche, *A Shower of Blessings: A Guru Yoga Practice to Accompany the Seven-Line Prayer*, trans. Adam Pearcey, Lotsawa House,

<https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/shower-of-blessings>.

20. Padmasambhava, *The Benefits of the Vajra Guru Mantra and an Explanation of Its Syllables*, trans. Heidi Nevin, Lotsawa House, version: 1.6-20250220, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/karma-lingpa/benefits-vajra-guru-mantra>.
21. The mantra is: om̐ padma śavari phaṭ | nenpar shik | nāga nen | tadyathā | sarva virita | hana hana | vajrena rakṣa rakṣa svāhā (ཨོཾ་པདྨའཔ་ཤའི་པཎེ་ནཔ་པར་ཤིག་ལ། རྒྱ་གཞི་འཕྲོ་ཏེ། སའ་མེ་རི་ཏེ། ཉ་ན་ཉ་ནེ། བཟེན་རྩལ་རྩལ་སྐྱེ།).
22. Gowo Lha Tsé (Tib. གོ་ལོ་ལྷ་ཅེ།) is a sacred mountain in Dawu (道孚), Sichuan Province, where His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche revealed a terma statue of Buddha Shakyamuni from a rock and left a footprint on a stone.
23. Khenpo Sodargye, *Footprints on the Journey: One Year Following the Path of Dzogchen Master Khenpo Sodargye*, trans. Shao Guang, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2024
24. Khenpo Sodargye 索达吉堪布, 《佛教与科学》 (“Buddhism and Science”).
25. Taixu 太虚, 《斗净坚固中略论时轮金刚法会》 (“A Brief Discussion on the Kalachakra Initiation Amidst Controversy”).
26. Yinshun 印顺, 《太虚大师年谱》 (*The Chronicle of Master Taixu's Life*).
27. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, *Aspiration Prayer: Sun of Samantabhadra's Realm*, translated by Adam Pearcey and Sean Price, 2020, <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/khenpo-jigme-phuntsok/sun-of-samantabhadras-realm-aspiration>.
28. 《钦则益西多吉密传》 (“The Secret Biography of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje”), author unknown, trans. from Tibetan into Chinese by Khenpo Sodargye 索达吉堪布.

29. Karma Lingpa, *The Benefits of the Vajra Guru Mantra* (《莲师心咒之功德》). For an English translation, see <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/karma-lingpa/benefits-vajra-guru-mantra>.

Dedication

May the merit resulting from this piece of work contribute
in the greatest possible measure to the long life of all great masters,
to the flourishing of the Buddhadharma,
and to the welfare of all sentient beings.



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ཡི་གེ་ཉི་ཤུ་ཅན་རྒྱལ་པོ་འདི་དཔེ་ཚའི་ནང་དུ་བཞག་ན་དཔེ་ཚའི་ཉི་ལྔ་དྲུག་
བཤོམ་མ་གུང་ཉེས་པ་མི་འབྱུང་བར་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷ་རྒྱུད་ལམ་གསུངས་སོ། །