



The Five Race Buddhas and the Five Emotions

H.H. the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin)



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www.sakyatradition.org

Email: info@sakyatradition.org

Wechat ID : sakyatradition

Weibo: sakyatradition

IG: the_sakya_tradition

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By the merit of this work, may His Holiness the Sakya Trichen enjoy perfect health and a very long life, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.



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Motivation Determines the Levels of the Path

Today I will be speaking about the five Buddhas and their relationship with defilements. As always, whenever we receive a teaching, the very first thing we do is to generate the right motivation. Although this discussion is not a formal or an exclusive teaching, it is on a very profound subject, and is therefore very important to have the right motivation.

There are different types of motivation, hence resulting in different levels of the path.

If we receive the teaching just for the sake of this life, for instance, to clear obstacles and to accomplish our worldly needs such as long life, good health, and prosperity, although this is virtuous in essence, the purpose is within the worldly level, and therefore this is not pure Dharma. As it is said in *Parting from the Four Attachments*, “If you are attached to this life, one is not a dharmic or religious person.” To make our Dharma practice pure,

the goal must not be for the sake of only this life; we must practice at least for the sake of the next life.

Life is not permanent. Everyone who is born in this universe will die one day—sooner or later—because everyone born has to die. When we die, our physical body will be disposed of one way or another, but the mental consciousness, which is invisible and cannot vanish in the way that a candle flame flickers out—our consciousness must continue. When we die, our consciousness has to enter into the next life. At that time, we have to leave behind everything that we possess, including our very precious body. The karma that we have accumulated while we were alive, however, will follow us wherever we go, in the same way that a shadow follows wherever the body goes. The negative karmas that we commit during life will determine our destiny to fall down to the lower realms—the hungry ghost, hell, and animal realms. Conversely, the positive karmas or virtuous karmas that we accumulate will cause us to be born in the higher realms—human, demigod, and god realms. If one is born in the lower realms, then of course, one will have to experience unbelievably enormous and unbearable suffering.

The Path of a Small Person

In order to save us from such suffering while continuing to enjoy

existence in the higher realms, we must practice virtuous deeds. Such purpose in our practice is still considered dharmic—practising virtuous deeds is good—but is at a very low level because its goal is still within saṃsāra or the circle of existence. The motivation of those who practice the path with the purpose of seeking to be reborn in higher realms, is defined as the path of a small person, due to their very limited goal, which is still within saṃsāra. Although the suffering in the lower realms is enormous and unbearable while the higher realms seemingly have a mixture of suffering and happiness, if we examine carefully we will find that even in the higher realms there is no real happiness. The feelings that we consider joy, pleasure, and happiness are in reality another form of suffering, too. Suffering in the lower realms is enormous while suffering in the higher realms is lesser; nevertheless, both the lower and higher realms have the nature of suffering. The entire saṃsāra, the entire cycle of life, is full of suffering and there is not a single place that is worthy of attachment.

The Path of a Mediocre Person

Realizing that the entire saṃsāra is not worthy of attachment and thus wishing to be free from it totally, seeking liberation for oneself through Dharma practice is called the path of a mediocre person. This is higher than the path of a small person, yet is still not the highest path, and hence its name. Like us, every sentient

being from tiny insects up to god beings, all have the same feelings and wishes, which is wanting to be free from suffering and liberated from saṃsāra completely. As we believe in rebirth, the life we have now is not the only life we have had. We have had innumerable lives in the past and we will also continue to have innumerable future lives—unless we attain liberation or enlightenment. Therefore, every sentient being is related to us. There is not a single place where one has not been born or where there is not a sentient being who has not been our mother or father.

The Path of a Great Person

So, it is wrong to seek liberation only for ourselves while abandoning and ignoring all sentient beings who have been our parents or loved ones. Instead of just seeking liberation for ourselves, we have to think of the countless other sentient beings who in reality have been our parents, but, due to the obscurations of our present lives, are not recognizable. We may see some as our relatives, some as enemies, and some as indifferent. Realizing this, how can we return the love and kindness given to us in previous lives? The best way to do so is to rescue them from the suffering of saṃsāra and place them on the path of happiness. To accomplish this, we have to attain full enlightenment. Thus, for the sake of all sentient beings,

we embark on the practice path to seek the ultimate enlightenment. This path is known as the path of a great person. It is known as “great” because there is no greater goal than this.

In brief, our level of spiritual path depends on our motivation. Since the topic of discussion today is on the profound five Buddhas, it is especially important to have the right motivation in receiving this teaching. The right motivation is to receive teachings for the sake of all sentient beings in order to attain full enlightenment. After receiving this teaching, you will diligently follow the profound path. It is important to have the right motivation and uphold the right conduct. Since the subject I will be discussing is exclusively for the Vajrayāna teachings, it is important to have its history explained.

A Thousand Buddhas

The period when a buddha appears in this universe is known as a “light eon.” The time in which a buddha has not appeared is called a “dark eon.” There are many, many dark eons but very few light eons. In the beginning of a light eon, when the merits and lifespan of human beings are increasing, a buddha does not appear. In other words, buddhas do not appear most of the time. However, since there will be a thousand buddhas appearing together in this eon, it is called a “fortunate eon.”

Long before these one thousand buddhas attained enlightenment, they were pursuing the bodhisattva path together. At one time they were all born as princes of a universal emperor, as a result of their praying together. When all the princes gathered at a garden, the royal priest collected their names, written in gold and mixed with many precious jewels, and put the names in a vase. Each prince prayed to determine when and where they would attain enlightenment. Names were taken out one by one after the prayer. The order of enlightenment was determined according to

the order of names drawn. Based on that sequence, our present Buddha Śākyamuni was number four, and therefore Buddha Śākyamuni is referred to as the “Fourth Buddha.”

During that time, none of the princes except Buddha Śākyamuni expressed the wish to attain enlightenment during the dark eons or degenerate times, because human beings have more defilements during those times and thus are extremely difficult to train and tame. Our present Buddha Śākyamuni had special compassion and courage to choose to attain enlightenment in a degenerate time—the most difficult time of all. He vowed to help sentient beings in the most difficult periods of time, which were already given up by the other princes, using skillful means and special methods to transform defilements as an assistance to attain enlightenment.

Since Buddha Śākyamuni has chosen to tame the most difficult sentient beings during the most difficult period, among the thousand buddhas he was the only buddha who was empowered to bestow the Vajrayāna teachings to ordinary or common followers. It is just like a person who goes to the poorest country and obtains the best share. It is mentioned very clearly in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, as well as many major tantras, that all the thousand buddhas do not teach Vajrayāna teachings, but only Hinayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, whereas only Buddha Śākyamuni teaches Vajrayāna teachings.

It is mentioned in *Mañjuśrī Nāma Saṃgīti* that Vajrayāna teachings were also taught by all buddhas—the past, present, and future buddhas. Some commentaries mention that Drogön Chögyal Phagpa was consulted in regard with this question and he clarified that the two statements are not in contradiction, because the *Mañjuśrī Nāma Saṃgīti* states that all the past, present, and future buddhas teach higher-level disciples the Vajrayāna teachings, whereas *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and several major tantras state that only Buddha Śākyamuni teaches the Vajrayāna teachings to common followers.

In any case, Buddha Śākyamuni created the enlightenment mind in the beginning and in the meantime accumulated merit and wisdom to endure for three countless eons, and then eventually attained full enlightenment. Although the Buddha does not remain a single moment without helping sentient beings through all of his physical, verbal, and mental activities, the most important activity is turning the wheel of Dharma. In other words, Buddha helps all sentient beings by giving them teachings according to their mentality, defilements, and propensities. The majority of beings are still at lower levels, and therefore most of the teachings are Hinayāna teachings. Then, Mahāyāna teachings are given to higher-level beings who are ready for it, while Vajrayāna teachings are given to those at the more advanced level, including ordinary beings, if they are ready for them.

The Buddhas of Five Races

The term *Five Dhyāni Buddhas* is used exclusively in the Vajrayāna teachings, not in Mahāyāna teachings. This term was used in many earlier translations. Dhyāni means “meditation”; hence Dhyāni Buddhas refers to “meditating buddhas.” The term “Dhyāni Buddhas” is found in neither Sanskrit texts nor Tibetan translated texts, because all buddhas are meditating all the time, so it is improper to refer to them in this way. The best term might be the “Buddhas of Five Races,” because the five Buddhas are of different races. In Tibetan language, the word *rig* means “race,” and *rig nam* means “the five races.” Hence, the Buddhas of Five Races.

The Four Classes of Tantras

There are different classes of tantras in the Vajrayāna teachings. There are many ways to categorize tantras, but the most common classification is to divide them according to the four types of disciples, and thus the four classes of tantra.

The first and basic tantra is called *kriyā* tantra. *Kriyā* means activities. Inferior people cannot devote much effort in meditation, but can engage more in outer physical or verbal activities like recitation of mantra and fasting rituals, so these practices fall into the *kriyā* tantra.

Mediocre people can engage in outer physical activities as well as inner meditation equally and they fall into the *caryā* tantra. Superior people who can concentrate mainly on inner meditation practices are practitioners of yoga tantra. Lastly, the very superior people who can emphasise not only inner meditation but also the highest level of meditation belong to the *anuttarayoga* tantra. In this way, we have four classes of tantra.

As mentioned previously, the Buddhas of Five Races are not mentioned in the Sutrayāna. In fact, this term is not even mentioned in the *kriyā* tantra. *Caryā* tantra only describes the Buddhas of Five Races briefly. Yoga tantra describes the Buddhas of Five Races and their pledges. However, this topic is described fully in the *anutarayoga* tantra.

The relationship of the Buddhas of the Five Races with the samsaric level is very, very important. This is because we think samsaric sentient beings who are in saṃsāra as dwelling at the base, as being low or ordinary, while we think of the buddhas and

their primordial wisdom as dwelling at a very high level. It will be difficult to make the connection between sentient beings and the buddhas if we think that one is lower and one is higher.

Although there is a vast difference like earth and sky between the buddhas and sentient beings, at the same time there is a complete connection between the two; they are interlinked. Therefore, with effort, ordinary sentient beings like us who are full of shortcomings and have defilements can attain full enlightenment because every sentient being possesses buddha nature, the natural race of the buddhas, without any exception. The true nature of mind of every sentient being from invisible germs and tiny insects up to gods, in a sense is the true primordial wisdom of the buddhas—there is no difference between the two. The difference is that the buddhas realize the nature of the mind but ordinary sentient beings have not realized the nature of the mind. Rather, ordinary sentient beings are completely trapped by obscurations, such as obscuration of defilements and obscuration of the knowledge. In other words, the difference between the buddhas and sentient beings lies in whether one has realized the true nature of mind.

The main cause to be caught in *saṃsāra*, where one has to experience ceaseless suffering, is due to ignorance—the lack of wisdom. Ignorance is not knowing the reality; instead of seeing

the reality, we cling to our existence as a “self,” without any logical reasons. We all have a natural habitual tendency to cling to a “self,” but this notion of clinging to a self, which we have built up for an extended period of time is wrong because there is no logical reason. We can begin to investigate by asking “Where is the self?” We are not able to find it anywhere because the body, the name, and even the mind is not the self. This ignorance of clinging to a self is the basis or the source of all suffering.



Buddha Vairocana

The true nature of ignorance is the wisdom of dharmadhātu. Dharmadhātu means ultimate reality. So, in the ultimate reality this very basic ignorance in actuality is the same as the

dharmadhātu wisdom, which is the wisdom of Buddha Vairocana. Buddha Vairocana is white in color because white is the base of all other colors. Likewise, ignorance is the base of all the other defilements. Due to the ignorance of self-clinging, when you have “self,” then there are “others,” just like when you have “right,” then naturally there is “left.” When you have clinging to the self and others, then this gives rise to attachment to one’s own self and anger toward others. From ignorance, attachment and anger then arise. In this way, these form the three basic defilements or, as commonly known, the three poisons. When you have these three defilements, then the qualities of these defilements are pride and stinginess, and the activity of these defilements is jealous thoughts. In this way, ignorance leads to two forms of defilements, and from the three forms of defilements further expands to five defilements, also known as the five poisons.

The symbol of Buddha Vairocana is a wheel. The wheel is a very powerful weapon: it is sharp and can cut, but is not as visible as a sword or an axe. Similarly, although ignorance is the basis of all defilements, it is not as visible as anger or desire.

Form is one of the five aggregates^[1]. Form refers to the five sense organs and the five sense objects that are visible and serve as a base. The five aggregates, five defilements, and five elements are naturally pure in the nature of the five buddhas. If one realizes

their true nature, then they are the five buddhas and the five primordial wisdoms.

In the Vajrayāna practice the ground to be purified, the purifier, and the result of purification are very important. The ground to be purified is the five aggregates, five defilements, and five elements. For example, the ground to be purified for Buddha Vairocana is the aggregate of form, the defilement of ignorance, and the element of earth. Visualizing these forms, defilements, and elements as deities is the purifier. For example, in this case, the aggregate of form, the defilement of ignorance, and the element of earth are visualized as Vairocana and the wisdom of dharmahātu. The empowerment of Buddha Vairocana is the name empowerment; the name given is in a visible form. If there is no form then the name could not be given. Since Buddha Vairocana is a form, the empowerment of Vairocana is the secret name empowerment. The ground to be purified is actually not something different from one's own mind, which has been clinging to the aggregate of form and the defilement of ignorance as an ordinary thought.

The object that we cling to itself is pure; however, due to the way we perceive, we cling to it as an ordinary form. Hence, the ordinary defilement is the ground to be purified. Since there is a connection between the actual Buddha Vairocana and the wisdom

of dharmadhātu with our present aggregate of form and the defilement of ignorance, like the seeds and crops connection, visualizing ourselves in the form of Vairocana and the defilement of ignorance as wisdom of dharmadhātu, is the purifier. When the seed is planted and meets with favorable conditions such as fertile ground, the right amount of moisture, the right temperature, and so on, then it will grow. Similarly, although we are not a buddha at the moment, since there is a connection by visualizing and imagining that we are Buddha Vairocana and possess the wisdom of dharmadhātu, we will be able to attain the Buddha Vairocana stage and accomplish the wisdom of dharmadhātu. As taught by the Buddha, if we do not use and realize our defilements, we will continue to consider them as ordinary; as we indulge in ignorance, we will then, of course, remain caught in saṃsāra and thus experience unceasing suffering.

Buddha Vairocana's wisdom is dharmadhātu. The dharmadhātu wisdom has always been there all the time—no changes—whether you are an ordinary being or a buddha. Only the perception of beings changes. For example, if you have a dirty container made of copper, since it is used as a dirty container thus people consider it as dirty and hesitate to touch it. However, if the same dirty container is melted and the copper is then used to make an ornament, people will have no hesitation in touching it, and instead will appreciate its appearance and desire to touch

and wear it. The perception is now completely changed. If the same copper is used to make a statue of a deity, then not only will people desire to touch it, but also respect and place it in a very high location. The shape of the object is changed, but its material, copper, has never changed, it is the same copper that is used to make the dirty container, ornament, or statue. The wisdom of dharmadhātu from ordinary sentient beings until buddhahood does not change—nothing new is gained when you attain enlightenment. The wisdom of dharmadhātu is already with us right from the beginning, it becomes visible to us during buddhahood, which is also known as dharmakāya.



Buddha Akṣobhya

The aggregate of Buddha Akṣobhya is consciousness, the

defilement is anger, and the wisdom is mirrorlike wisdom. As anger arises from ignorance, the aggregate of Buddha Akṣobhya is the combination of the sense consciousness and mental consciousness, and hence is the aggregate of consciousness. Buddha Akṣobhya is blue or dark blue in color because when one gets angry one's face becomes dark. The object of Buddha Akṣobhya is a vajra. The vajra is the most powerful weapon that exists because when anger is visible it arises, so the symbol for Akṣobhya is a vajra. The empowerment for Buddha Akṣobhya is water empowerment because water washes the dirt away—the dirt on the cloth thus becomes purified and cleansed. The object itself is actually pure, however, it is our mind that perceives it in an impure way. Therefore, what we need to purify is the mind, not other objects, just like dirt is what we need to wash away, not the cloth. Buddha Akṣobhya is about the mind aspect, so its water empowerment symbolises the purifying of the mind.

Mirrorlike wisdom is the wisdom of Buddha Akṣobhya. Mirrorlike wisdom and the wisdom of dharmadhātu are like the two sides of one coin. One side is the wisdom of dharmadhātu while the mirrorlike wisdom that is the omniscient wisdom is on the other side. Like a mirror, whatever form shown is reflected in the mirror. Similarly, each and everything, the causes and conditions of everything, is known to the buddhas,

who are without any conceptual thoughts. Hence, the buddhas' wisdom is omniscient. So, the Buddha Akṣobhya's wisdom is mirrorlike wisdom and the defilement is anger. Anger is not only very powerful but is the most harmful and the worst among all the defilements because the deeds that are caused by anger or related to anger and hatred will result in a rebirth in the hell realm.



Buddha Ratnasambhava

The aggregate for Buddha Ratnasambhava is feeling, such as physical and mental feelings, the defilement is pride and

stinginess, and the wisdom is equality. As mentioned earlier, pride and stinginess are the qualities of defilements. When one has possessions or gains something, one feels proud and becomes stingy. Ratnasambhava's color is yellow because stinginess mostly refers to wealth. Wealth is typically represented by gold. Gold and many precious items are yellow in color, hence Buddha Ratnasambhava is yellow in color. When one possesses jewels, one easily feels pride and stinginess, therefore the symbol of Ratnasambhava is jewels. For example, a crown is made out of jewels, so the empowerment of Ratnasambhava is a crown. Buddha Ratnasambhava is the embodiment of all the buddhas' qualities. The main quality is to fulfill the wishes of sentient beings. Like a ruler of a country who is crowned, when you are crowned you can fulfill the wishes of the subjects. The wisdom of Ratnasambhava is the wisdom of equality. When you reach such a state then all beings are completely equal; everything is in complete equanimity.



Buddha Amitābha

The aggregate of Buddha Amitābha is the aggregate of perception, the defilement is desire or attachment, and the wisdom is the wisdom of discrimination. The mental consciousness of sentient beings discriminates among good, bad, and natural feelings and further creates thoughts such as hope and fear, which cause us to suffer. However, once ignorance is removed, then the wisdom of discrimination arises; such wisdom of the buddhas determines everything without discrimination.

Although desire is not as harmful as anger, it is very difficult to give up because it is associated with the feeling of pleasure and joy.

When anger arises, one becomes very angry and unhappy; anger is very harmful to us yet it is relatively easier to give up. We are dwelling in karmadhātu, the realm of desire. Karma means “desire.” Desire is the strongest defilement among all the defilements and thus is difficult to eliminate. This is the reason why the practice of Buddha Amitābha is so important, particularly in this degenerate time. Due to the special aspiration and prayer of Buddha Amitābha, his buddhafiield is the only buddhafiield where even ordinary persons who have shortcomings can be reborn, as long as we generate sincere wishes and aspirations to be reborn in Amitābhā’s buddhafiield. In comparison, to be born in all other buddhafiields one must have reached a certain level of attainment. Further, since desire is difficult to eliminate, the more difficult defilement to eliminate, the more that emphasis on the practice on Buddha Amitābha is required. In terms of their knowledge, wisdom, compassion, and power, there is no difference among all the buddhas; it is only from the perspective of sentient beings that differences are perceived, and thus we have different likings.

When desire or attachment arises, the person’s face turns red. So Buddha Amitābha is red and the symbol of the Buddha Amitābha is a lotus as it is beautiful and is an object of attachment. Therefore there is a connection between the ground to be purified and the purifier. The Buddha Amitābhā’s

empowerment is the vajra empowerment because Buddha Amitābha is the embodiment of all the buddhas' speech. Moreover, all the teachings are given through speech. The symbol of the teachings is a vajra with five prongs. So the symbol of empowerment is the vajra empowerment. The blessings and compassion of all the buddhas are all the same, constantly showering upon us. It is only due to the lack of our own efforts and devotions that we could not receive the blessings. Therefore at this point, it is very important for everyone to practice Buddha Amitābha and to seek his blessings and guidance, and to generate strong devotion in making the connection through the practice. One will be able to eliminate difficult defilements such as desire and will also be able to take birth in Sukhāvati, the buddhaheld of Amitābha, easily in the future when we leave this world.



Buddha Amoghasiddhi

The aggregate of Buddha Amoghasiddhi is predisposition, the defilement is jealousy, and the wisdom is all-accomplishing. All entities are generally included in these three groups: inanimate, conscious or cognizant, and predisposed. It is a bit difficult to comprehend, but there are detailed explanations regarding this. “Aggregate of predispositions” refers to entities that are neither conscious nor inanimate, and have qualities such as direction. Buddha Amoghasiddhi is the embodiment of all the buddhas’ activities. Amoghasiddhi is green in color; green is a mixture of many colors. Likewise, a mixture of defilements such as desire and anger will create jealous thoughts. The symbol

of Amoghasiddhi is either a crossed vajra or a sword. The crossed vajra is a combination of two vajras that symbolizes the combination of defilements. The sword is also very sharp and active, and is activated by jealous thought. The empowerment for Amoghasiddhi is the bell empowerment because Amoghasiddhi is the embodiment of all the buddhas' activities. The main activity of the buddhas is providing their followers with the explanation of the nonduality of sound and emptiness through the sound of Dharma—hence, the bell empowerment.

In this way, the five aggregates, five defilements, and five elements are all connected with the Buddhas of Five Races and the five primordial wisdoms. If such a connection is absent, then it is impossible for us sentient beings to become a buddha. For example, a beggar will never become the king of a country through mere visualization. Likewise, without a connection, we ordinary beings will never be able to become a deity through merely visualizing one as a deity.

Buddha means fully enlightened and possesses infinite qualities; in contrast, we sentient beings are helpless—we are completely bound with our karma and defilements. Therefore, this presents the vast difference between the buddhas and ordinary sentient beings. Yet, at the same time, there is a connection between the two—there is a connection of the five aggregates, defilements,

and elements of sentient beings with the five Buddhas and the five wisdoms. Because of this connection, we are able to enter the path, and by clinging to the practice, what we do is real. For example, when we visualize ourselves in the form of a deity, whichever deity we visualize, we think of that as a real result-time deity. And through this way, we enter the path—just like the connection between seeds and crops. Every seed has the potential to grow into crops, if met with the right method and favorable conditions. Because of its potential, if favorable conditions are introduced to the seed, such as a fertile ground, the right moisture, and the right temperature, then it will grow and eventually blossom. Although due to the seeds and crops connection, we cling and enter the path at the beginning, yet because of the same connection we will not fail to obtain results, such as experiencing the Buddhas of Five Races and eventually achieve the five primordial wisdoms.

Notes:

[1] Five aggregates or five skandhas: forms, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. These are the basis for self-grasping.

Buddha	Vairocana	Aksobhya	Ratnasambhava	Amitabha	Amogasiddhi
Aggregate	Form	Consciousness	Feeling	Perception	Predisposition
Defilement	Ignorance	Anger	Pride and Stinginess	Desire or Attachment	Jealous
Element	Earth	Space	Water	Fire	Air
Color	White	Blue	Yellow	Red	Green
Wisdom	Dharmadhātu	Mirrorlike	Equality	Discrimination	All-accomplishing
Empowerment	Name	Water	Crown	Vajra	Bell
Embodiment	Embodiment of all the buddhas' body	Embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom	Embodiment of all the buddhas' qualities	Embodiment of all the buddhas' speech	Embodiment of all the buddhas' activities
Symbol	Wheel	Vajra	Jewel	Lotus	Crossed vajra or sword

Note: Various traditions may have different explanations about the five buddha families and their associations. This table is constructed according to the teaching given by His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (*Five Buddhas and Five Emotions*, February 13, 2011; follow-up interview with His Holiness in 2021) and has been verified by His Holiness.

The Specialty of Vajrayāna Teachings

This is the speciality of Vajrayāna teachings—by using what we already have in saṃsāra such as the five aggregates, the five defilements, and the five elements, instead of abandoning them. Through skillful means we are able to use what are already within us to help us accomplish results. However, to accomplish results, it is very important for us to make effort. The very first effort is to receive a proper empowerment from a qualified guru. Without receiving an empowerment, if we try to practice the Vajrayāna path, it actually causes more harm than benefit. In addition, the empowerment has to be the unbroken transmission of blessings that is passed down from the Buddha Vajradhāra right to one's root guru—it has to be passed down from person to person, at a proper time, at a proper place, using proper ritual, and in the proper maṇḍala. This will have to be a major empowerment in the proper maṇḍala, for instance, short initiations without a proper maṇḍala will not be able to ripen the mental continuum of the

recipients. If one receives a proper major empowerment from a qualified guru in a proper maṇḍala through proper ritual, then, of course, one will gain immense benefit.

Since we already have the essential nature to become a buddha, for example, we have the five aggregates, defilements, and elements that serve as the basis to become the five Buddhas, then by receiving a proper empowerment, we will accomplish results. Just like our seed has met with favorable conditions—a fertile ground, right moisture, and right temperature—it will sprout and blossom eventually.

If one is a very superior practitioner, then one needs not practice the process of creation and completion; such practitioners will be fully awakened—realizing and accomplishing all the excellencies—the moment the empowerment is received. One good example is King Indrabhūti in the ancient time, who lived in the country of Orgyen that is now known as Swat Valley in Pakistan. At that time, one day, he saw a group of monks in orange robes flying in the sky. Due to this prior karmic connections, he was very astonished and was very keen to learn about who they were and what they were doing. So, he asked his minister and was told that the monks he saw flying were in fact the disciples of Lord Buddha Śākyamuni who was residing in central India. The moment King Indrabhūti heard the name of

Lord Buddha, his karmic connection with the Buddha was instantaneously awakened. His strong devotion was aroused and he generated a strong urge to meet the Buddha. Indrabhūti asked whether it was possible for him to see the Buddha and was then informed that the Buddha would appear to whoever had faith in him. So he made arrangements for the next day, making a lot of offerings to request and invite Buddha and his retinue for a midday meal.

The next day, Lord Buddha along with his retinue of five hundred arhats in orange color robes, flew from central India and arrived in the country of Orgyen. King Indrabhūti was extremely impressed and developed great devotion, prostrated to the Buddha and offered the meal. It was customary for the Buddha to give a teaching after a meal offering. So, after the meal Buddha gave a teaching about giving up attachment to worldly pleasures and qualities, and to remain in seclusion searching for liberation. The king responded that it would be easier for him to be born as an animal in the midst of the jungle than giving up attachment to worldly pleasures because he was too used to it. He asked if there was a way to seek liberation without giving up worldly pleasures. Lord Buddha saw that he was worthy of receiving the Vajrayāna teachings and that he was ready to attain realization.

Right at that very moment, Lord Buddha who was in a renounced form transformed to the Guhyasamāja maṇḍala. Buddha manifested as the main deity of the maṇḍala while all the arhats there manifested as the maṇḍala deities. Buddha bestowed the Guhyasamāja empowerment and teachings to King Indrabhūti. Since the king had very great fortune and karma that had already ripened over a very long period of time, through the power of the Buddha's blessings, the king along all his retinues attained realization at that very moment upon receiving the empowerment. King Indrabhūti is an example for attaining realization through receiving empowerment without going through the path. For those who do not have such fortune, one must practice on the path after receiving the empowerment.

The practice you do is actually none other than what you have received during the empowerment because the practice in the Vajrayāna path has two stages or two processes—creation and completion. These two processes are none other than what you have received during the major empowerment. During the vase empowerment of a major empowerment, by visualizing all ordinary forms as deities and celestial palace, the conceptual of clinging to the ordinary appearances is sealed, and this is the process of creation. Then during the three higher empowerments: secret, wisdom, and the four empowerments, what you visualize

as deities and celestial palace is also not in a particular form, but all are in the manifestation of primordial wisdom, and this is the completion process. Apart from that there is no separate process of completion to practice.

Receiving an empowerment is not only important in the beginning, it is also the main part of the practice—you practice what you receive during the empowerment, and this is called the two processes. Those who are mediocre will either eventually attain realization at the time of death or in the bardo by practicing this. For inferior practitioners, if they do not commit any downfalls after receiving the empowerment, they will accomplish realization either within seven lifetimes or, for those who are very inferior will gain realization within sixteen lifetimes. This is considered very fast when you compare it to three countless eons, because the Sutrayāna states that even those who are the most diligent and possess the best wisdom will require three countless eons to accomplish full enlightenment. This all occurs because of the connection between “the base” and “without abandoning the base,” by using the samsaric matter itself and transforming it through skillful means.

With this I conclude today’s teaching. I hope that after this teaching everyone will gain some knowledge about Vajrayāna teachings and then concentrate on the practice, as you have

already received an enormous number of empowerments and teachings from various gurus and teachers. Then, in due cause, no doubt you will be able to accomplish great results.



■ His Holiness the Sakya Trichen is revered as the forty-first throne holder of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Tibet in 1945, His Holiness is from the noble Khön family, whose predecessors date to the early days of Tibetan history and established the Sakya order in the eleventh century. In his youth, His Holiness received intensive training in Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and ritual from eminent masters and scholars.

Widely regarded as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, His Holiness is the spiritual guide to many in the next generation of Buddhist teachers and practitioners, and has bestowed Sakya's core teaching cycle known as the Lamdre (the Path with the Result) in both eastern and western countries. His Holiness manifests profound wisdom and compassion, tirelessly working to establish monasteries, nunneries, and educational institutions and to impart the Buddha's teachings to countless students around the world.



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