



# Some Words of Advice After a White Mahākāla Initiation

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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It is said in the teachings that in order to be free from suffering, attain liberation from saṃsāra, and accomplish buddhahood, we must be free from all kinds of attachments. If so, why are there deity practices for wealth, long life, and so on?

What is defined as Dharma practice and what is its goal? Does Dharma practice mean we have to drop out of school or quit working, and live in caves or jungles as a hermit doing the so-called Dharma practice?

In this teaching, His Holiness points out mistaken attitudes, approaches, and behaviors—so we can avoid such blind spots in our Dharma learning and practice.

## Some Words of Advice After a White Mahākāla Initiation

**W**hite Mahākāla is a wealth deity that we practice for the sake of our spiritual aims, not our worldly ones. If you were to practice White Mahākāla merely for worldly results—for example, to become rich or famous—then you would only go deeper into saṃsāra when, as Buddhists, our goal is to get out of saṃsāra. Our spiritual practice, however, can benefit from certain material conditions, such as a long life, a healthy body, and so on. There are many deity practices that can help us with these things. For example, for a long life, we have Amitayus. For a healthy body, we have Medicine Buddha. To clear obstacles in our practice, we have Vajrapāṇi. White Mahākāla is like this.

Wealth comes in many forms. There is inner wealth and material wealth, for example. Our possession of it in any form depends on our karma: increasing good karma will increase our favorable circumstances. Practitioners, of course, do not need very much material wealth. However, we need enough to

survive. You can think of it as like having a car. If you want to go some place by car, you will need gasoline—or a battery, if the car is electric. It does not matter how big or how wonderful the car is: Without gasoline or the battery, the car will not work, and it will no longer be of value to you.

For us, the destination is buddhahood. Our goal is enlightenment, to become awakened, and all of the practices that we do are methods to accomplish this goal. Take meditation, for example. It has short-term and long-term benefits. In the short term, the benefits include stress relief, and a calmer, more relaxed state of mind. Many people do meditation to experience relief from the stresses of the office, of family, or business. As Buddhists, our goal when we practice meditation is a long-term one: we practice meditation so that we can acquire insight, or understanding.

In order to acquire insight, first we need to control our minds. If we cannot keep our minds in one state, then it will be difficult to acquire understanding. This is the point of śamatha practice: first, to control our minds. Right now, our minds go everywhere; we think about ten different things at one time. Our minds are always in the future, thinking about lunch or dinner, or about plans for tomorrow or next year, about our fears, and so on. A stable mind is the beginning of meditation. When you are able

to set your mind continuously in one place, you can channel your concentration wherever you want.

Remember that all of our negative emotions come from the three poisons of anger, desire, and ignorance. If we study these three, then we will see that they boil down to two factors: doubt and hope. Both mean that the mind is dwelling in the future, whether you have a worry about something or a hope for it. Basically, we bring the problems of the future into the present. In reality, of course, there is no point in worrying about these things. You and I can worry all day about the possibility of dying tomorrow. It is, after all, certain that we will die one day, and it could happen tomorrow. But we cannot live our lives like that. Someday we will all die, yes. Today, however, I am not dead, and I can focus on my practice.

When we keep the mind in the present, we will be calmer and more relaxed. Often, we are unsatisfied, thinking that we do not have enough—whether it is food, wealth, or other things in life. If we can only come back to the present, we will be aware of the things that we do have, right now. It is very interesting that when we allow our minds to wander away from the present, we experience dissatisfaction.

The point for us is to keep our minds calm and in a “straight



line.” Typically, we alternate without stop between feeling happy and unhappy. Of course, we cannot make ourselves emotionless, but we can make our mental state more stable. This is a big achievement that will have an impact on your daily life. If you are not bringing your practice into your daily life, it is like a person of means who lives like a beggar. It defeats the purpose of having means.



Furthermore, when you are happy, it will positively affect other people. You have probably noticed that others can feel our energy. When we are happy, the people around us become happier. If we are unhappy—perhaps angry all the time—this affects others, too. They might be afraid if we are angry all the time.

It is a basic Buddhist teaching that anger is one of the three poisons: desire, anger, and ignorance. We know this, but there is a difference between knowing something intellectually and having knowledge with faith, or believing knowledge. In our practice, we strive to acquire believing knowledge. We know with our intellects that we are all going to die. But consider what it is like to lose someone you love and care for, such as a parent, a child, or a pet: You might cry and scream, or feel physically and mentally disturbed. The moment you accept that the person is gone, however, you will stop crying, and you can begin to resume your normal behavior. The disturbance arises because you cling to that person, refusing to believe that they are gone, even though you know this to be true. When you finally accept the fact, you can begin to return to your normal state. This is the difference between knowing and knowing with belief.

With a basis in morality, and with study of the Dharma, this

is where our practice needs to be: slowly, to establish a calm mind and to develop believing knowledge. This will not happen overnight. Through Dharma study, we can know what negative deeds are, and we can know that we should be compassionate to others. These are not difficult things to know. But putting these things into practice in daily life is something else. I cannot see your mind, but I can see my own, and I know how difficult it is when I get angry, or experience desire or ignorance. We need to find methods that we can apply in the observation of our minds, so that we can find the anger when it arises and analyze it. When you try to do this, it will definitely make a difference. If you discover even a small method that allows to you observe your anger, it will make the anger diminish, and this is a real achievement.

Of course, to gain enlightenment, it is not enough to practice for the sake of one's own benefit alone. We should think that everyone out there wants the same things that we want. It is too easy to live in one's mind like a king in a kingdom, thinking, "I must have the most beautiful home, or the most handsome man or woman." Or we think, "I must eat at the finest restaurant and enjoy the tastiest food." Or we think, "Whatever someone else has, then I should have that too." We all have our own lists. Even in a small group, we are subject to these thoughts, such as, "Well, I am more beautiful, or I am better at this or that." These

thoughts arise even when there are only two people together. Our minds play tricks on us, and we have to examine them to see how they work and to gain real, believing knowledge.

Enlightenment, in one way, is very easy. We all know about emptiness, that this or that lacks inherent existence. It is easy to say it, but to understand it completely and with faith is extremely difficult. To realize it means ridding ourselves of the thought of self-clinging. This is our basic goal. I am explaining these things to you now in a very brief and easy manner. Of course, one could devote a lifetime to studying these things. I want to emphasize, however, the importance of implementing what we already know in our daily lives. We do not study the Dharma for the sake of studying or to become smart, but to understand the nature of our minds. Then, we can practice in our daily lives by employing our understanding or insight and looking into our emotions—our anger, desire, and ignorance. If you can analyze why you feel anger or desire, then it is a very good way to practice. You can do it not only during your sādhanā practice or at the gompā, but when you are with your family, your neighbors or your coworkers. If you do, then you will have a happier and a more relaxed life.

Even when we do the White Mahākāla practice, we should do it without self-clinging or attachment and with some

understanding of emptiness. Let's say you are doing the visualization of Mahākāla. Remember that each meditation or sādhanā that you do has a creation stage and, at the end, a dissolution stage. This is important. If you become attached to the self-creation stage, then you might begin to think that you are such a powerful person, or you may fall into some other error. At the end of the sādhanā, we dissolve everything into emptiness, and this is an important exercise for your mind.

These are the things that I wanted to share with you today. I hope now that you will practice diligently, and that you will bring your practice into your daily life, because whatever you have learned, if you are not using it in your life, it will have no point. Of course, even if you practice diligently, gaining enlightenment might take many lifetimes. For others, it might take only a number of years or a single lifetime. Some have even gained enlightenment during the initiation ceremony. There are definitely cases where this has happened.







- His Holiness the 43<sup>rd</sup> Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, is the second son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41<sup>st</sup> Sakya Trizin). He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

At an early age, Rinpoche undertook his training in the principal rituals and prayers of the Sakya lineage. Rinpoche has received from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen most of the major initiations, empowerments, oral transmissions, blessings, and pith instructions that are inherent to the Sakya lineage. Furthermore, Rinpoche has received numerous common and uncommon teachings from some of the pre-eminent teachers of Tibetan Buddhism of our age.



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