



A Talk on Green Tara Before the Initiation

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GREEN TARA

Whenever Tara is mentioned, we often conjure an image of a compassionate female deity, becoming a source of inspiration and refuge for sentient beings.

However, our understanding of Tara's true nature, the significance of her female manifestation, and her attainment of bodhisattva state is often limited.

Despite the perceived distance between us and Tara, His Holiness emphasizes that she serves as a crucial role model, especially for those navigating a busy modern life.

In this teaching, His Holiness elucidates how to integrate Dharma knowledge and practice into our lives, aiming to ultimately achieve the enlightened state of Tara and all buddhas and bodhisattvas.



Green Tara

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Prologue

Hello, everyone. Some time ago, Jampa-la and Sakya Kalden Ling asked me to give a Tara teaching, and then, some time later, Her Eminence Jetsun Kushok advised me to do it. To the best of my abilities, I will try to fulfill the wishes of my gurus. I consider Jetsun Kushok as a Tara, and she is one of my root gurus.



The Story of Tara's Origin: Princess Yeshe Dawa Developed Bodhicitta

Many eons ago, at the time of Sangye Ngadrak, the Buddha of the Sound of Drums, Tara was born as a princess to a great king. This king had great faith in the Buddha of the Sound of Drums. He received many teachings from him and did many practices. His daughter, Princess Yeshe Dawa, was beautiful and very devoted, an exceptional student of the Buddha. She faithfully served and worshipped the Buddha of the Sound of Drums for many hundreds of years, offering him food, flowers, and water, and doing many other things that showed her commitment. Seeing her devotion, the Buddha of the Sound of Drums was very pleased.

In the time of Buddha Shakyamuni (Skt. Śākyamuni)—in our time—one might ask right away, “How could she study for many hundreds of years? It is rare for us to live even up to one hundred years!” But in those days, people’s merit in general was so great that they commonly lived for thousands and

thousands of years. That is how she could devote herself to the buddhadharma for so long, as it says in the texts, and how she was able to do so many practices.

Princess Yeshe Dawa promised that she would become just like him—that she would attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. That was her promise to the Buddha. Making this commitment is when she started practicing meditation on bodhicitta. One cannot jump straight into meditation on bodhicitta, because the basis for bodhicitta is great compassion. Great compassion means, briefly, having the wish to free every being from suffering. To have such a feeling for sentient beings is called compassion, and to have it for every sentient being is called great compassion.

As with bodhicitta, you cannot go straight into the practice of compassion as a meditation, either. The basis for compassion is loving-kindness, which is the wish that all sentient beings be happy. (Before you can cultivate true loving-kindness, there is an even earlier step. You need to understand that there is a life after this, that *samsāra* exists.) In our pujas for meditation on loving-kindness, we use our mothers as the basis for the meditation. For most of us, our parents, but especially our mothers, are the closest and most dear persons in our lives. The idea is to think of the person you love and care for the

most. Understanding and acknowledging that this person exists for you is the first step in the practice. The second step is to understand and acknowledge that all beings have been this person for you in different lifetimes. You should think about the guidance and love that they showed you, not just in this lifetime but in countless lives. The third step is to feel that you want to repay them, these dear mothers who have given you so much loving-kindness and compassion. Through these three steps, you cultivate the practice of loving-kindness, or the wish for all sentient beings to be happy.

After that, you can go on to the practice of compassion. This is the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering. You should understand that your loved ones are suffering because they are in saṃsāra. They are in saṃsāra because of karma, their deeds, and because of their defilements. Every being in saṃsāra has the defilements of anger, ignorance, and desire. Then, we create karma because of our defilements. The causes for escaping saṃsāra are good deeds and good merit, but these are very difficult for us because of the strength of our defilements. Reducing the defilements and performing good deeds, thinking more about loving-kindness and compassion—these are difficult things for us to do. And so, we suffer in saṃsāra, taking birth repeatedly, like going around in a wheel.

Every single sentient being has been reborn countless times, and everyone has been our dear mothers a countless number of times. Everyone is connected to everyone else in this way. When you meditate on the continuous suffering experienced by your loved ones in saṃsāra, you will have a strong wish for their happiness and a strong wish that they can be free from suffering. You will want to liberate them—if only you were able to do it. With this purpose in mind, you will want to attain enlightenment, wishing to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings so that they can be liberated. We call this very high and noble thought the thought of enlightenment, or bodhicitta. It is not easy for this thought to appear. It is very rare.

Princess Yeshe Dawa Vowed to Become a Female Buddha

Once the princess formed bodhicitta, she meditated upon it often. At the same time, she continued to serve the Buddha of the Sound of Drums and the Saṅgha members, and all the thousands of buddhas and bodhisattvas. She fed them, and she offered water, food, flower, and many other things for hundreds and hundreds of years. The buddhas and bodhisattvas were very pleased to see her do such great deeds, days after day, for so many years. They told her that, if she wished, she could pray to transform from a female to a male in this very lifetime and

continue to practice the Buddhadharmā all the way until she became enlightened. They said that they, too, would pray with her.

The princess said to them that there were many who had become buddhas in the form of males but very few female buddhas in the world. She said that she wanted to attain enlightenment in the female form. Pleased with this, the Buddha of the Sound of Drums said that in the future, Princess Yeshe Dawa would be called Drölma, meaning liberator. He prophesied that she would attain enlightenment and that, after attaining enlightenment, she would retain the name Drölma.

Princess Yeshe Dawa Practiced Śamatha and Vipāśyanā

Because she wanted to be enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings, she started meditating on *śamatha*, or practicing meditation to control and pacify the mind. Some of you may not notice this, but our minds are like waterfalls. When looked at from a distance, a waterfall appears to be one thing, like a column of water coming down, but in fact, a waterfall is many small droplets coming one after another. Just like that, our minds are streams of many different thoughts coming one after another, and we don't notice them. We do not notice how many thoughts flow through our minds until we look.

One of my masters told me that the mind is like an ocean. The top of the ocean has waves and a lot of visible motion. One never sees a wide ocean that is still like a small lake. My master said that when you begin to look at the mind, you will see that the surface is full of questions, full of curiosity, and full of movement. But as soon as you go deeper into the water, you start to notice that things are calmer. Deep in the ocean, things are very calm and peaceful. We must get beyond the first layer before we can find that calm and peaceful state and before we can understand ourselves. Until the mind is under control, it will go in many directions and be busy. When I was in Sakya College, my abbot pointed out that when we were doing our homework in our rooms, our minds could easily be somewhere else. Maybe we were thinking about buying toothpaste or a toothbrush, and our minds are at the shop. Or, our minds would be somewhere else, here or there, even though we were sitting in our rooms in front of our texts.

We need to gain control of our unruly minds. We often think that we are in control, or that freedom is being able to do whatever we want and whenever we want to do it. But really, we are not free. We are slaves to our desires, anger, and ignorance. Every decision that we make and thought that we have, thinking we are free, is driven by the defilements—even

in our dreams. You may not notice this, but it is important to understand it. We must understand the mistakes we are making if we are to improve. Similarly, we must seal all the holes in a jug before we can use it to carry water. If there are holes in the jug, the water will leak out no matter much you pour inside. When we understand our mistakes and correct them, then every step we take in the future will help us.

To control our minds, to have a stable and strong foundation so that everything we build upon it will also be strong, comes from śamatha practice. Śamatha means to stabilize your mind. The first step in practicing śamatha is to take a blue flower or a buddha statue or another object or image that you can place in front of you and use it to settle your eyes upon. Then, concentrate on that object. It sounds very easy, but it is difficult to keep your mind in one place like this. The mind can fly anywhere without any limitations. However, real freedom comes from the ability to keep your mind in one place, to stabilize your mind.

The power of the mind is amazing. Of all the powerful things in the world, the most powerful is the human mind. The power of the mind to imagine and create things is greater than any other powerful force. Scientists say that we only utilize five percent of

our mental capacity, which emphasizes that there is no limit to what we can do. I joke with my friends, sometimes, to imagine how many songs have been written in hundreds and millions of years, and still new ones are created. That's a lot of music. Or, consider how many shoes have been designed, even though we have simple feet. Companies make hundreds of different kinds of shoes every season, every year, and then in the next season they create more styles. I'm amazed to see all these different things when I go out. I'm amazed to see how powerful our minds are. They truly have no limit.

This is why I think we are underestimating our minds when we feel that buddhahood is difficult to accomplish. We underestimate our faith, our belief. When you have confidence, then whatever limited practice you are doing will be a hundred times more powerful. You must believe in yourself. Otherwise, you may be following the greatest master in the world, but you're basically asking your master to do everything for you. People want the Buddha to take them to enlightenment, but it does not work this way. Your teachers accepted you as their students because they believe in you. Otherwise, they wouldn't have accepted you. This is an important thing to remember. The questions I often receive from students make me feel they need more faith and more belief in themselves.

Once you are good at śamatha, meaning that you can control your mind, then you can progress to vipaśyanā, the meditation realizing emptiness. Princess Yeshe Dawa did this. She practiced the combination of śamatha and vipaśyanā, and she realized the fruit: She understood emptiness. Her mind became very powerful, and she concentrated her enlightened energy on liberating and helping all sentient beings. She liberated hundreds and thousands of sentient beings from saṃsāra.

People sometimes ask me for advice about practicing in the modern world or living in a busy city. I think that we can learn from Tara. One of the special things about her is that she did not go to a cave or to a secluded place to do these meditations. She did them while living as a princess. You can imagine that as a princess there was no real limit to the luxury around her, just like today's celebrities. She had access to all the luxurious things that she could have wanted. Although she was living in a grand palace, she was not attached to the lifestyle. This is a very important point for us to remember. She was not attached to the luxurious lifestyle, the delicious food, the fragrant perfumes, the grand palace, the gold, silver, and diamonds that she owned. She was able to live as a princess while practicing Dharma and achieving such a great height and liberating so many people. She acquired the name Drölma, as the Buddha said.

Drölma Returned in Female Form to Benefit Beings and Attained Buddhahood

When the Buddha of the Sound of Drums made the prophecy that the princess would be known as Drölma, she made a promise that she would continue to come back in a female form to benefit beings. That was her promise. So, in her next life, she was born in female form in the time of Buddha Amogasiddhi. She was a very good and devoted student who performed offerings and did practices. She promised Buddha Amoghasiddhi that she would protect all sentient beings from harm. With love and compassion for all sentient beings, and with bodhicitta, she subdued many evil spirits, and she helped many sentient beings. Another specialty of Tara is sharing the pain of those who call upon her. When pain is shared, it is reduced. Whenever someone called on her, she was fearless. She helped many people this way, and she acquired the nicknames Nyurma, which means “very fast,” and Palmo, which means “the fearless,” among other names.

In her third life after the prophecy, she was born at the time of Buddha Vairocana and the Five Buddhas, again in a female form, and again she became a great and devoted student. Buddha Vairocana was very happy with her. All the buddhas combined their blessing in the form of light and gave her the initiation

that some people call the light initiation. This is basically the same thing as the Avalokiteśvara initiation. After receiving it, she became enlightened and attained buddhahood.

Tara's Twenty-One Emanations and Mantra

There are twenty-one Green Tara emanations. They are usually represented as twenty-one emanations around a central Green Tara figure, making twenty-two altogether. Regarding the origin of these twenty-one emanations, I think I said at the beginning that Tara is the emanation of Avalokiteśvara, and Avalokiteśvara is the emanation of Buddha Amitābha. Long ago, Avalokiteśvara promised to Buddha Amitābha that he would meditate until all sentient beings in the world were free from suffering and liberated from saṃsāra. Until then, he would not have any selfish thought or self-clinging. Until then, he would never flag even when he was tired. As a result, he liberated many sentient beings.

After much time had passed, and he felt content that he had liberated a great quantity of beings so that there were perhaps only a few left in the circle of saṃsāra, he rose from his meditation. He wanted to see if anyone was left. To his surprise,

he saw even more beings in saṃsāra than when he first started meditating. Seeing all these suffering beings, he was very sad and started to cry. He cried so much that his tears formed into a small lake. In this lake, there arose twenty-one lotus flowers. In these twenty-one lotuses, there were twenty-one Taras, or emanations of Tara. They all told him, “Avalokiteśvara, do not worry. We are with you. We will help you and work until every sentient being is enlightened.” These Taras promised to help those experiencing difficult times and those experiencing fears of all kinds. These fears include fear of suffering, fear of lions, fear of bandits, fear of earthquakes, fear of drowning, and all other kinds of fear. The emanations of Tara promised to liberate these beings from saṃsāra, and for those who call Tara’s name or who do Tara pujas, they promised that they would not only liberate them but would help reach enlightenment.

The Tara mantra is ten syllables:

OM TĀRE TUTTĀRE TURE SVAHĀ

OM is the combination of three letters: Ah (ँ), O (ॐ), Ma (ः). These are Tara’s body, speech, and mind. It is the most important syllable in all mantras.

TĀRE means Tara. With the mantra, we are calling out to her.

TUTTĀRE is another form of the name.

TURE means “swift.” Whenever people call her name, she will come and help them immediately.

SVAHĀ means wish. When we call out to Tara, we wish and pray.

This can be explained in many ways, but basically you are calling out to Tara and praying: “May all sentient beings be free from suffering, and may all obtain enlightenment.” You are calling out to Tara and making this aspirational wish.

There is also a text that we recite called the *Twenty-One Praises to Tara*. It was composed by the Buddha Vairocana, combining the meaning and essence of many texts and pujas for Tara that were composed by Avalokiteśvara. The text has twenty-one verses of praise. I have been told that it was created especially for degenerate times when people would be lazy, or would have less opportunity, or would have minds that are less controlled. For these people, the text of the twenty-one praises is easy to learn and recite.

Tara Practice in India and Tibet

There are many mentions of Tara in the sutras, which are the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni in our time, our present Buddha. We also know that many of his students practiced Tara, or even kept Tara as their main deity. This is important to know because it inspires us to learn from them. There have been many great Buddhist masters whose main deity was Tara. One of my questions straight away was why so many masters opted to practice Tara, when there are so many other deities. The answer is that Tara is very swift, and she is an emanation of all the buddhas' activity. She is a very powerful, active buddha.

One of her practitioners was Nāgārjuna. Buddha Shakyamuni said that after many years there would be a great scholar who would come and teach the Middle Way and whose main deity would be Tara. Those who learn about philosophy will study Nāgārjuna. His main yidam, or deity, was Tara. It is said that she came to him in visions and inspired and guided him, and she

told him to do meditation on emptiness. Many other masters have taken Tara as their main practice, too. I'm referring to the tantric practice of Tara, of course, which sacred and kept secret.

Tara came to Tibet in the time of Atiśa, a scholar from the West Bengal who went to Nālandā to study and became one of the great masters of his time. Nālandā was considered the most prestigious university at that time. Top scholars came from very far to study there. Atiśa at that time was wondering to himself what was the best way to attain enlightenment because there are so many ways. Just as this thought was going through his mind, he saw two girls in the sky talking to each other. One of them was asking what was the best way to attain enlightenment. The other girl responded, "The best way to attain enlightenment is through loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta." He was circumambulating a small temple. There was nobody there, but the door suddenly opened, and he went inside and saw a statue of a Tara. To this day, you can go to Bodhgaya in the state of Bihar and see this same Tara statue. We are so fortunate that we can see it.

A voice came out of the statue saying, "Your last student is in Tibet. You should go there, where your activities will flourish. Although it means your life will be shorter, it will be more meaningful." This was the advice given by Tara to Atiśa. He then

began to prepare to travel to Tibet. If you study history, you will learn that Atiśa was invited to Tibet by a king. But this is only the outer story. The inner story is that he was instructed by Tara to go there to meet students. On reaching Tibet, he found many students there, and he also met his last student whose name was Dromtönpa. Atiśa did many pujas and gave teachings across the whole of Tibet, and he made the practice of Tara popular in Tibet.

This is the case across all the schools. In the monasteries, you will see the statue of Buddha Shakyamuni. But if you notice, the general population is all chanting OM MANI PADME HUM, which is the Avalokiteśvara mantra, or OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA, which is the Tara mantra. These are very famous. There are many stories of Tara appearing to ordinary people in various emanations and helping them. Many princesses, queens, and wives of Buddhist masters have been emanations of Tara. It is also very common in Tibet for families to sit down together in the afternoon or after dinner and do the Tara prayer together.

I think it is inspiring. There are many deities, but it is said that Tara and Avalokiteśvara have special karmic links to Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. This is like having a karmic link to a teacher or guru. There are many good teachers, but if you find the one to whom you have a karmic link, then your realization will come

a hundred times faster. You can learn very quickly and naturally with your karmically-linked teacher.

To keep it short and simple, I will conclude today's teaching here. Many people have asked for the Tara sādhana, but in general, for tantras, you cannot chant the mantra or do the sādhana without a permission or initiation. Tomorrow, I will do the Tara initiation and give the oral transmission of the *Twenty-One Praises to Tara*.

A Short Meditation

Before beginning the initiation, I would like to do a short meditation to quiet the mind because our minds are typically so busy with thoughts. We should prepare and be ready to receive the initiation, just like we wash our hands before we eat.

Remember that whenever you receive any teaching or do any *sādhana*, any ritual, or any other practice including good deeds, you should do it with great compassion and for the sake of all sentient beings, with the thought of attaining enlightenment to liberate them. This is what makes it a Mahāyāna or a Vajrayāna practice. This motivation is an essential part of every practice and, of course, of the initiation.

We will now do a short meditation on compassion, the basis of all Mahāyāna Buddhism. If you have difficulty thinking of all sentient beings, then you can concentrate on your breath, on breathing in and out, or on any object you have in front of you—

for example, a flower, a statue, or a picture of a buddha or of a deity. You can focus your mind on that.

[Brief meditation.]

Dharma Practice Advice

Motivation, Self-Confidence, and Diligence

To help remember why we are receiving the initiation, think that it is rare and difficult to be born as a human. To be born as a human being gives the best opportunity to be a Buddhist practitioner. I sometimes say we have the opportunity of suffering because without suffering, there would be no push, no encouragement, to practice to become enlightened. Suffering is a very important part of life. Normally, people fear of death, but as practitioners, we recognize that death is a part of our practice. We understand that we are mortal and that our time is limited. Therefore, we need to do whatever we can during our time here in this human form. We should not think that we can practice tomorrow or when we are retired. We don't know whether tomorrow or our next life will come first.

I'm not saying that we must give up everything or that we must do all the practices today or right now. But whatever we do, we

should do it with full devotion and full faith. I'm sure most of you already practice either a long or short sādhana. Maybe you don't feel that doing the sādhana is helping anybody. Because time is short, or because we are lazy, we do our sādhanas as fast as we can. Maybe we cut down on the mantras. We do other things with our minds instead of focusing on the sādhana, slowly and carefully. Others may not know, but you know yourself: Are you rushing through it? What are the emotions you have during your practice? These are important questions. No one is perfect, but we must try. It does not matter whether or not you live in a cave or a temple or wherever, and it does not matter how many hours you practice, as long as you do it with full faith and devotion. How long or how much you do is not the point here. You can do one mantra with full faith, and this might be better than hours with your mind doing something else. Quality is more important than quantity in every practice we do.

I have given many initiations to many people. I always say that receiving the initiation is a part of the practice; it is not the whole practice. It's like going to the doctor, receiving a diagnosis, and being given medication. Those steps are only part of the treatment. After that, you do what the doctor says: Take the medicine, eat the right food, and do the exercise. If you go

to the doctor but you do not take the medicine, then you cannot necessarily expect to get to the result. In the same way, after receiving the initiation, the real work begins in your practice. Practice is the most important part of achieving liberation from saṃsāra and attaining buddhahood. Without that, you can still receive a blessing from the initiation but not the full benefit that is available to you.

There are people who want to receive many initiations and blessings, but when it comes time to practice, they tell themselves that they are busy. As I said before, this does not matter. Tara herself was a princess living in a palace full of luxury before she became enlightened. But because she did not have attachment to worldly things, she was able to achieve great results from her practice. You can live in your house with your family, and you can do your work and run your business. If you can eliminate attachment these things, if you think about impermanence, your practice will be much easier. The distance between you and enlightenment is totally decided by you. Nobody else can send you to hell or send you to heaven. What matters is how you practice, how you see the world, and how you develop wisdom. This is why I spoke before about believing in oneself. If you believe in yourself, then everything will move more quickly and your results will be stronger.

Even if you don't believe in yourself, you may still be devoted to your guru. Maybe you think sincerely, "I'll do everything my guru says." But in the end, your guru does not want anything but the most important thing, which is that you practice. Gurus are in the world because of our devotion and our need for them, not because they want to be here. Even how long a guru lives depends on the devotion of the guru's disciples. As I said before, most people think that if they do four hours of sādhana a day, or if they do a retreat, then their guru will be happy. But that's not all there is to it.

The Guru Is the Best Part of Yourself

You should think of the guru as the Buddha himself. You cannot think, "If I don't tell him, he won't know; if he doesn't see me, he won't know." You are greatly reducing the power of the blessing that you receive if you do not believe the Buddha and the guru are the same thing. The great Sakya teacher Appey Khen Rinpoche said, "If you believe in your guru and serve the guru, then you are serving all the buddhas. But if you disrespect your guru, you are disrespecting all the buddhas." What I'm trying to say is that, if you weigh their importance, the guru is much more important than the Buddha. This is because although the Buddha exists, there is no path to enlightenment but what your guru shows you. Once you find your guru, then everything is beautiful.

There was a time when I worried, “In this impermanent world, even Buddha Shakyamuni passed away at the age of 81. How would I do without my guru in this world?” But then, working on my own practice, reading texts, and discussing things with my abbot and with scholars, I found out that the guru is also none other than yourself. The best part of yourself is reflected as the guru in front of you. Although he may appear as physically different than you, and even as someone from a different country, those things do not matter because the point is that the guru is there out of yourself. The moment I found this out, I felt liberated. It was a great relief that my guru will be with me no matter what, in every situation. Also, there is no hiding from myself. Just like your shadow is always present, your guru is with you. The guru is a part of you, the best part reflected in front of you. You may see this person as a different form, but that is only an outer appearance and is not important. Basically, that is what the guru is.

There is no separation between oneself and the guru. Therefore, it is short-sighted to think, “Oh my guru is a man and I’m a woman,” or, “My guru is a woman and I’m a man.” These things do not matter at all. They are just outward appearances and nothing to be worried about. The guru is oneself. The guru’s voice is my voice. My voice is the guru’s voice. The guru’s speech is my speech. The guru’s mind is my mind. Basically, it is the

best, purest point of yourself that you are seeing as the guru in front of you. This is why when you practice, you are transparent to your guru. You cannot hide from the guru.

We should believe this, and not just know it. Knowing and believing are not the same thing. This is a significant point for our practice. We all know why we are here in saṃsāra, and we know how saṃsāra works. We can read these things in the texts and understand them. Similarly, we all know that we will die one day. There is no hiding or running away from that. Still, when we lose our family members or loved ones, we feel terribly sad. Why do we feel this way? If we know that everything is impermanent and that no matter how much we protect somebody, they will pass away one day, then why do we feel sad? And yet, we do.

I think it is because we don't believe it one hundred percent. I've seen certain people pass away and remain calm, without fear or crying. I have seen many practitioners pass away like this, including some of our gurus. These were good practitioners, not afraid of dying, and they knew impermanence. They knew they would be reborn again in another form. If you are fortunate and your karma is good, then you will be reborn as a human, and in this way your practice will continue. One of my abbots who passed away used to say, "I'll be back. There is nothing to worry

about. It's like changing rooms." He said that in the next life, he would have a more fit body, because he was a bit heavy. This is how he talked to us.

Realizing Emptiness

All the practices that we do are to realize the true nature of ourselves, or emptiness. Why do we want to find emptiness? If we understand the true meaning of emptiness, then we can apply it to the self. And when we realize that there is no "I," no "self," then there is no longer any attachment. The sooner you realize this, then, the sooner you will attain true happiness, liberation from saṃsāra, or another level depending on your ability. Like I said before, most already know very well why we are here in saṃsāra. It is because of the three defilements of ignorance, desire, anger. I do not know even one new practitioner who does not know this fact. But we must believe it one hundred percent. We must have one hundred percent faith, and this must be developed. If you can work on this day after day, thinking about it more and more, then it will be easier to have full belief and confidence in your practice.

We all say, "Yes, this is very important. Suffering is real, and we want to be out of saṃsāra." But it is not enough to say this outwardly. If we want our words to have meaning, we must put

them into practice. It does not matter which practice you do, which deity you practice, whether it is simple or complicated. These distinctions are not important. You cannot say, “My deity is stronger. He has more hands or legs or a better color.” These things do not matter. All the deities and buddhas are the same. There is not a single point of difference between them. They appear in different forms only for the benefit of beings and for their practices. You can imagine that if there is some person you like and with whom generally agree, you would be inclined to accept what they tell you. But when someone you dislike, someone you do not trust, says the same thing, it might be difficult to believe them or to accept the same information. This is basically why we have different deities and gurus.

No matter which teaching you receive and no matter what practices you do—rituals, retreats, or something else—the final result is emptiness, the insight that there is no “I” or “self.” All the rest is different methods for us to choose. You can take advice from your guru as to which methods are good for you.

[The Initiation]



■ His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, is the second son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st 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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