



Advice Given Before a Two-Day Vajrakīlaya Empowerment

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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By the merit of this work, may Their Holiness the Sakya Trichen, the 42nd, and the 43rd Sakya Trizins enjoy perfect health and very long lives, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.

EDITORIAL PREFACE



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For those who have embarked on the path or are about to, have you ever wondered what the most important factor on the Buddhist path is? This question, posed at the very start of this teaching, prompts us to reflect deeply on our approach and whether we truly grasp its profundity.

What does it mean to receive an initiation or empowerment in the Vajrayāna tradition? What is the purpose behind these rituals, and how do they relate to Dharma practice? Are they confined to spiritual practice or cushion time, or do they have relevance to our day-to-day experiences? What truly embodies the Dharma?

This text reminds us that the journey to enlightenment is not about grand gestures or flawless execution, but about the purity of our intentions and the sincerity of our efforts.

Let this guide illuminate the understanding that the essence of Dharma lies in the simple, yet profound practice of kindness and compassion in all aspects of our lives.

Advice Given Before a Two-Day Vajrakīlaya Empowerment

The quality of our Dharma practice is the most important factor for us on the Buddhist path. Although we can receive an initiation like this one as a blessing, it will be much better for us if we put what we learn into practice. Even without getting into higher practices such as tantra, if we work on basic Buddhist practices such as compassion, loving-kindness, and being caring to the people around us, it will help us greatly on the path. We can start such practices with our families, neighbors, coworkers, and others whom we encounter in daily life. Ordinary encounters in daily life are opportunities, and progress will come much more easily—we will accumulate much more merit—if we take advantage of these opportunities.

Our thoughts flow in the mind like a waterfall. Waterfalls are made up of millions of tiny drops of water, but they come so fast in a torrent that we cannot see the individual drops. We only see a huge waterfall. Our thoughts are like the drops of water coming one after another continuously. This is why if we are not

being compassionate and kind in our thoughts in ordinary life, then we are wasting many opportunities. But if we can learn to control our minds, then each thought will be an occasion to accumulate merit.

It takes practice, of course, just like many things in our lives outside of Dharma practice. Whether you are a professional or a cook or an athlete or a martial artist, one thing common to all these is the need for practice. Nobody becomes a martial artist in one day. It takes years of practice and dedication. Take learning to drive as an example: When I started driving, I learned on a car with a manual transmission. This meant working the clutch and the gear shift as well as the brake and the accelerator. While doing all this, you have to look at the road and stay in control. At first, I thought that I would never learn; there were so many things to think about. But, with practice—doing it day after day, weeks and months—driving becomes natural.

Learning to be compassionate doesn't require coordinating a lot of physical movements, but it also takes practice. First, there is the mental practice of generating compassion while doing meditation. We say in our prayers that we generate loving-kindness and compassion for all sentient beings, and we learn to do this step-by-step. Then, in our actions, we have to learn to

practice loving-kindness and compassion towards the sentient beings right in front of us and near to us.

As with work, or sport, or martial arts, it takes a lot of dedication to do this. Sometimes I hear people asking why Buddhist teachers talk so much about suffering. Well, our gurus talk so much suffering to encourage us to be better people and better practitioners. Let's say you decide to perform a virtuous act: you buy a fish or a bird and release a life. Then, you probably feel good about yourself and your practice because you released an animal that was fated to be killed. But think about how many moments are in a day. There are twenty-four hours in a day and a huge number of minutes and seconds. You have performed one act of virtue, but what about all those seconds of time during which your mind was busy thinking about many different things and not engaged in the accumulation of merit? We may be wasting 90% or 99% of our time thinking about different things and not engaged in being compassionate and kind.

Suppose you make a commitment to practice more. The first day, you do really well. The second day, pretty well. But after a few days, you find that you are busy and not doing nearly as much practice. Maybe you think there isn't time to meditate, or there isn't time to do the proper visualization. After a few days

or weeks, doing your practice becomes rote, a convention that you follow. I do not consider practice like this to be meaningful Dharma practice. It's just following a convention like a tradition.

This is why I think our gurus are always giving teachings about suffering. It is important to understand that we are always talking about suffering because it is the only way we can understand the problem we face. Unless we really understand the seriousness of the problem, we will never be dedicated to finding the solution to it. When you are very sick, you go to the doctor or hospital. You know you have a serious problem, so you do all the things the doctor tells you to do. You consume less fat, less salt, less of this or that, and you take your medicine on time every day. But when you start to feel better, you start forgetting to take the medicine. It doesn't seem important anymore. When our gurus talk to us about suffering, it is beneficial for us because it can help us set our minds again on what is important so that we will practice diligently.

The Buddha gave many teachings, but to my way of thinking, the most important teachings of the Buddha are about truth. There are the four noble truths on suffering and the cessation of suffering, but there are also the two truths, relative and ultimate. These are different teachings for different ways to practice. The ultimate truth is what we call emptiness. I think

that the most important thing to understand about emptiness is that it helps us get rid of our attachment. If we begin to understand that things don't exist as they appear at the level of relative truth, it will be easier to cut attachment. When there is no longer attachment or aversion, we will not have all the other negative emotions.

This is why we talk about attaining the view, which is another way of talking about emptiness and the two truths. In my personal understanding, whenever we see suffering, it isn't always possible for us to go there physically to help. Of course, if we can do that, it is very important that we do so. But chances are, we can only help one or two or a few people—not so many. This is why we create the wish to attain buddhahood and attain the qualities and powers of a buddha. Similarly, for our own suffering, if we can change our view and understand the nature of our suffering itself and its cause, then we will not see our suffering as suffering any more. To put it in a very simple way, if you think of your experience as suffering, then it becomes suffering; if you think it is not suffering, then it is not suffering. When there is no strong attachment, there will no longer be suffering because all the negative emotions will go away—anger, desire, and ignorance. The mind will be calm. It will rest in its purity. I believe enlightenment is that state. Of course, as

ordinary beings, we cannot really do this or remain that way. Every time some small thing comes up, then all our emotions come into play, and the purity is forgotten or diluted. I think that emptiness is very important to understand, but we have to go slowly, step by step.

In an initiation, we reenact what Buddha did to his followers so that we can receive the same blessing received when the Buddha gave it. It is possible through the reenactment. For example, the giving of nectar: this was originally given by the Buddha to his students. Through the reenactment in the empowerment, we can obtain the same experience as those students of the Buddha. The water used in the blessing is not the point; the point is having the genuine experience of the blessing.

This is why I think the most important aspect is your mind and how you practice. It doesn't matter whether you do a retreat, or six hours of sādhanā every day, if do not have purity or a kind heart. We must go back and attend to the main part of the practice, the main part of the initiation, the main part of all the teachings. Without understanding the main part, or the essence, then I think we will be losing a lot of the blessing or wasting energy.

Before we begin the initiation, I would like to do a short meditation. As I said, our minds have many thoughts every second and every moment. We should get out of that state and prepare for the initiation, just like we would wash our hands before eating a meal, by cultivating purity and kindness and by turning our basic compassion into great compassion for the benefit all sentient beings.

It's very important whenever you do a practice or receive an initiation to generate great compassion and to think that you are receiving this initiation for the sake of all sentient beings. It is not just for yourself, and not just for your family and loved ones, but for all sentient beings. This preparation is the most important part of any teaching or initiation or practice that you do. The beginning, or right preparation, is the most important part because it establishes the motivation or aspiration in your mind, and the mind is always the most important part.

Next comes the teaching or Dharma in the main part of the initiation. Then, at the end, we dedicate whatever merit we have gained during the initiation, the oral teaching, and transmission to all sentient beings. In Buddhism, we do a dedication of merit like this for all teachings and practices. In short, this structure of preparation, main part, and conclusion is the same across all Dharma teachings and practices.



- 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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