



His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin on Sonam Tsemo

His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche



"The Sakya Tradition" Publications

Published by “The Sakya Tradition”

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Acknowledgement

His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, delivered this talk on January 13, 2022, at Tsechen Kunchab Ling, U.S.A., in commemoration of the mahāparinirvāṇa anniversary of Lobpon Rinpoche Sonam Tsemo. In 2025, this English text of the teaching was prepared, edited, and published by The Sakya Tradition, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and making widely available the precious Dharma teachings of the glorious Sakya lineage. The Sakya Tradition team also translated the text into the Chinese language.

This publication was made possible by the generous donations of Katherin Gaston, Maria Julia Silva, Cheah Poh Peng, and Cheah Poh Kheng. We also want to thank all volunteers for their dedication and effort in putting this teaching together.

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



EDITORIAL PREFACE

Lobpon Rinpoche Sonam Tsemo, the second Sakya patriarch, embodies wisdom and compassion.

Reading his story is not merely a glance into the past—it serves as a mirror for our own minds:

Are my body, speech, and mind today creating benefit, or causing harm?

His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin on Sonam Tsemo

Tashi delek to everyone. As you all know, today is a very auspicious day. According to the lunar calendar, it is the eleventh day of the eleventh month, which is the anniversary of the day on which the great Lobpon Rinpoche Sonam Tsemo, one of the five founding masters of our tradition, went to Sukhāvātī, or the Pure Land.

We say that actions performed on such holy days are more powerful than actions performed on ordinary days. The effects of our actions, whether they are good or bad, will multiply. If our actions are meritorious, then the merit will be multiplied by many times. Thus, we should be careful and vigilant about what to do and what not to do on such special days as this. Above all, we should focus on performing virtuous deeds and on Dharma practice.

The five founding masters were not ordinary human beings but manifestations of Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, etc. Lobpon Rinpoche

was none other than the great Ārya Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of all the Buddha's wisdom, who appears in many emanations. I will briefly describe his biography here.

But first, I want to explain that among the five founding masters, the principle one was Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, who was a manifestation of Ārya Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of all the Buddha's compassion. He was also the manifestation of Ārya Mañjuśrī. For the eyes of common people, Sachen Kunga Nyingpo had four sons, and Lobpon Rinpoche Sonam Tsemo was his second son, born in 1142 in Sakya. The word Sakya has two meanings. It is the name of the place in Tibet where the seat of the Sakya tradition is located, and it is also the name of the school or the tradition that arose there.

When Lobpon Sonam Tsemo was born, many auspicious and extraordinary signs appeared in Sakya to symbolize the birth of a noble being. Even in Bodhgaya, where all the buddhas attained buddhahood, ḍākinīs wrote on the gate to the stupa that a manifestation of Mañjuśrī had been born in Sakya—Sonam Tsemo—possessing great knowledge of the Vajrayāna. At that time, there was a great paṇḍita in Bodhgaya from Kaushambi who spread news of this, and eventually the Indian paṇḍitas determined his location in Tibet. Right after his birth, he spoke many Sanskrit words. An ordinary child will start to speak their

own language after about two years, but Sonam Tsemo was able to speak Sanskrit words immediately. He also said about himself that his conduct or behavior was beyond that of ordinary children. He said so two or three times, repeatedly. Then, again right after his birth, he sat in the cross-legged position. Because of these noble activities, all those who were present were amazed.

From a very young age, Lobpon Sonam Tsemo knew many Dharma texts and many Dharma meanings without learning them, and he remained always in the clear light, or always in meditation. In eleven previous lives, Lobpon Sonam Tsemo had been born as a great paṇḍita in the noble land of India, and he could clearly remember each of these lives, and he spoke about them to others.

When he was three years old, he saw Ārya Mañjuśrī and Green Tārā directly in his pure vision. Such pure vision is truly seeing the real person directly, and not like any other kind of vision. I think sometimes people have a misunderstanding of the difference between pure vision and an artificial vision; this was a real pure vision.

From a very young age, he was able to recite by heart the three Hevajra root tantras and commentary tantras, the Cakrasaṃvara root tantra, and other texts. Also from a young age, for the eyes of common people, he received many Vajrayāna empowerments,

blessings, and all the transmissions and pith instructions from his holy father, the great Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. He was able to understand all the Vajrayāna teachings without any hesitation or doubt and with great conviction.

He was known as a great, undisputed scholar of Vajrayāna, and his fame spread not only in Tibet but in India. Later, again for the eyes of common people, he learned many great texts of Sūtrayāna, and when he was twenty-six years old, he wrote a text called *Door into the Dharma*. Outwardly, for the eyes of common people, he became a great scholar, and inwardly, he always remained in meditation. In his post-meditative session, he gave precious and profound teachings to others, removing the ignorance of his followers.

In debate, he could clarify all wrong conceptions, and in his writing, he was able to illuminate the Buddha's intent and especially that of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo. Day and night, he could see deities, the master Virūpa, and his own holy father Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, and others. He saw them directly, just like we see and meet our friends and family. From them, he received unceasing teachings, and he himself became the owner of the treasure of Dharma, or the ocean of Dharma. Dharma refers to both sūtra and tantra, so this means he became the owner of both the sutric and tantric ocean of the Dharma, and like a pillar of the Buddhadharma.

When he gave teachings, his disciples saw him as the real Ārya Mañjuśrī, just as his younger brother Jetsun Dragpa Gyaltsen saw him as the real Mañjuśrī. Other disciples saw him as the real Avalokiteśvara, and still others saw him as the real Virūpa.

Lobpon Sonam Tsemo mastered all the five major sciences and became a great paṇḍita. Not only did he have great knowledge, he also gained many inner realizations and led countless followers from suffering, especially from the three lower realms to temporary and ultimate happiness, which means to liberation and enlightenment.

After spending his entire life in Dharma activities, at the age of forty-one, he went to Pure Land. He didn't pass away or, to use ordinary words, die at that time. He went to the Pure Land. This occurred on the eleventh day of the eleventh lunar month. He left with many auspicious and amazing signs and without leaving his body behind. Death means that the mind is separated from the body, but Lobpon Sonam Tsemo went to Sukhāvātī with his body and without dying.

There is a story that some time later, a great being, a noble Tibetan, went to Sukhāvātī. There, he didn't recognize others because they had changed their bodies. But he recognized Sonam Tsemo in Sukhāvātī because his body looked exactly the same as when he

was in Sakya during his forty-one years of life. This is because he did not change his body. Therefore, it is important to know that this day, the anniversary of his going to the Pure Land, is not an anniversary of his death.

Today I have explained his biography in a very short form. The purpose of studying the biographies of the great masters is to make an impact on our minds. We should be inspired, and due to this inspiration, we should change our mindset. If we can experience a positive impact on our minds, then it will affect our physical and verbal actions, because the body and speech rely on the mind. We can say the mind is like the remote control for the body and speech. The mind is the boss, and our body and speech are under this boss. Without the mind, the body and speech can't do any action.

The purpose is to plant a seed of liberation and enlightenment in our minds. Whenever we see or hear these great biographies, it should inspire us to follow in their footsteps. To do this, we need to make changes in our actions. Without changing our actions, it is not possible to follow in the footsteps of the noble beings. We need to do something to make changes so that we can experience better results and a brighter future. When there is a wish or willpower, there is hope for changing our actions, but without having a wish or willpower, we will never be able to change our conduct.

We should think in a much broader way; we should not be narrow-minded. If we focus on only a few things, our minds become narrow, which can make it more difficult to face challenges or difficult situations. But if we have a positive mindset, then we can handle the challenges and difficult situations in a better way. These problems won't affect our minds or our peace and happiness. This is what we should focus on today: trying to change our minds in a positive way. We should think that, with our bodies, we will not perform nonvirtues, such as hurting others or any other harmful action. With our speech, we will not use harsh words or talk about bad things from anger or other negative thoughts. With our minds, we will not have anger, jealousy, or any other negative thought. If we can control negative thoughts and perform positive actions through body, speech, and mind, then we will naturally have a brighter future and better results in this life and in the future life. Gradually, we will gain liberation and the enlightenment state for the sake of all sentient beings, without any exception or discrimination.

With this, I will conclude my short talk. I sincerely wish that many blessings of our root guru and the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha will be with you now and always.



■ His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, is the eldest son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). Renowned for his erudition and the clarity of his teachings, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin is regarded as one of the most highly qualified lineage holders in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

Since his youth, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin has received an ocean of sutra and tantra teachings, empowerments, transmissions, and pith instructions from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen, as well as many other learned and accomplished masters. After years of rigorous philosophy studies at Sakya College in India, he was awarded the kachupa degree. And starting from the age of twelve, he has completed numerous meditation retreats, including the Hevajra retreat. With utmost humility, he travels extensively to bestow teachings and empowerments at the request of students across the globe.



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