



Advice Before and After the Five Deity Avalokiteśvara Gyalwa Gyatso Initiation

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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EDITORIAL PREFACE

Before you begin,
you might keep one question in mind:
How much of what we experience comes from
what is happening around us—
and how much comes from the way we see it?

If changing the outside world does not necessarily
change how we experience life,
then what is it that really needs to change?

You do not need to answer these questions now.
Just keep them with you as you read.



Advice Before and After the Five Deity Avalokiteśvara Gyalwa Gyatso Initiation

The Avalokiteśvara initiation is special for the Himalayan region and peoples. Avalokiteśvara is a karmic link deity; everybody in Tibet and in the larger Himalayan region knows how to chant the mantra of Avalokiteśvara even without being formally taught.

Whenever you receive an initiation, whenever you do your sādhana or any other kind of practice, the most important thing is having the right motivation. Your motivation for receiving the initiation should be for the sake of all sentient beings. In Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna practice, in particular, there is not a single practice done for oneself, one's family, or only for those who are dear to us. It is important that we keep this motivation in mind—that we are practicing the Dharma for all sentient beings.

What we are trying to do through our practice is see the true nature of everything. Whatever we see and feel now is tainted by or obscured by our emotions. What we see is diluted by emotions like anger, desire, and ignorance. For example, if we see somebody

good or somebody we like, we feel happy. If we see somebody we don't like, we get a little bit anxious. All this is because we are not seeing the true nature of things.

Basically, we experience things the way we do because we are projecting from our own minds. But when we get rid of these emotions, we can see the true nature of things. The benefit of doing our practices is that we will be free from the emotions that are at the root of our samsaric problems and see the true nature of everything with pure vision and pure thought. There are different methods for achieving this: Dharma practices like initiations, sādhanas, rituals, life releases, circumambulating temples or stupas, and every other Dharma activity. These are all methods for us to see the true nature of everything.

That is the singular goal—the only goal of our practice. Buddhahood is basically nothing other than seeing the true nature of everything. Buddhahood does not mean that you will go to heaven, that you will have the ability to fly and do all kinds of magical things. It does not mean that. A buddha is simply a person who sees the true nature of everything.

We are in saṃsāra because of our anger, desire, and ignorance, and we have these things because we have doubt and hope. We have doubts and hopes because we have selfish thoughts. The

cause of all the suffering in our lives, in our worldly existence, is selfish thoughts. Selfish thoughts lead to hopes and doubts, and hopes and doubts lead to emotions like anger, desire, and ignorance. The only way to get rid of selfish thoughts is to see the true nature of everything. When we eliminate selfish thought and see the true nature of everything, we are digging out the root of suffering. When we have done that, we have basically achieved buddhahood.

Now, the problem for most of us is that we already know these things, just like we already know what to do and what not to do—what positive actions to do and what negative actions to avoid. Yet, despite knowing all this, we are still *samsaric* beings. The reason for this is that knowing something and believing something are totally different things. If we are doing our practice only with intellectual understanding and without faith, it won't be of much use for achieving buddhahood.

Likewise, if we practice Dharma because we are motivated to have a long life, success, or for the benefit of our families—these are small goals. Every practice that we do will be much more meaningful and much more beneficial if we are really going after the root of all suffering, the root of all problems, and not just trying to solve our immediate ones. Whatever practice we do with the goal of buddhahood will be much more meaningful. We should always have this goal in mind.

The blessing and achievement you will obtain from this initiation depends entirely on the motivation with which you take the initiation. Your motivation should be for the sake of all sentient beings, not just for yourself, not just for your family, not just for your country, and so on. There is no other way of doing this. The only way to receive the initiation is to receive it for the sake of all sentient beings.

Also, the first thing we need to do when we set out to achieve any goal is to believe in ourselves. If we don't believe in ourselves, we will never even start the work. It's the same with our Dharma practice. Typically, we say that to be a Buddhist, especially a Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna practitioner, we have to be very brave. Without bravery and a big heart, we cannot practice the Mahāyāna Dharma. We even need bravery with a family of five or six or ten. There is a lot to worry about if we want to benefit the five or six or ten people in our families. We worry about whether the children are going to be happy and successful, and we worry about business, work, education—whatever it is. Now, imagine you are worrying about the welfare of all sentient beings. If you do not have a big heart, if you do not have courage, it would be very difficult. Buddhism is not for the faint-hearted.

At the same time, many of the problems that we encounter in the world are artificial worries. We have our worldly goals, but

who sets these goals? Where do we get them? We call it society, but where do we find society? You can never point your finger at society because there is no such thing. Society is an idea that we have in our minds; society is all made up in our minds. This means that the goals we have in our ordinary lives are really coming from our imaginations. There is no limit to what we can imagine. It has no bounds, and often when we try to achieve what we imagine, we find there is no such thing, no satisfaction.

I would like to give an example of the thousands of new shoes that are designed every year. In all the companies of all the countries of the world, a lot of new and different shoes are designed all the time. Our feet are just the same as they've been for millions of years, but all these companies are designing new shoes. For every product in our homes, there is something new, some new design, every year or every season. Somebody has to think up all these designs. Imagine if we could use all that mental energy—and that imagination—to solve our attachment to things and to reduce our selfish thoughts. The power that we have in our minds is very great.

You might think that you are only a normal, ordinary person, and maybe you cannot really imagine reaching such a big goal as buddhahood. But if you are a Buddhist, there is no such thing as “normal.” Either you are only a normal person, or you are a Buddhist. You cannot be a Buddhist and also be only a normal person.

This is what I am trying to explain. If you think that achieving buddhahood or attaining enlightenment is such a faraway thing or something that isn't possible for you, then you have already given up. You will never achieve what you cannot believe is possible. This is why the first thing you have to do is believe in yourself.

Buddhahood feels far away because we believe it to be far away. But seeing the true nature of everything happens in the blink of an eye. It is such a short distance. The big transformation that happens when you practice Buddhism is the change in your point of view. That is the only thing that has to change. You don't have to change where you are, where you live—nothing but your point of view. These might sound like trivial words. This might sound too simple. But if you think carefully, it's clear that our point of view is everything. It determines the kind of life we live, whether it is happy, stressed, or anxious. It determines everything we experience or go through. You don't have to change anything outside, only the way you see things—your vision.

It is difficult now because we have believed what we believe and we have seen things the way we do for a very long time—not only in this life, but for countless lifetimes. This habituation is why we think that what we see now is the truth or reality. And this is why it takes time to change.

To achieve this change, you have to learn by studying the details. The Buddha's teachings are all about going into the details. In our practice, we do this by going into the details of our daily existence. When you do this, you learn that you cannot find all the things you think you know. For example, if you are angry, and you turn to the details of your anger and try to find where it is and how it starts, you will not find it. If you go into the details, you will not find anything. These are the simple methods the Buddha taught.

Before we begin the initiation, we will do a short meditation. I like to begin this way because our minds are like waterfalls. When you see a waterfall, you see one thing—a big ribbon of water. But if you go in detail, then you understand that a waterfall is actually made up of millions and millions of small droplets, all falling one after another. Our minds are like this.

To calm our busy minds, to switch from a worldly mind to a religious mind, or to switch into practice mode, we can do a short meditation. The way to do it is to concentrate the mind on an object, preferably a holy object like a statue of the Buddha, an image of your guru, a thangka, stupa, temple, or any of your masters. If for some reason you can't do that, then you can take any object, such as your house, your car, a family member—anybody or anything on which you can keep your mind for a moment.

After the Initiation

I received this teaching from His Holiness the 41st Sakya Rinpoche, who is my root guru. It is essential now to practice Avalokiteśvara, and also to keep good behavior.

In order to be a guru's student, to qualify as a student, you must listen to your teacher and follow your teacher's instructions. If you are not doing this, you are not really a master's student. You don't become a student of a master just by calling yourself one. The bond that you have with your master is secret, and it is very important to practice diligently according to your time to maintain it. If you can do that, it is how to keep your masters healthy and bring them long life.



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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