

A TEACHING ON THE BENEFITS OF DRUPCHEN

BY LAMA THARCHIN RINPOCHE

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What we call the dharma, or the Buddha’s teachings, is something extremely vast. On my side, I have no qualities to be able to describe to you just how vast those teachings are. And on your side, using your ordinary way of analyzing or investigating with your minds, you have no capacity to hear how vast these teachings are. But in brief, to get to the real core of these teachings, we are now practicing this Drupchen, an intensive group practice. This is a very wonderful, incredible style of practice. But more particularly, as a framework for this practice, we’re using a text that was passed to Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche directly by Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, called the “Collection of Seven Treasures (Ter Kha Dun Dü).” It was Yeshe Tsogyal who requested Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche compose this specific text. She is the crown ornament of ten million dakinis, the teacher who has been the most kind to all of the Tibetan people. And it is she who appeared in a vision to Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, who is himself like the monarch of dharma within the three realms of beings, our supreme spiritual guide. We call him by the name of Kyabje, His Holiness, or Lord of Refuge, Kyabje Jigdral Yeshe Dorje Drodul Lingpa Tsal, as his long name. Yeshe Tsogyal appeared in a vision to Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche and said that it was the time to compose this particular text, which combines six previous treasures as well as Kyabje Rinpoche’s own terma treasure of the practice of Guru Rinpoche. This is the very holy, important, and vital practice that we are all doing here together. Through recognizing the qualities of this practice, we develop faith, and having developed faith and then actually doing this practice, we will receive its blessings. And by receiving its blessings, we can achieve the two forms of siddhis or accomplishment, both common and supreme. Common accomplishments are what we call the four enlightened activities¹ and the eight powers². Supreme accomplishment means to make manifest that which has always been present in the basis of our being from the beginningless beginning – our own enlightened nature. This is why we are doing this practice, and there is no other reason to be doing Drupchen besides this.

¹ Pacifying, Enriching, Magnetizing, and Annihilating

² See the eight ordinary accomplishments on rigpawiki.org for detail

One reason this “Collection of Seven Treasures” practice of Guru Rinpoche is considered to be so special is that it gathers together seven different treasure lineages into one.³ This is through the kindness, once again, of Yeshe Tsogyal, who asked Kyabje Rinpoche to do just that. You can imagine if we didn’t have this practice, it might be possible here in the West for some people to find a few of those lineages but probably not all of them. The same is true even in Tibet. Some of those lineages would be accessible to people, but rarely would they be able to gather all seven together. Thanks to the kindness of Yeshe Tsogyal, however, all the blessing and the power of all seven lineages have been gathered within this single practice by Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche.

When we are practicing any of these techniques, the point in any of the vehicles within Buddhism is always the same. Whether it is on the level of the Hinayana, the Sravaka practitioners; whether it is on the level of the Mahayana, the Bodhisattvas; those practicing the Vajrayana, the tantras; or those practicing the Clear Light Dzogchen Great Perfection teachings, every Buddhist practitioner’s goal is to attain enlightenment. However, the approach of each practice is somewhat unique. According to the Hinayana, one views all phenomena as being like a magical display or illusion, and bringing that attitude toward all phenomena is the path to enlightenment. In the Mahayana, one views all phenomena as being empty. Bringing that attitude to bear at all times and meditating on the empty nature of all phenomena is the path to enlightenment. When practicing according to the Vajrayana, such as in this particular practice, one considers all phenomena to be wisdom deities and pure realms. Since the primordial, original nature of all phenomena is recognized as extremely pure wisdom deity, tantric practitioners do not need to impose thoughts such as, “Things are a magical illusion,” or “Phenomena are empty.” The practitioner knows that the nature of the deities themselves is originally pure. Phenomena are the empty wisdom manifestations of magical illusion, which are the wisdom deities. Just focusing on that is itself a very powerful means to attaining enlightenment.

This is the basic approach of the tantras. Further, among all of the inconceivable number of deity practices within the tantric tradition, our Drupchen retreat focuses on the most effective,

³ 1. *Gathering of Secrets* (Sang-wa Dü-pa) of Guru Chöwang; 2. *Gathering of the Eight Commands* (Ka-gyad Dü-pa) of Dorje Lingpa; 3. *Gathering of the Innermost Essence* (Yang-nying Dü-pa) of Ratna Lingpa; 4. *Gem Ocean* (Nor-bu Gya-tso) of Pema Lingpa; 5. *Gathering of Victorious Ones* (Gyal-wa Dü-pa) of Zhigpo Lingpa; 6. *Complete Gathering of Enlightened Intent* (Gong-pa Yong-dü) of Duddul Lingpa; 7. The cycle of *Complete Gathering of Sugatas* (De-sheg Yong-Dü) of Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje

which is Guru Rinpoche. During this world's time of decline, which is to say our time, Guru Rinpoche said that sentient beings' afflictive emotions would become very coarse and powerful. At the same time, he said that his compassion would become that much stronger during this degenerative time. Guru Rinpoche also said that the darker the time, darkness being the measure of the coarseness of people's afflictive emotions, the brighter the moonlight of his compassion. This is the promise behind our practice focusing on Guru Rinpoche.

As well, we've received the lineage of these teachings from the teacher who is invested, empowered, praised, and lauded by Guru Rinpoche himself as his own representative, that is to say Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche. Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal appeared directly to Kyabje Rinpoche in a vision and they bestowed upon him the name Drodul Lingpa Tsal, the Adept Who Tames Beings, investing him as their representative in this world. This is the original source of the lineage, and we have received these teachings directly from Kyabje Rinpoche and from his son, who is also his spiritual heir, Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, whose wisdom mind is completely of a single flavor with that of his father. We have received these teachings from both father and son in a very direct lineage that brings with it all of the power and blessing and influence of the original source. Receiving these teachings is like having a wish-fulfilling jewel placed directly in our hand. Nonetheless, we have to recognize it as such. If we hold a wish-fulfilling jewel in our hand, we can pray to it for whatever we wish and we will receive it. Without recognizing this, however, we might as well be holding ordinary rocks and stones because if we don't think of praying to it, we won't receive anything from it. If we don't recognize the wish-fulfilling jewel as such, it might as well be something very ordinary. So, we must know that we have this pure source of the lineage and recognize it as such.

Furthermore, we should be very happy with ourselves. Why is this? Because we have attained that which is very difficult to attain in this world, which is to say, a precious human life. And in this precious human life, we have met with that which is difficult to meet – the tantric teachings. We have met with the most qualified spiritual masters in Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche and Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche. And we have the opportunity to practice their teachings. These are signs of incredible merit on our part. We are the vessel for these teachings and we have the opportunity to practice. So we should feel overjoyed with ourselves. We have about a week for this Drupchen practice, and while that might seem like a short time, it's really not. With recognition of our great fortune to practice, that we're holding this wish-fulfilling jewel in our

hand, a week is more than enough time. Without recognizing this fortune, if we practice without faith, belief, or trust even for an eon of time, it won't be enough. With trust and faith in this practice and lineage, a week is long enough to attain supreme accomplishment. So please recognize your fortune and be happy.

Some people believe that once they become Buddhist, the best thing to do is to practice absolutely everything available – to practice the Sakya, the Nyingma, the Kagyu, and the Gelug traditions, at least. And if not all of that, then even within one tradition, they think it's best to receive as many teachings as possible. That's what some people believe: the more the better. Some of my Western friends, in particular, have said to me, "You know, your center at Pema Ösel Ling, you're only doing the rituals and practices of the New Treasures of Dudjom, everything is just... Dudjom. What is that about?" And they seem sort of unhappy about it, or they're questioning, "Why are you limiting yourself to such a small piece of this whole picture?" Well, I tell them that the entire range of Buddha's teachings can be found within the Dudjom lineage and within these teachings. We have before us really the very innermost essence of all of the Buddha's teachings in the Dudjom Tersar and it's really not necessary to go anywhere else. Here we have the heart blood of the dakinis, teachings that are vital, powerful, and that still have their blessings if we practice them.

What is the proof that practicing these teachings will lead to enlightenment, since that is our goal in practicing the Buddha's teachings? Dudjom Lingpa, Dudjom Rinpoche's previous incarnation, the source of many of these teachings, had at least thirteen disciples who attained rainbow body. Dudjom Rinpoche had a student named Jigme Chöying Norbu, a lama who requested that Rinpoche write down many teachings, who he praised in the colophons of many of his texts as "my foremost disciple" or "the best among all of my disciples." Dudjom Rinpoche revealed a treasure with a prediction of this man's life and his attainment of rainbow body at death and he did attain rainbow body. That is one example. Another example is one lama who was originally a Gelug geshe⁴ who received transmission of Dorje Phurba Namchak Putri teachings from Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche who told him, "Now you're the *chö-dak*, you are responsible for these teachings." This lama wrote a long commentary to the Namchak Putri teachings. He also attained rainbow body. And there was yet another student who received

⁴ His Gelug name was Gelong Lobsang Khyentse; his Nyingma name was Khenpo Acho

teachings from both Dudjom Lingpa and his reincarnation, Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche, who attained rainbow body. These are just three that we know of, and who knows how many other students of Dudjom Rinpoche attained rainbow body? This is proof that these teachings alone contain all of the innermost essential points of the Buddha's teachings, since practicing these teachings alone can lead to enlightenment and to these marvelous signs of rainbow body at the time of death. This is the basis of my very deep faith in these teachings and this practice and the trust that they lead to enlightenment. This is why I am making this opportunity to practice these Dudjom teachings available to all of my dharma friends. I trust very deeply that these teachings are the heart essence of the dakinis and will lead my dharma friends to enlightenment. This is why I developed Pema Ösel Ling in this way.

Not only do we have these incredible teachings, but we are unbelievably fortunate to have our teachers – I guarantee that. I'm not competing or playing politics or anything, but under this blue sky today, there is an incomparable teacher who is the living Buddha Kuntuzangpo in human form and that is Kyabje Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche, our Lord Protector. For us to have this kind of good fortune and to not make a serious effort to practice would be a great shame. We have this precious human life, which is more precious than that of the devas or gods. People think the deva realm is better than the human realm, but actually that's not true. In terms of temporary experiences of pleasure, happiness and joy, yes, devas do have all of that. But to reach the final long-term happiness and joy of complete enlightenment, human life is more powerful even than the gods'. Why is this? It's because of generating the proper motivation to benefit all sentient beings equally under this blue sky. How many sentient beings are there? Wherever the sky pervades, there are sentient beings; wherever there are sentient beings, there's karma; wherever there's karma, there's suffering. That's samsara. We develop the vast motivation to empty samsara and liberate all sentient beings from their suffering. In addition, in these teachings we have the skillful wisdom aspect of Vajrayana. And the most powerful of those is the human body because, while normally sentient beings have five elements, humans have one extra called the element of the wisdom of exaltation.

Although devas do temporarily have a kind of joyful, light body that's not solid, still that body is based on karma. Because they're not enlightened, when that karma is exhausted, they can be reborn in other realms within samsara. The human body is the most powerful thing we have

for dharma practice and it's our good fortune to have this precious human life. According to our positive circumstances, we can see what kind of teacher and teachings we have. We are unbelievably rich in this way. Then, when we take that essence of our precious human life, it's most powerful. But without recognition of its preciousness, we lose that essence. Of course, we need to have faith. Generally speaking, on an external level, we need to have faith in the Triple Gems – the Buddha, dharma, and sangha. And from the point of view of tantra, we first must have faith in our own enlightened Buddha nature. When we have that faith, then naturally we will have manifestation of Triple Gems, of inconceivable Buddha phenomena, externally manifesting unobstructedly. When these two – our faith and Buddha's manifestation – come together, it's very powerful. When we are doing dharma practice, then if our life is even one day longer, it's very meaningful. Every day we can recite mantra, do dharma practice, accumulate virtue, and think of the Triple Gems' blessing with faith and devotion. Then if we keep receiving the blessings and continually repeat that, eventually we will become fully enlightened. Although we have Buddha nature, we find ourselves either stuck in samsara or enlightened, depending on two different circumstances. When we are engaged with our afflictive emotions, karma is produced, which leads to suffering. That is called samsara. However, if our mind is engaged with the Triple Gems' phenomena and we develop that habit, repeating it again and again, then we become enlightened.

What I'm trying to say is that even one week of Drupchen retreat is never too short because we are experiencing truly positive circumstances here. Normally we are always experiencing our worldly material phenomena, and repeating that again and again, which just leads us further into samsara. But for this one week of Drupchen, we are totally engaged with Buddha phenomena. For instance, we can look at all these external art forms, such as the Guru Rinpoche statue here at Pema Ösel Ling. Like we say in Tibetan, you can put the whole world on one side and this statue on the other side, and this statue will be more valuable. We have this kind of support for our practice created by Kyabje Dungse Rinpoche's own hand. The moment we think of this support, we continually receive its blessings. And everything we are doing during this retreat is related to dharma. Our mind repeats that experience and creates that habit. Then after Drupchen, when we go home, we can remember this experience: this mantra, this sadhana, this visualization, our faith and devotion. Then when we die, whatever kind of mental habit we've created awakens and we will be reborn wherever that habit takes us. If our anger

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habit wakes up, then we wake up in the hell realm. If our pride habit wakes up, we will be reborn in the deva realm. If our jealousy habit wakes up, we will be reborn in the asura realm. If our desire habit wakes up, we will be reborn in the human realm. If our ignorance habit wakes up, we will be reborn in the animal realm. If our habit of greed wakes up, we will be reborn in the hungry ghost realm. This Drupchen, however, creates only the habit of Buddha phenomena. When that habit wakes up, immediately we wake up in the Buddha's pure land. That's what we're doing here – creating pure habit. That's why this practice is so powerful. Through the kindness of Kyabje Dungse Rinpoche and Lama Sonam Rinpoche, we have these kinds of genuine teachers to guide us. This is an incredibly unique and fortunate circumstance. Please keep that appreciation.

Also it is most important to practice. People often have the idea, “Oh, I want to do practice, but I don't know how.” Lots of people have this thought. But Patrul Rinpoche said that is not true. He said, “Everybody knows how to say *Om Mani Padmé Hung*, but only a few people accumulate a hundred million.” In other words, people know how to recite mantra, but they're not doing it. That's the problem. To practice the Dharma, we don't have to know a lot. Dharma practice has to do with a pure heart. Have genuine faith in the Triple Gems and genuine loving kindness toward all sentient beings. Also have genuine trust in your own Buddha nature, and try to keep that awareness present all the time. It's that simple.

Thank you so much.

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