



Aurora Of Blessings

Khenpo Pema Sherab was born in 1936, at Riphu, a place in Dege Jomda, in the Kham Province to Dorje Dhondup and Tse Tso. When he was eight, he studied reading and writing Tibetan from his uncle Lama Choesang while herding cattle. At fourteen, he went to Lhasa and studied under masters and scholars of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. While receiving teachings, he rendered service to his teachers and studied with great enthusiasm, day and night.

In 1953, Shechen Kongtrul Rinpoche bestowed novice vows upon him. In 1959, he fled from Tibet to India. He met H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, from whom he received most of his teachings including the Guhyagarbha Root Tantra, Longchenpa's Treasury of Pith Instructions, Kagyud Ngag Dzod (Treasury of

Tantra teachings of Kagyu Lineage), Rinchen Terdzod, Jigme Lingpa's Yonten Dzod (Treasury of Enlightened Qualities), Lochen Dharmashri's Explanation on Ngari Penchen's Three Vows entitled, Fruit of the Wish-fulfilling Tree, Patrul Rinpoche's Words of My Perfect Teacher, and many other sutra and tantra teachings.

On various occasions, he has received many teachings including the Rinchen Terdzod Empowerments and its oral transmission from H.H. Dudjom Rinpoche and H.H. Penor Rinpoche. He received all the teachings related to Jang-ter (Northern Treasure Teachings) from H.H. Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche.

In 1968, His Holiness Penor Rinpoche invited him to come to Namdroling to teach the Dharma. Though at that time, the institute has not established, Khenpo spent a few years teaching the traditional common and uncommon fields of study to small monks of the monastery.

Since the establishment of the institute in 1978 until 2003, for 25 years, Khenpo Pema Sherab has been teaching in this institute out of compassion and kindness to the students. During his tenure, he has wholeheartedly rendered his priceless service without thought of eight worldly concerns and has stayed in the institute all these years, forbearing all hardships for the preservation and dissemination of Buddha's teaching in general and the Nyingma doctrine in particular.

The teachings that he has dispensed include the common traditional sciences of Tibetan grammar, spelling and poetry. Among the uncommon traditional studies, he has taught primarily the Thirteen Great Treatises, Jigme Lingpa's Yonten Dzod (Treasury of Enlightened Qualities), Mipham Rinpoche's Osel Nyingpo; a commentary to Guhyagarbha Tantra, Longchenpa's Ngalso Korsum (Trilogy of Resting in the Nature of Mind), Do Tshog Chen Dupa (Sutra that Gathers All Intentions and Great Accumulations), Rongzom Mahapandita's Thegchen Tsul Jug (Entering the Mahayana Path), Mipham Rinpoche's Gal Len Nam Sum (The Trilogy of Replies to Criticisms) and many other teachings that illustrates the distinct view, meditation, conduct, and fruition of the Nyingma Lineage.

For the benefit of future generations, he has composed many books on Buddhist philosophy including a biography of Guru Padmasambhava, an Exposition on Two Truths, Lorig and Tagrig, Sun of Mind; an exposition of Logic and many others. All in all, he has taken the responsibility to manage the institute with great compassion to this day. Hence his kindness is unfathomable.

Buddha's Revolution

Being so removed from the time and without reference to the myriad sutras that record it, it is hard to imagine how beautiful, harmonious and excellent was the Sangha led by Lord Buddha 2900 years ago. His Sangha was joined by renunciates from every strata of the

Indian Society- nobles of royal families, untouchables, mothers, musicians and notorious murderers. Once they decided on the path, they were welcomed into the community of those practicing to eliminate all obscurations or in other words personal negativists. In Tibet the stories of their lives was Legend.

The Buddhist Sangha was driven by one goal, eventual enlightenment. Enlightenment was taken seriously in those days, it was the ultimate goal that drove the breath of those on the spiritual path. Living in the princely house of his father in the Kingdom of Shakya, the prince Siddhartha when he reached the age of twenty-nine was inspired by this very impulse, spoken of with awe in quiet rooms or besides fires at night in India almost three millennia ago, in short he was driven by this thought, The Thought of Enlightenment and forsook everything that was holding him back to seek and attain this goal. At the age of thirty-five, he was successful, under the Bodhi-Tree in Bodhgaya he realized the truth of all things. That is what enlightenment is, the truth, the true nature of phenomena which we now see incorrectly due to our negative thinking, in the Buddhist paradigm known as the two obscurations. Following his enlightenment Lord Buddha taught 84,000 paths of removing forever that which was obscuring beings.

The paths Buddha laid out originated from his enlightenment and so unmistakably lead to this goal. Siddhartha became enlightened and therefore became a Buddha, an awakened one, which is exactly down to the last hair-breadth equivalent to enlightenment itself. If we seek the same goal and follow Buddha as the teacher walking the path he laid out we can be enlightened also. The original disciples came from all walks of life and as one great body of peace won the hearts of and were an inspiration too the whole of Northern India. They offered a society for anyone determined to join in which all conditions were optimized to reach the end of the spiritual path.

Buddha's first teaching was the four noble truths, which is based on the crucial insight that all phenomena are a creation of thinking, from positive mind states happiness arises and from negative suffering does. It is crucial to understand that phenomena are not informed from some other principle other than thinking, such as the universe or atoms, or energy. They are manifestations of deluded thinking. Without grasping this it is difficult to understand the Four Noble Truths, which explain how all possible phenomena came to be. The first truth explains the fact of suffering. The second explains what causes suffering, the third explains the fact of happiness (cessation or Nirvana) and the fourth explains what causes happiness, the path or Dharma and its myriad ways of removing obscurations and increasing positive thinking in order to attain the state of enlightenment itself. Striving for Enlightenment is what it means to be Buddhist and the texts we will study during this Shedra outline powerful and swift methods to reach this goal.

Teachings of Vajrayana

During the Buddha's lifetime the vehicles of Hinayana and Mahayana were taught to large numbers of disciples. The vajrayana however remained a closely guarded secret and was taught only to select disciples whose aptitudes were suitable to the teaching. Tantra utilizes a vast array of techniques to actualize the enlightenment that lives as our nature. The Vajrayana teachings are very important, very special, very secret, very deep and powerful teachings. One of the first students of Vajrayana was King Indrabhuti who asked how he could practice the Dharma and remain in his palace. In response the Buddha dismissed his monks and for seven days gave the teachings of Vajrayana to the King. Following Buddha's Parinirvana the two categories of teachings were the teachings of the

Sutras and the teachings of the Tantras and each was practiced according to the tenets and precepts particular to it. Buddha's time was known as a golden age because people did not have the serious deep negative karma and obscurations so common today as the age has degenerated. Because of this teachings of the Sutra were effective and sufficient for most.

Therefore tantra was taught secretly in small groups and Sutra's taught in public and in monasteries throughout India. The reasoning behind such a tradition was this- when a children are very young they cannot eat solid foods and must be slowly introduced as their capacity to take in greater variety of nourishment increases. Just the same, once a being has developed the capacity for a specific teaching whether Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana, the Buddhas bestow the appropriate teaching. During his 45 years of teaching, Buddha made several prophecies of times far in the future when the Vajrayana teachings would be propagated on a wide scale as these would be the most effective methods for a time when negative mind states are a rampant epidemic.

Guru Rinpoche manifested thereafter and spread Tantra in Tibet and to this day many practitioners of Tantra are yielding results and attainment from its practice.

Vajrayana has many benefits as well as danger. The benefits come from the swiftness and power of the methods and the dangers can be compared to piloting an airplane which allows you to travel much faster; however should something go wrong in the flight, the flight will end with a disastrous plane crash. This is why the foundational practices of Ngondro are so critical as they prepare the ground from which Tantra is to be practiced and ensure stability in the later phases. What we wish to accomplish in this Shedra is to provide students with the gateway to the swift path so they will be prepared to practice Tantra successfully should it harmonize with their aptitudes.