

Advice on Nonsectarianism

From Radiant Sunlight of the Victorious Ones' Teachings: A Brief, First-Hand Account of the Liberating Life-Story of the Great Emanated Treasure Revealer, Along With Some Accounts of Treasure Origins and Discussions of Various Topics

by Chokgyur Dechen Lingpa

Among the hundred major and thousand minor Treasure revealers (*tertöns*) of past and future who are regents of the Lake-Born Mahāguru Padmasambhava, embodiment of all victors throughout the three times, the one called Chokgyur Dechen Zhikpo Lingpa Trinlé Drodül Tsal thus addressed all disciples living in this vast kingdom:

“From the beginning, naturally pure wakefulness is the basic space of everything. Within it, all pure and impure phenomena are by nature non-arisen. At the same time, they are also self-arisen through the potency of unobstructed display. Among all, everything that is good and beneficial for the world—the appearing vessel together with its living contents, all sentient beings—arises from the inseparable wisdom and great compassion that is the wisdom activity of the perfect buddhas. And the main, foundational activity consists in the propagation of the Dharma teachings. As Śāntideva said:

May we meet with and serve the teachings—
the only cure for beings' suffering
and the source of all happiness—
and may they thus endure forever! ¹

"Accordingly, it is due to the kindness of Dharma kings, translators, and scholars that the precious teachings of the victors, source of all benefit and happiness, were able to spread and flourish in the world in general and in the snowy mountains of Tibet in particular. Thus, the great preceptor Śāntarakṣita granted ordination to the 'seven men of trial,'² and propagated far and wide the teachings of the Vinaya, the root of the doctrine. The Master Padmasambhava subjugated the gods and spirits of Tibet, binding them with a powerful seal,³ and he illuminated the essential teachings, the resultant tantras, like the sun. He also prescribed various things that should be done in order to establish auspicious connections for the long life of the king and the spread of the teachings of the victors, such as turning a valley of sand into a grassy meadow. However, at that time, there were evil ministers who delighted in the dark side. They drove a wedge of slander between the master and the king, and as a result the king did not ask the master to establish these

auspicious connections. Thus, for instance, the necessary orders were not given to the twelve *tenma* goddesses⁴ to prevent the appearance of extremists in Tibet. The master therefore prophesied that due to this failure to create the right auspicious conditions, in the future, disputes would arise within the Buddhist teachings. This prophecy has now come to pass.

"Since the point of teaching and study is practice, it is not right to separate scholastic from practical endeavors. And yet, today, those engaging in study and those engaging in practice are set apart. Scholars call practitioners 'ignorant meditators,' saying that now is not the time for practice, and so on. They see them as bull-headed, these great meditators whose focus is on practice, and they criticize them endlessly. Likewise, practitioners heap scorn on scholars, describing as meaningless their earnest activities of study and contemplation, teaching and listening. For them, this is but a parrot's recitation of the Dharma.

"Nowadays, merely having a different preceptor and monastery is tantamount to belonging to a different sect or lineage. People are partisan, biased towards their own monasteries, their own localities. They favor the masters and preceptors of their local community, while heaping lavish criticism on others and on the teachings—all in a scramble for gain, honor, wealth, and fame. In the end, they take up weapons and kill each other, and so it goes on. Even those who follow the same texts and the words of the same masters go their separate ways, blown apart on the breeze.

"Practitioners too have started identifying different masters and monasteries as 'different lineages.' They jealously eye each other's dwellings, students, and renown. They run around everywhere, not content with mountain hermitages or isolated places. These people who have neither shame nor religion obtain the name of 'realized renunciants,' and those who know nothing are hailed with the words, 'knowing one, they are wise in all.' Their conduct is dissolute, their behavior careless, and they are lazy, idle, and indolent. They claim that the throes of their attachment and aversion are 'the nature of meditation,' and that they are 'siddhas who have destroyed delusion,' and so on. And yet, if I investigate closely, I do not find any view or school of thought that is superior to any other, or even particularly different.

"There are but slight variations in the way young monks debate about red and white colors,⁵ and *māntrikas* place their vajra and bell. Great meditators also differ slightly in their understanding and perception of their experiences, but their ultimate goal and destination remain the same—the single final intent of the victorious ones, of all the *sūtras* and *tantras*, scriptures and commentaries.

"This however is not sufficient to address all the slight variations in the mindset of individuals. Thus, the so-called 'Old School' (Nyingma) and 'New School' (Sarma) respectively designate the earlier and later propagation of the teachings, and are otherwise no different in terms of view or practice. Nevertheless, we call them so in order to identify their different teaching styles. Similarly, the Kadampas, Sakyapas, four elder and eight later Kagyüpas,⁶ the Jonang, Zhalu, Bodongpas, Gadenpas and so on may all hold different lineages with different conventions, but their ultimate view and accomplishment are the same. Therefore, since all doctrines are intermingled and no one teaching stands apart, there is no point in talking about different monasteries and lines of transmission; ultimately, all these distinctions are complete delusion. And yet the teachings these days are troubled by malignant forces, and are all but torn to pieces by the same jealousy, competitiveness, attachment, and aversion that plague worldly traditions.

"The prophetic guide to one of my Treasures, *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes (Sampa Lhündrup)*, says:

Talking out of their own personal likes and dislikes[‡]
they disguise mountains of concepts as 'Uḍḍiyāna's words.'[‡]
Based on predictions made in fake prophecies,[‡]
self-praising in tone and disparaging of others,[‡]
the single Dharma community is divided into factions.[‡]
In these conditions, study and practice are split asunder.[‡]
Through this inexpiable karma of forsaking the Dharma,[‡]
great harm comes to oneself, to others, to the teachings, and to beings.
[‡]
Therefore, do not follow after charlatans: this is my heart-advice.[‡]

"One should practice accordingly.

"Also, the *All-Weaving Sūtra*,⁷ says:

Mañjuśrī, consider the karmic obscurations of forsaking the sublime Dharma. Mañjuśrī, those who consider some of the Tathāgatas' teachings to be good, and some to be bad, are forsaking the Dharma. When they say, 'This is right' and 'This is not right,' they are forsaking the sublime Dharma. I myself have never taught different Dharmas for the sake of the Listeners' Vehicle, the Solitary Realizers' Vehicle, or indeed the Great Vehicle. Yet such fools differentiate my

teachings, saying ‘This was taught to the listeners; this to the solitary realizers.’ Through this perception of difference, they forsake the sublime Dharma in its entirety. When they say, ‘This is something bodhisattvas must train in; this is not something bodhisattvas must train in,’ they forsake the sublime Dharma. To talk about whether a particular Dharma teacher is eloquent or not is to forsake the Dharma. Saying that he has taught the Dharma incorrectly is forsaking the Dharma.

"Thus, those who wish themselves well should regret and confess any such karma already accrued of forsaking the Dharma. They should vow that, from now on, they will guard against it and refrain from it, even at the cost of their lives. Though provisionally, in accordance with the mental level of disciples, the view and practice of the different vehicles might appear as different, ultimately they are one. As for us *tertöns*, we do not have any particular ‘*tertön* religion,’ aside from remaining impartial and unbiased towards localities, communities, disciples, sects, and teachings. The union of Sūtra and Tantra taught by the buddhas is what constitutes the teaching of the *tertöns*.

"Hence, those who have entered the Victor’s teachings should be entering the gateway of Dharma with the wish to be free from *saṃsāra*. Furthermore, they should not be thinking only of their own peace and happiness, but should have the overwhelming resolve to awaken for the benefit of others. Thereafter, it is of utmost importance that they strictly keep the rules of the three types of vows. As the supreme scholar Venerable Vasubandhu said:

With disciplined study and contemplation,
one aptly prepares for meditation.⁸

"This should be understood. As the world-famous Lord Gampopa said:

Beginners strive in listening, contemplation, and meditation,
and having become stable, they practice persistently.

"In just this way, one of my students—a Vinaya-holder of these degenerate times, Karma Sangyé Chöpel, or Péma Drimé Lodrö Zhenpen Chökyi Nangwa⁹—has visited all the Dharma centers and remote mountain hermitages of the foremost scholars and practitioners. He has toured their monks’ colleges to engage in study and reflection, and stayed in their retreat centers to enhance his practice of the essential points of Sūtra and Tantra. Since serving the Dharma with pure, virtuous altruism forms part of the seven accumulations of merit from material causes,¹⁰ all decent people—high, low, and middling—should seek him out! Not only that, but in these times when people hold to mere appearances, the only attachment of this master

from Ewam Chögar is to the beneficial qualities of the steadfast scholar. Therefore, wherever you hail from—whether lay person, novice or pre-novice, or fully-ordained monastic—if you are interested in the Vinaya of the sublime Dharma, you should know him to have the undeniable status of a *khenpo*! Indeed, as it is said in the four sections of Vinaya scriptures: ‘Monks, how much must be done so that we may say that the sublime Dharma endures? As long as monks exert themselves and fulfill their duties, it is said to endure.’¹¹ "

In this, the Fire Rabbit year of the fifteenth year-cycle (1867–68), may these words spread forth from Orgyen Samten Chöling at Rudam Snowy Ridge, the main sacred site of wisdom qualities, and may they bring goodness!

| Translated by Lhasey Lotsawa Translations (trans. Oriane Sherap Lhamo and Laura Dainty, ed. Libby Hogg), with many thanks to James Gentry for kindly providing suggestions and clarifications.

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1. From the dedication chapter of Śāntideva's *Bodhisattvacāryāvattara*. Zhi ba lha, "Byang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa", in vol. 61 of *bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994–2008), 1037. ↩
 2. The seven men of trial (*sad mi mi bdun*) were the first seven men to take ordination as Buddhist monks in Tibet. They were regarded as test subjects, to establish whether or not the vinaya (the monks' rules) could be upheld in Tibet. ↩
 3. Seal (*phyag rgya*) is a common word in tantric texts, which can take on a variety of meanings. It can be understood here as referring to Guru Rinpoche's dominion, or more widely as the commitments or oaths that were forced upon the spirits of Tibet when Guru Rinpoche made them into Dharma protectors. ↩
 4. Tenma goddesses (*brtan ma*) are twelve guardian sisters connected to twelve different mountains and lakes in Tibet. ↩
 5. This is a reference to the dialectics studied in the monastic college. One common debate in classes of logical reasoning concerns the attribution of color to entities, using the existential verb 'is'. For example: if a horse is white, and white is a color, then is the horse a color? ↩
 6. The four great and eight minor Kagyü school subsects are the Barom (*ba rom*), Phakdru (*phak gru*), Kamtsang (*khams tshang*), and Tselpa (*tshal pa*) Kagyü; and the Drikung ('*bri gung*), Taklung (*stag lung*), Trophu (*khro phu*), Lingré (*gling ras*), Martsang (*smar tshang*), Yelpa (*yel pa*), and Yazang (*gya' bzang*) Kagyü. ↩
 7. *All-Weaving Sūtra* (Tib. '*Phags pa rnam par 'thag pa thams cad bsdus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, Skt. *Ārya-sarvavaidalya-saṃgraha-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*). The citation appears in this sūtra in very similar, though not identical form. "rNam par 'thag pa thams cad bsdus pa'i mdo," in vol.63 of *bKa' gyur dPe bsdur ma* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2006-2009), 506. ↩
 8. From Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*. dByig gnyen, "Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyī tshig le'ur byas pa", in *bsTan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994-2008), vol. 69: 43. ↩

9. *Karma sangs rgyas chos 'phel* or *Padma dri med blo gros gzhan phan chos kyi snang ba*, was one of Chokgyur Lingpa's closest students, commonly known as Karmé Khenpo Rinchen Dargyé (*Karma'i mkhan po rin chen dar rgyas*). ↩
10. Jamgön Kongtrül cites the seven merits derived from material things as the following, according to the *Transmissions on Monastic Discipline* "The [construction of] monastic campuses (*ārāma*),/ The [building of] great temples (*vihāra*),/ The [making of] mattresses,/ The prolonging of life,/ The nursing of those who suddenly fall ill,/ Acts of charity [undertaken] in places and times of destitution:/ These are the so-called "seven merits derived from material things." Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, and Gyurme Dorje. *The Treasury of Knowledge. Book Six, Parts One and Two* (Boston, MA: Snow Lion Publications, 2012), 181. ↩
11. This rather obscure citation appears in the Vinaya in this expanded context: sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la tshe dang ldan pa u pA lis zhus pa/ btsun pa rung ba'i sa zhes kyang bgyi mi rung ba'i sa zhes kyang bgyi na/ btsun pa ji tsam gyis na rung ba'i sar rig par bgyi/ u pA li dam pa'i chos yos pa'i tshe rung ba dang mi rung bar 'gyur/ dam pa'i chos zhig par gyur na thams bcaad kyang rung ba'o/ /btsun pa ji tsam gyis na dam pa'i chos mchis pa zhes bgyi/ ji tsam gyis na zhig pa zhes bgyi/ u pA li ji srid du las byed cing nan tan byed pa yang yod pa'i bar du ste/ las byed la nan tan byed pa yang yod na dam pa'i chos yod pa zhes bya'o/ /las kyang mi byed la nan tan byed pa dag kyang med na de ni dam pa'i chos zhig pa zhes bya'o/ 'Dul ba in vol.13 of *bKa' 'gyur dPe bsdur ma* (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2006-2009), 176. ↩



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