

~From the Archives of Teachings by Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche~

HEART ADVICE ON TSOQ AND OTHER MATTERS

*A teaching read to those gathered at Orgyen Dorje Den on January 14, 2012,
to practice Vajrasattva in connection with Dungse Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's Parinirvana.*

Part 3

The Blessing Presence of Shakyamuni, Mandarava, and Guru Rinpoche, Still Fresh and Vivid

We can still be inspired today by the qualities and the displays manifested by the great masters of the past. Look, for example, at the land of India, the place where the Buddha himself came into this world. There is almost no place in India that was not touched by his blessing, that he did not visit and infuse with the power of his presence in this world. First, he was born there. We call him Buddha Shakyamuni, which indicates he was born into the clan of the Shakyas, and you can go to the place called Lumbini Grove where he actually took birth. You can read the stories of his enlightened activities, of the various deeds he manifested as he grew up, and how he finally attained enlightenment itself. We can read the stories and understand how Buddha Shakyamuni put on the display of taking birth and then of growing up. He displayed learning and studying, training and developing skills, and all manner of things. He displayed renouncing the world, renouncing his kingdom. You can go to the place where he turned the wheel of the dharma—many places where he turned the wheel of the dharma, in fact—giving Fundamental Vehicle teachings and Great Vehicle teachings, and you can see how vast his enlightened activities were.

If you are able to go to those places, you can think, “How amazing! How many places there are like this, where the land itself is saturated with the blessings of Buddha Shakyamuni! How many thousands of years have gone by since he was here, how many centuries' worth of other events have passed in this place, and yet still it is resounding, still

aglow and abuzz with the blessings of Buddha Shakyamuni himself. How extraordinary is that!”

Or take Guru Rinpoche, for example. Guru Rinpoche didn’t only enact his enlightened activity in his pure land, the land of the Copper Colored Mountain. All over India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, every place has been touched by his blessing and his presence. You can read stories of the miraculous displays he performed in so many far-flung places. There is a very famous account of his life and activities called the *Pema Katang*, which you can read—it is translated into English¹—and you can see for yourself how extraordinary the activities of this being were.

For example, Guru Rinpoche went into one kingdom, and there he met his destined consort Mandarava who at that time was ordained as a nun. It was soon discovered that they were performing union practice together. Mandarava’s father, the king, was furious with them both. He locked Guru Rinpoche up in prison. He buried Mandarava down in a deep cave, blocking off the entrance with thick briars covered in thorns, and said, “You must stay here, my daughter, for nine years because of the shame that you have brought on this family!”

Then the king burned Guru Rinpoche on a great pyre. He prepared the pyre by bringing endless gallons of fragrant oils so that the fire would be very hot, and sandalwood logs, and so forth. He built a great mound and placed Guru Rinpoche on top and set fire to it. Then, as was the tradition, everyone went away from that place but they could see the smoke from the fire in the distance.

Now, usually, when you burn someone on a pyre, after a couple of days the body is completely burned and all of the wood and so forth is gone, and the smoke stops and you know that the fire has gone out and the person is dead. But this time, the smoke just kept on

¹ An English translation of a version of the *Pema Katang* is available through Dharma Publishing as a 2-volume set, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, which is based on a French translation. Sections of the *Pema Katang* are also included in the 3-volume *Following in Your Footsteps* series published by Rangjung Yeshe Publications: *The Lotus-Born Guru in Nepal* (Vol. 1), *India* (Vol. 2), and *Tibet* (Vol. 3, scheduled to be published in November of this year). *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, also from Rangjung Yeshe Publications, is a translation of another version of Guru Rinpoche’s life story recorded by Yeshe Tsogyal.

coming and coming and coming. Finally, the people went back to see what was going on. They found that all of the oils that had been poured on the pyre had been transformed into a great, cool lake. And there was Guru Rinpoche upon that lake surrounded by many, many retinues of dakinis—dakinis not unlike Mandarava, it must be said—who were all singing his praises and making offerings to him. The king said, “Am I crazy? Can I believe my own eyes? What is this I see? I am sure that I burned this guy. What’s happening?” But in fact, he was beholding Guru Rinpoche’s wisdom form.

So, you should read in the book because I am sure I am getting some of this wrong, and it will be much better if you read it for yourself, but that is the idea.

At that point, the king had great regret and he sent his servants immediately to bring his finest garments, his most splendid silken robes from the royal treasury, and he dressed Guru Rinpoche in them. Those are the robes that you see Guru Rinpoche wearing in all of the statues and images of him. Then the king sent his wife, the queen, to go get Mandarava, saying, “Bring the girl, quick, we have made a terrible mistake!” So, the mother went to see Mandarava, and Mandarava said, “No, I will not come.” So, her father the king went and implored her to come and she said, “You said that I had to stay here for nine years because of the shame I had brought on the family, and so here I intend to stay. I will stay for nine years, as you commanded.”

At that, the king completely broke down and offered many confessions and expressions of regret for his great mistake, at which point Mandarava relented and agreed to come out. The king also gave her beautiful silken garments, and she and Guru Rinpoche were reunited. To this day, the lake where Guru Rinpoche was burned is still called Tso Pema, Lotus Lake, and you can go there and see it. The miracles that were performed there still imbue that land with the blessings of Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava and the whole display of enlightened qualities that were manifested at that time. It isn’t just in India, either; it is also in Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim—really in that whole part of the world, there is no place where Guru Rinpoche’s blessing did not penetrate.

So, you can go to these places and see them and be inspired. However, in one way it doesn't matter if you go and see them if you are just going to say, "Oh yeah, I saw Maratika Cave—it is a bunch of sticks and stones." But if you understand the history and significance of that place, then your mind, your heart, will be more open to receive the blessing that is still there. In such places, the rocks and the earth are still vibrating with the sound of those mantras and those practices, and the whole place is still resonant with Guru Rinpoche's own voice. Maratika Cave, for example, was where Guru Rinpoche and Mandarava directly beheld Amitayus, the deity of long life; and by practicing there, they actually attained the state of vidyadharas of immortality. The blessings and teachings and substances that they received from Amitayus directly, from the deity of longevity himself, were concealed as a treasure. We have that treasure today, called the Chimed Sok Tig, which was revealed by Düdjom Rinpoche². Actually, it was half-revealed by a tertön named Namkha something-or-other³, I can't remember. Tertön Namkha something-or-other half-revealed it and Düdjom Rinpoche half-revealed it. Anyway, we still have a very direct connection to that lineage. So, if we go to that place we can say, "This isn't just some place in a tourist book or some place that I read about in some moldy old text. This is a place I myself have a connection with, through the living lineage of my wisdom teachers. How extraordinary is that!"

You might ask, "Why is it important to know about these different places, to know about this stupa, that cave, such-and-such mountain, what is the point really? I thought that we were supposed to be meditating and concentrating on our own minds." Yes, that is true, that sounds really good, please do that! But you can see for yourself that, if you understand the stories behind these places, that will help you appreciate the qualities of those masters. Conversely, seeing the qualities of the masters and their activities will in turn help you have reverence for the blessing and significance of the places. The stories are the means by which the masters' qualities are revealed and, by extension, the qualities of the places they blessed.

² Kyabje Düdjom Rinpoche, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje.

³ Tertön Zilnön Namkhai Dorje

As you appreciate the blessings a little more, you recognize their power a little more, and through this your faith naturally grows. Naturally you trust them more and more.

Trust is very important. You have to trust your masters, you have to trust your lineage, if you are going to rely on them and make use of their wisdom. If you don't trust someone, you are never going to do what they say. We have a hard enough time trying to do what they say anyway, but if we don't trust them, we are completely hopeless. So, the more we cultivate faith and devotion, the more we will trust our masters, the more we will trust the great lineage gurus; and because of this, we will try, in our little way, to do what they say. And one way or another, we will actually be able to make some kind of progress on the path. That is called authentic practice. That will allow us to accumulate merit and purify our obscurations, which are really our only two jobs and the only two things standing between us and enlightenment.

~ teaching continues in Part 4...