

4. THE PASSING OF ENLIGHTENED BEINGS

Today I've been asked to give some explanation on the topic of how offerings should be made in relation to relics, in connection with the passing of the great Vajradhara Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche.¹ After discussing the way the Buddha passed into parinirvāṇa,² I will talk about the way offerings have been made and about the practice of abiding in *thugdam*. More generally, I will discuss devotion to the lama, the need for guarding one's tantric vows, and so forth. Stated briefly, this is my intent.

THE PASSING OF LORD BUDDHA

Generally speaking, the activities of Lord Buddha are beyond measure. However, his greatest deeds can be listed in several ways, of which the "Twelve Deeds"³ is the most well-known. One day, while our Teacher was dwelling in the area around Vaiśhālī,⁴ he told Ānanda, "Those who have reached the stage of the four bases for miraculous powers⁵ have the capacity to live for a long time, if there is a purpose and they have the intention to remain." Although Ānanda should have requested him to remain for a long time, Ānanda was under the influence of Māra and did not make the request. Māra, the "Wicked Demon," is the king of the Paranirmitavashavartin⁶ gods. When the Dharma thrived in this world-system, his followers were impaired and felt defeated, so they continually created obstacles for those who practice the Mahayana doctrine. Even for Śākyamuni Buddha they created obstacles. Once they were no longer able to obstruct him,⁷ Māra requested Lord Buddha, "Please pass from this world immediately!" At that time the Buddha did not consent, explaining that he had many tasks to perform; as long as his work remained unfinished, he would not pass into parinirvāṇa.

However, when, on another occasion, the opportunity arose for Māra to repeat his request, the Buddha promised to leave this world after three months, thus causing the earth to shake and other signs to occur. When Ānanda asked about the significance of these events, the Buddha described eight events that cause earthquakes,⁸ and Ānanda then understood that it was a sign of the Buddha's departure from this life. He beseeched him to remain, but the Lord Buddha had already accepted Māra's request and so could not accept Ānanda's. In due course, after coming into this world to act for the great benefit of sentient beings, he eventually passed beyond.

There seem to be several different explanations of the precise timing of the Buddha's passing. According to the best-known Tibetan tradition, it occurred on the fifteenth day of Saka Dawa,⁹ the day that he arrived in Kuśinagarī,¹⁰ when he received alms from a man named Cunda at a place called "Pleasure Grove." Hasti, another resident of Kuśinagarī and a member of the Malla clan, offered a piece of yellow cloth as part of a set of new robes. When the Teacher put them on, His emaciated body became particularly radiant. When he was asked about the reason for this, the Teacher said it was a sign of his imminent passing beyond suffering.

When the Teacher came to dwell near the city of the Mallas (Kuśinagarī), he prepared his final resting place at the foot of a Sal tree and rested in the reclining posture. He discussed a number of topics with the monks concerning how they should behave in the future. In particular, he told them they must study the sutras. Also, in place of having another teacher, four topics should be taught to others: the code of monastic conduct (Vinaya); that elders should teach their juniors; that junior monastics should obey their elders; and that people should visit the places of the Buddha's birth and so forth.¹¹ When it was publically announced that he was about to pass away, many people gathered and the Buddha taught the Dharma to them. After giving that last discourse, he was asked what should be done with his sacred remains after his passing. He replied that they should be treated like the remains of a great king: they should be wrapped in cotton, with five-hundred pieces of cotton cloth as an offering, and placed in an iron casket. Oil and spices should be sprinkled on top and it should be cremated with fragrant wood producing a pleasant smell. Afterward, the bones should be collected and placed inside a golden vessel. He explained that offerings should always be made to the relics, especially on festival days.

One of the Buddha's final disciples was the king of gandharvas¹² named Upananda. When he came before the Buddha, he did not request the Dharma due to his excessive pride, the source of which was his skills as a musician. In order to tame this pride, the Teacher took on the appearance of a gandharva and played the lute in his presence. Many exquisite tunes emerged from the lute simultaneously; but gradually he played less and less until finally, without playing even a single melody, the beautiful music continued. The sweet sounds transformed the pride of the king of gandharvas, which had been a great hindrance to the development of his good qualities. The transformation of the king's pride meant he was able to become a proper vessel for the teachings. He once again approached the Buddha and was able to see the truth of what the Teacher taught.

The Buddha had another final disciple, a one-hundred-twenty-year-old ascetic named *Subhadra.¹³ Because of his good qualities, he became convinced that he was an arhat, and so remained idle. While resting in a grove of *udumvara*¹⁴ flowers, he noticed some of them wilting, and realized that the time for the Teacher to pass beyond suffering had indeed come. He approached the Teacher in order to request the Dharma, but Ānanda would not allow him an audience. The Teacher perceived the situation, and told Ānanda to send for him, saying "This is my last non-Buddhist disciple." The two of them discussed the various spiritual paths in a frank and relaxed way. The Teacher said, "Apart from the path of the Buddha, there is no way to attain liberation." After that, Subhadra saw the truth and ordained as a monk, later to achieve the state of an arhat.

Then the Teacher told the monastics: "If you have any doubts about the Three Jewels or the four noble truths, ask me now. Meeting with a buddha in physical form is extraordinarily rare, so behold." In order for everyone in the audience to clearly see his body, he lifted his upper robes. Then he gave his final advice: "All composite phenomena are impermanent." Amongst all his teachings, this was the last and final statement; therefore, it is very important for us to meditate on impermanence and death.

Geshe Potowa¹⁵ taught that a continuous familiarization with the thought of death and impermanence will give rise to a profound understanding of their reality. Then one will not experience any hardships in Dharma practice. Meditating on compassion is likewise: the moment it truly arises, one will not experience hardships in benefitting beings. The Geshe also taught that by meditating again and again on the selflessness

of phenomena, when the fact of selflessness is made truly evident, one will not experience hardship in casting off the defilements to be eliminated. Since this teaching comes directly from the mouth of the Buddha, it is extremely important to be mindful of these meditations on death and impermanence.

The Buddha then adopted the posture of meditation and entered the states of deep absorption. Afterward, He displayed passing beyond sorrow in the state of what is called the “final fourth absorption.” According to the Hinayana teachings Śākyamuni Buddha himself was not a *nirmāṇakāya* or emanation body, but rather the Buddha in flesh whose physical form does not continue on in the state of nirvana. Thus, when he had completely passed beyond suffering, the continuity of his composite, physical form was cut off and ended right there. In the Mahayana, it is taught that Śākyamuni *was* a *nirmāṇakāya*, and that he merely displayed passing away. According to the latter, there is no discontinuation of the Buddha’s deeds and activities.

The elder Mahākāśyapa was the most senior among the śrāvaka¹⁶ students of the Buddha. At that time, he was staying in Rajgir. As soon as he learned of the Buddha’s passing beyond suffering he wanted to inform king Ajātaśatru, who was a great patron of the Teacher. Thinking that this sad news may cause the king to die of grief, he devised a method to gradually introduce him to the idea of the Buddha’s passing. He commissioned an artist in the king’s retinue to create paintings of the highest quality depicting the deeds of the Buddha. These beautiful paintings begin with his birth, and go on to depict his display of miracles at Śrāvastī, and so forth; the final deed being his passing beyond suffering in Kuśinagarī. Through viewing the paintings, the king gradually learned of the Buddha’s passing. Mahākāśyapa even gave instructions for how the king should be revived if he were to be overwhelmed when seeing them.

One week after the Teacher had passed beyond suffering, the Mallas made preparations for the funeral rites in accordance with the instructions the Buddha had previously given. On the seventh day, among the Mallas, the young men and women raised parasols and the younger among them raised aloft excellent substances. Parading through the western gate of Kuśinagarī, they circumambulated the city and then proceeded to the east of the city where they crossed a river called the Hiranyavati to establish a funeral site at the base of the Mallas’ Mukutabandhana Stupa.¹⁷ As they

prepared for the cremation, there was a rainfall of flowers from the sky which fell until there were drifts of petals knee-high.

When the mourners attempted to ignite the remains with fragrant wood, the flames would not catch. When Elder Anuruddha¹⁸ came, he saw through his clairvoyance that the remains would burn only in the presence of the Elder Mahākaśyapa. Upon arriving, Mahākaśyapa opened the casket and ritually washed the remains, having taken out all the cloth. Next, he procured five-hundred pieces of cloth from the city and re-wrapped the body in them. Having once more shrouded the remains and supplied the pyre with the finest woods, the fire blazed spontaneously and the cremation was accomplished. From the ashes of the pyre many sacred relics of the Buddha's body arose. These were gathered up and placed inside a golden vase, brought to the center of the city and vast offerings were made. Many people came from the eight territories of India¹⁹ to see and make offerings to these remains. First were spokesmen from a place called "the Badlands"²⁰ to whom the Buddha had been very compassionate. The people there had great faith in him. They argued that since the Buddha was the teacher of their country, his remains should be brought there. If they were deprived of the relics, they said, they would be provoked to war. Meanwhile, the Mallas felt that since the Buddha had been their teacher, they should be able to make offerings, saying, "The holy remains are here and we are the ones honoring them with funerary celebrations. We also are not afraid to engage in battle." In the same way, the other six city-states threatened to prepare for war.

At that time, there was a Brahmin called Drona who said to the Mallas, "The Teacher cultivated patience for a very long time. He taught the Dharma and greatly praised the virtues of patience. If you wage war now for the sake of these relics, many men will be killed and injured, and other negativities will take place. Let me divide the remains and send one equal part to each city." The Mallas agreed to this. So saying, Drona picked up the vase in which the relics were stored and asked the Mallas' permission to take the golden vase to their land to build a stupa, make offerings and allow celebration. The Mallas acquiesced, as did the other seven countries when asked for the same permission.

So it came to be that the relics were divided into eight groups and eight stupas were erected. The Brahmin Drona erected another stupa for the vase which had housed the relics. The ashes from the cremation fire were brought to Nedrodha and placed in another stupa. In this way, ten stupas

were erected. Since the Indian town of *Rava²¹ was incorporated into the nāga realms, the stupa located there is said to be in the kingdom of the nāgas. Furthermore, four of the Buddha's teeth were kept after the cremation. Among these teeth, two have been found in India, one in the heavenly realms, and one in the nāga realms. Of the two teeth that were in India, one made its way to Sri Lanka. One tooth may have gone to China, but I don't believe that's the case.

THE MERITS OF OFFERING TO SACRED REMAINS

Of the multitude of activities in which the Buddha engaged, there is not a single one that was not done for the benefit of sentient beings. These actions were performed not just for a single being, but for the benefit of countless beings. Even the Buddha's passing beyond suffering was not for his benefit alone; he left physical remains so as to provide a basis for the accumulation of merit for sentient beings. The Buddha himself has said that the merit that accrues from making offerings to an actual Buddha and the merit accrued from making offerings to a stupa which houses the relics of a past Buddha do not differ, so long as the intention of the person making the offering is the same.

Today, here in Nepal there stand four great stupas erected by the Dharma King Aśoka. Inside each of them, there are definitely relics of the Buddha. Among the prophecies of Lord Buddha is one that says one hundred years after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, there will be a Dharma King named Aśoka who will construct ten million stupas. Historical tradition tells us that Aśoka did indeed erect many stupas. He placed inside each of them a portion of those original eight sets of relics. This led to great fortune for the lineage of King Ajātaśatru who concealed relics beneath a great stupa with the assistance of an arhat. These relics multiplied. The remainder of the relics were concealed elsewhere. In short, it is definitely the case that the Buddha's authentic relics reside in these stupas. Because of that, they carry tremendous blessings.

Nepal is quite closely connected to India. Since in Nepal the teachings did not encounter the great difficulties that destroyed the Dharma in India, many ancient stupas still remain today.²² At one time, Ācārya Vasubandhu²³ came to Nepal with a large retinue. When he saw a Buddhist monk engaging in very improper conduct, he thought to himself that the Buddha's teachings were corrupted and chose to pass

away. The stupa containing his relics now abides at Swayambhunath Stupa in Nepal, which is a very important pilgrimage site. Moreover, the Tang-dynasty Chinese translator Xuanzang, who played an important role when the Buddhadharma became widespread in China, was a student and teacher in the lineage of Vasubandhu. Much of the Dharma in China derives from the great scholar of Nālandā, Vasubandhu, so this stupa is very important to visit, prostrate to, circumambulate and so forth.

In accordance with Khenchen Appey Rinpoche's instructions, only those who have received a tantric empowerment are permitted to read the remaining part of his teaching.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY, SPEECH, AND MIND

Now I would like to discuss a bit about the samadhi of thugdam which is a sacred form of meditation demonstrated by great masters upon their passing. This is related to the teachings of the Secret Mantra in a general way. Since you have received empowerment and are interested in the Vajrayāna, I will explain a bit about it.

First of all, it is important to know something about the formation of our bodies according to the understanding of how beings are born from a womb.²⁴ When the wind that carries the consciousness enters the mother's womb, it abides there together with the other four elements of earth, water, and fire. These are the four elements from which the coarse body is produced. When all are present, body, speech, and mind come about. Here, "mind" refers to the agent of mentation that cognizes various thoughts and concepts; and "body" is of two types, coarse and subtle. The subtle body consists of the sense faculties,²⁵ while the coarse body is the physical basis for these faculties: eyes, ears, and so forth. "Speech" is also separated into coarse and subtle. Coarse includes talking, laughter, and so forth, whereas "subtle" indicates the movement of winds in the body.

One's body, speech, and mind are very closely related. Body and speech function as a support for the mind. Any event in the mind will have an effect on body and speech; likewise, whatever happens in body and speech, will affect the mind. In terms of practicing the Vehicle of the Perfections, the Parāmitāyāna, the mind is said to be most important. Although, generally speaking, prostrations and so forth are performed

with the body, the main point is to transform the mind. All faults arise from the mind; since they are created by the mind, being able to transform the mind gives one the ability to transform all faults. In this way, the practice carried out in accordance with the Parāmitāyāna is based on the mind by working mainly on the mind.

In the system of Secret Mantra, or Vajrayāna, one speaks of the inner mind, the intermediary body, and external appearances. These are all closely connected, and among them the body is extremely important. The mind can be affected relatively easily based on working with the key points of the body, performing meditation on the deity and making use of the subtle body, the winds, and so forth.²⁶ When the mind is transformed based on these practices, external appearances will also change. Therefore, one practices tantra based mainly on the key points of the body.

Within the body are located five chakras. They are the junctures for the many energy channels, or *nāḍīs*, running through the body. Then there are the five winds flowing through these channels, the five elements, the five *skandhas*, and the five sense faculties. Each of the five chakras is associated with one of the five winds, one element, one skandha, and one sense faculty.

THE DYING PROCESS AND THUGDAM

When the body first forms in the mother's womb, this process starts with the formation of the navel chakra. In the same way, the process of dying begins there. As the forces of the five winds cease one after the other, they do so together with the functioning of their associated element, skandha, and sense faculty. This process begins with the decay of the force of the "digestive wind"²⁷ at the navel and continues up until the "all-pervading wind" associated with the element of space ceases (at the crown chakra).

Together with the degeneration of the digestive wind at the navel, the element of earth, the sense faculty of the eye, and aggregate of form all degenerate. In such a manner these four sets of five—winds, elements, sense faculties, and aggregates—all come to cease in stages.

This first step of the process is referred to as "earth dissolving into water." This means that the supporting power of the earth element is exhausted. When this happens, three signs appear: outer, inner, and secret. The outer sign is the weakening of the body: one cannot hold up

one's head any longer and the limbs can't support the weight of the body. Internally it feels like one's body is sinking into the ground. This is why the dying sometimes request others to lift them back up at this stage. The "secret sign" refers to the signs announcing the dawning of the mind of clear light, such as the appearance of mirages, smoke, and so forth. When the vision of smoke appears, for instance, one might be led to think that there is smoke in the room.

At the second stage of the dying process, the "life-holding wind" at the heart degenerates, causing the force of the water element to cease. When this happens, the body becomes dry and dehydrated. This is referred to as "water dissolving into fire." Then, as the "upward-moving wind" at the throat comes to cease, the fire element decays. At that time, the body loses its heat. If the person is a Dharma practitioner, the heat withdraws from the feet upward. This is also when the mind dissolves into the all-base consciousness.²⁸ If the person has accumulated many negativities, the heat will withdraw from the crown downward until it is completely eliminated. This is known as "fire dissolving into wind."

After this, the "downward-voiding wind" dissolves at the secret chakra. This causes the dying person to have many exhalations, but one is no longer able to draw breath back in. This fourth stage is called "wind dissolving into consciousness." Because at this point the coarse elements and winds have dissolved, the dying process up to this point is referred to as the coarse dissolution.

Then the "all-pervasive wind" at the crown chakra ceases to function, which brings the perceptible movement of the breath to a complete end. This initiates the subtle dissolutions, which indicate the way in which the body's subtle channels and consciousness dissolve. There are four stages of this dissolution: appearance, increase, attainment, and near-attainment. This process involves the two subtle element drops acquired from one's parents. The red element, or essence drop acquired from one's mother, is of two types: coarse and subtle. The coarse element produces flesh, blood, and skin. The subtle red drop abides in the central channel²⁹ at the level of the secret chakra, where it is held in place through the power of the red *rasanā* channel. The coarse aspect of the white element acquired from the father produces bones, marrow, and seminal fluid. The subtle white element drop, also referred to as the pure white essence, abides in the central channel at the place between the eyebrows, held there with the support of the white *lalanā* channel.

The first stage of the subtle dissolution is referred to as “consciousness dissolving into appearance.” At this stage, because there are no more winds, the *rasanā* channel can no longer hold the pure red essence at the secret chakra. As it moves up through the central channel, there is the dawning of “red appearance.” At that time, all conceptions related to the affliction of anger come to cease.

Following that, “appearance dissolves into increase”: the white drop between the eyebrows can no longer be held there by the *lalanā* and descends through the central channel. At that time, all appearances dawn as white. This is likened to the dawning of moonlight in the sky. All thoughts of desire come to cease.

Next, “increase dissolves into attainment”: when the white and red drops meet at the heart center, with consciousness trapped in between them, a black appearance dawns and all concepts related to ignorance come to cease. Because of the ceasing of all concepts, one experiences what is known as “luminosity,” or clear light, which is utterly devoid of conceptual elaboration and is totally inexpressible. This is likened to the sun rising in a perfectly clear sky.

Generally, we speak of two kinds of channels: the channels of *samsara* and the channels of *nirvana*. In terms of the winds flowing through these channels, we differentiate between karmic winds and winds of awakened awareness. When, for those who have not gained experience through their practice, the mind moves through the *samsaric* channels of the *rasanā* and *lalanā*, there arise different experiences of happiness and suffering along with the appearance of external objects. For those who have gained the necessary level of experience, the winds do not veer into the *rasanā* and *lalanā* channels. When these winds enter the central channel, they are known as “winds of awakened awareness.” This gives rise to all the realizations of the paths and grounds, at which point, defilements cease.

It is said that at the time of death, the experience of luminosity dawns even for those who have not practiced at all due to the winds and mind entering the central channel at that very moment. For those who have practiced, and in particular for those who have authentic experience in the practice of special insight or *vipaśyanā* as well as those who have performed the practice of gathering accumulations to a great extent, awakened awareness, that is, the realization of the ultimate nature of things arises due to the dawning of the luminosity at the time of death.

From among the many types of wisdom, the highest is that which allows one to attain the dharmakāya. Even though the attainment of buddhahood requires one to traverse the five paths and the numerous stages, this can occur swiftly for experienced practitioners through this process. In this way, buddhahood is attained through the realization of the dharmakāya, immediately followed by the attainment of the sambhogakāya in the buddha fields.

VENERATING THE GURU

It is said that if disciples make offerings on the occasion of the passing of a realized master, the merit accrued is exceptionally great. Likewise, if a disciple practices meditation on this occasion, then because of the quality of the guru's meditation practice, the disciple's will also be accentuated. If some warmth remains in the area of the lama's heart and the physical body appears deeply radiant, more youthful, and brighter than ever, these are signs that the lama is in the state of thugdam.

There are three postures accomplished practitioners usually choose to pass away in, such as the seven-point posture of Vairocana and others. The Lord of Dharma Sakya Paṇḍita, for example, passed away in sitting posture, holding the vajra and bell crossed at his heart. But these points of posture are not strictly necessary. The length of time thugdam can be sustained for is also not certain; it is usually determined by the person as they enter that state. The meditator might enter into thugdam with the intention of remaining in that state for three days, in which case, thugdam will end after that amount of time.

Once thugdam has been completed, there will be various signs, such as the decline of the body's radiance and the appearance of rainbows. In some cases there will be a swelling on top of the head, or a swelling of the arteries and so on. Generally, when the master rises from this inner realization, the external body loses the radiance it displayed during thugdam. It should be noted that not all accomplished practitioners necessarily abide in the state of thugdam. There are many who do not. Practitioners of the Secret Mantra who perform *phowa*, the transference of consciousness into a buddha field, for instance, do not exhibit this state.

For those without meditation experience, "the winds and mind entering the central channel" is a mere label and is not experienced. The

real state of luminosity, completely free of conceptual elaboration, is an irreversible state of realization accessible through advanced levels of practice alone. In the case of ordinary beings, the process of dissolution alone cannot interrupt the flow of ordinary consciousness. What happens instead is that it dissolves into the all-base consciousness.

On this particular occasion we are honoring the passing away of Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche, who is equal to Vajradhara. He was an exceptional Dharma practitioner in general; and in particular he was an excellent monk, upholder of the Vinaya, and ornament adorning the lineage of the teachings of the *Collection of Tantras* and *Collection of Sādhanas*. Rinpoche was a profound and highly accomplished practitioner, a true ornament of the Dharma. Now, at the time of his passing, he abides in thugdam, manifesting signs of accomplishment in accordance with the teachings.

All of you gathered here have either received empowerments and transmissions from Rinpoche directly, which means that he is your lama, or from Rinpoche's disciples, in which case he is your lineage master. Thus he is revered as the master of masters. We should praise such lamas as Chogyé Rinpoche and receive the samaya from them.

The Buddha has said that before taking a teacher as one's tantric master or lama, one should first of all examine the master. Sakya Paṇḍita observed that on any given day, people spend a great deal of time preparing food, and thinking about how to patch up their clothes, etc. Likewise, if one needs a guide for a day, one tries hard to find someone who is pleasant and qualified. Where marriage is concerned there is similarly a great deal of evaluation about the character of a potential partner. However much time one spends choosing these friends and companions, these relationships only last for a short time, and so are not that important. Contrary to this, one's relationship with the Dharma and the lama is extremely important, so one must investigate a teacher thoroughly.

Once we have decided to follow a certain lama and have received empowerment and so on, however, it is important to cultivate pure perception. Whenever we see the lama performing any of the ten unwholesome deeds of body, speech, or mind; whenever he or she seems to be lacking any of the good qualities, or his or her conduct appears to be inappropriate or bad, we should think that the lama acts in this way for the benefit of sentient beings and that, in reality, he or she does not

have these kinds of faults. It is said that there is nothing that beings beset by ignorance or desire would not do. In the same way there is nothing a buddha, who is possessed of perfect compassion, would not do or say in order to benefit sentient beings. One should not perceive one's lama as ordinary. Likewise, it's said that no one apart from a buddha can perfectly know another person. This is something that can't be discerned by looking at the conduct of body and speech, but rather through knowledge of the other's mind. Such skill is difficult to acquire, so for these and for many other reasons, one must be mindful not to judge one's teacher.

There was a bodhisattva named Mañibhadra who had many teachers. Though some of those teachers engaged in what appeared to be very bad conduct, because he maintained his faith in his masters, Mañibhadra came to possess great qualities. In the same way, although some Indian mahāsiddhas engaged in very negative behaviors, those who maintained pure vision attained accomplishment. For those disciples who lack faith, no good qualities of any kind arise. One should be mindful of these reasons for keeping faith. The Lord of Dharma Sakya Paṇḍita has said that if one considers that the lama's actions are all excellent, one will become excellent; if one thinks them negative, one will become negative.

It is said that within the Mahayana, the master who teaches the Dharma performs the actions of the Buddha, and one should perceive that lama to be like a Buddha, but in the context of Highest Secret Mantra, when one receives empowerment from a teacher, one should think them to *be* a buddha, perform guru yoga and worship them.

In the tantras it is explained how one should revere one's lama throughout their life, how to engage in the funerary ceremonies and cremation when they have passed away; how to build a stupa for their sacred remains, and so forth. Therefore, if relics appear after the cremation, these should also be interred in a stupa. If not, one should in any case act with reverence, make offerings, and so forth as much as one is able. It is also extremely beneficial do retreat to gather the accumulations and to purify obscurations.

Now, on this occasion, many of you have come here in order to pay homage to the departed master, Vajradhara Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche. I am truly delighted by this. When a father passes away, his children will resolve to carry out certain duties to fulfill their father's legacy. Just like this, on the occasion of the passing of our lama, we must put into practice the Dharma we have received from him. Having considered the need to

honor the departed lama's intentions and attain the state of a buddha, we must resolve to practice.

While it is important to make offerings to the remains of the master, the most important thing is to fulfill the lama's wishes: for the students to practice the Dharma well and to preserve and spread the precious teachings of the Victorious One amongst sentient beings. This is where our main efforts should lie. It is said that taking just a single step toward a place in order to hear the Dharma already constitutes the upholding of the Buddha's teaching and is therefore extremely beneficial. Thank you very much for coming here.

Translated by Daniel McNamara.

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1. H.E. Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche (1920-2007) was the head of the Tsharpa sub-lineage of the Sakya. Renowned as one of the greatest masters of his time, His Eminence remained in meditation after death (*thugdam*) for sixteen days.
2. His passing away from this world.
3. The enumerations of these twelve vary somewhat across traditions. According to most Tibetan accounts, they are: (1) descent from Tuṣṭita heaven, (2) entering a mother's womb, (3) taking birth, (4) becoming skilled in various arts, (5) delighting in the company of a royal consort, (6) renouncing the worldly life, (7) practicing austerities, (8) taking a seat under the Bodhi Tree, (9) overcoming Māra, (10) manifesting full enlightenment, (11) turning the Wheel of Dharma, and (12) passing into parinirvāṇa.
4. A city-state during the Buddha's lifetime, located in present-day Bihar, India.
5. Tib. *rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi*; Skt: *caturvṛddhipāda*. These are a set of four qualities cultivated on the path of accumulation and belonging to the thirty-seven factors conducive to awakening. They are intention, will, diligence, and analysis.
6. Lit., "controller of others' manifestations," the name of the heaven where Māra abides.
7. That is, once the Buddha conquered Māra's hosts and attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.
8. These are listed in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra*: (1) great wind disturbing the water on which the earth sits; (2) when an ascetic or divinity "has cultivated the notion of earth as insignificant and of water as immeasurable;" (3) when a bodhisattva descends from Tuṣṭita heaven into his final birth; (4) when that bodhisattva is born; (5) when he achieves complete, unsurpassed awakening; (6) when, as a buddha, he first turns the Wheel of Dharma; (7) when he determines the time of his final nirvāṇa; and (8) when he attains final nirvāṇa (Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*, pp. 61-62).
9. Saka Dawa is the fourth lunar month in the Tibetan calendar, and is considered a particularly holy time. The Buddha's most significant deeds—his birth, enlightenment, and parinirvāṇa—are all celebrated on the fifteenth day of that month.
10. Kuśinagarī is where the Buddha passed away. At that time it was the capital of the Malla kingdom, and is still a town in northeastern Uttar Pradesh state in India, not far from the border with Nepal.
11. These are in particular the four great holy sites: Lumbinī, where the Buddha took birth; Bodhgayā, where he attained enlightenment; Sārnāth, where he first taught the Dharma; and Kuśinagarī, where he passed beyond suffering.
12. The gandharvas serve as musicians in the heavenly realms.
13. Tib. *kun tu rgyud rab snan*, Subhadda in Pāli.
14. A type of lotus flower used to symbolize the insubstantial nature of all phenomena.

15. Geshe Potowa Rinchen Sal (*Po to ba rin chen gsal*), 1027-1105 CE. He was an early Kadampa master and teacher to Geshe Langri Thangpa, whose verses on mind training are well-known.
16. That is, Hinayana.
17. Lit., “the Crown Stupa [of the Mallas].” This and other vital stupas were significantly expanded during the reign of Aśoka, approximately one hundred years after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa.
18. A leading disciple of the Buddha who was famed for his clairvoyance.
19. In the Buddha’s time there were eight city-states (*mahājanapadas*) throughout his dwelling grounds located in today’s states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Some of these were kingdoms, others were ruled by councils. These were later unified under the Mauryan empire.
20. Tib. *yul sdig pa can*, “the land possessed of affliction.” While this could ultimately be any of the sixteen city-states mentioned above, it is likely one that bordered on Malla lands, e.g. Vaji (Vṛji), Kośali, or Vatsa.
21. Tib. *sgra sgrogs*.
22. Rinpoche may be alluding to the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries that occurred in India, especially between 1000-1200 CE; Nepal did not suffer this destruction.
23. An important teacher of Abhidharma and Yogācāra philosophy who lived in approximately the 4th or 5th centuries CE.
24. The Buddha’s teachings describe four modes of birth: humans and mammals are examples of womb-birth; beings can also be born from an egg, from moisture, and spontaneously born. “Moisture born” can indicate some species of insects such as mosquitoes; examples of spontaneous birth include hell beings and beings of the formless realms.
25. Tib. *dbang po*, Skt. *indriya*. These are the six faculties of sight, hearing, smell, and so forth, located in the physical sense organs, with mentation as the sixth.
26. That is, the channels (*rtsa, nāḍī*), winds (*rlung, prāṇa*) and drops (*thig le, bindu*) of the subtle body which are the focus for advanced tantric meditation practices.
27. The major winds such as the upward moving, downward voiding, and digestive winds are detailed in Tibetan medical literature. They are also described in detail in, *inter alia*, the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje’s *zab mo nang don*, translated by Elizabeth Callahan as *The Profound Inner Principles* (Boston: Snow Lion, 2014).
28. Tib. *kun gzhi mam shes*, Skt. *ālayavijñāna*. The most subtle stream of consciousness, which flows uninterruptedly until the attainment of buddhahood.
29. Skt. *avadhūti*. The central energy axis in the body along which the five chakras are located.